



# CANAVERAL BEACON

The official newsletter for members of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation.

Follow us on Facebook @CCLighthouse



## Our Mission

*To assist Space Launch Delta 45 in preserving, protecting, promoting, and interpreting the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse and its historical significance to the Florida Space Coast, State of Florida, and our Nation*

Vol. 16, No. 1

January 1, 2026

## Message from Our New Foundation President



Happy New Year! As we look ahead, 2026 is shaping up to be a truly exciting year for the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse. In just a few short weeks, we will break ground on the remaining cottages, an important milestone that brings us closer to fulfilling Bob Merrill's original vision. That vision was not only to restore these historic structures, but to make the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse accessible to everyone, from dedicated lighthouse enthusiasts to local elementary-age children eager to learn the rich history of their own backyard and the broader Space Coast.

I am reminded of September 2013, when that vision was first shared at Exploration Tower under the fitting title, "What once was... can be again." Over the past twelve years, the Foundation has navigated no shortage of challenges: operating on highly restricted property, coordinating access amid an increasingly dynamic launch schedule, and enduring access limitations caused by government shutdowns and the COVID pandemic. Through it all, the resilience of our board, staff, tour operators and, most importantly, our volunteers have kept the momentum alive. Their commitment has turned vision into reality.

Our partnership with the Space Force has also never been stronger. We are deeply grateful for the continued support and advocacy of Jamie Draper, whose leadership and collaboration have been instrumental in advancing our shared mission.

Volunteers truly are the lifeblood of this Foundation. As President, I believe firmly that the role of the Board is to serve - to enable, advocate for, and facilitate the incredible work of our volunteers, fundraising coordinators, project managers, and tour operators. Simply put, we work for them. At the same time, we hold a solemn fiduciary responsibility to our members, donors, sponsors, and grant providers to ensure that their generous contributions are carefully stewarded and effectively deployed. Every dollar entrusted to us advances our mission to assist Space Launch Delta 45 in preserving, protecting, promoting, and interpreting the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse and its historical significance to the Florida Space Coast, the State of Florida, and our Nation.

Finally, I would like to personally thank Ron Ecker for his outstanding service to the Foundation over the past three years. His tireless efforts, steady leadership, and devotion to excellence has set a new standard and helped solidify the positive trajectory we now enjoy. I am humbled to follow in his footsteps, and I look forward to continuing this journey together.

Here's to a great year ahead! Shane

## Museum Highlights

### Museum Highlights

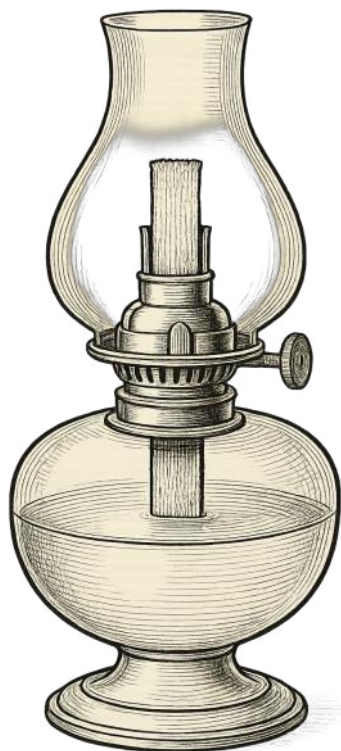
Holiday decorating was completed just in time for the Museums of Brevard Holiday Tour of Historic Homes, as well as the annual Membership and Brick Holder tour, which comes out in time to see the lights come on and to be able to see the lighthouse beacon. We very much appreciate how much our volunteers do to make sure our tours continue through the busy holidays, but we make sure they have time with family and friends by closing for tours on the day before and the day of both Christmas and New Year's. Hopefully everyone is happy and recharged for our very busy winter season.

Capitalizing on our increasing demand, our newest tour provider, Space Shuttle Excursions is now providing tours every day we're open. Between them and Canaveral Tours, there should be plenty of seats for you to bring out friends and family when they visit during the winter.

### Did You Know?

Before the days of electricity lighthouse keepers were often called "Wickies". It would seem a strange nickname, but one of their primary duties was ensuring the wicks in the lamps were always maintained to optimize the intensity of the light. You can tell the importance from the 1852 Instructions for Light-Keepers of the United States: *"The lamps shall be kept burning, bright and clear, every night from sunset to sunrise; and in order that the greatest degree of light may be uniformly maintained, the wicks must be trimmed every four hours and special care must be taken to cut the tops of the wicks exactly even."*

Becky Zingarelli  
Museum Director  
[museumdirector@canaverallight.org](mailto:museumdirector@canaverallight.org).



## “Race to Reclaim History” 2025 American Muscle Car Museum - Fundraising Success

**Sold out!** Our second major fundraiser of the year - the “Race to Reclaim History” was a sellout success! Over 230 people attended a fabulous evening of food, beverages, auctions and muscle cars!

This year’s return to the American Muscle Car Museum on Saturday, 29 November 2025, offered a special VIP Attraction which included early entry, and a personal tour of the museum by owner **Mark Pieloch**. Needless to say, the VIP Tickets sold out early! **Mark Pieloch’s** personal tour was filled with humorous stories and special insights to his vast museum of exquisite muscle cars (and other antique or rare items). Following the tour, food and beverages were provided as general admission supporters joined in the fun! Mark also led the Live Auction which netted winners of our private VIP lighthouse tours, and a special NASCAR Speedway overnight experience.

This evening’s success was exciting and essential to accomplishing our “race to reclaim history” goals of sharing the history of our lighthouse, welcoming school children as they study local history, greeting more visitors, maintaining our museum, and completing the original footprint of the lighthouse community by building the final two (2) Keepers’ cottages.

A huge thank you to Mark Pieloch and his AMCM staff & volunteers, to Wild Ocean Market, and all the CCLF volunteers and Special Event Committee members who donated their time and talents to making this such a wonderful event.



# Race to Reclaim History Live Auction and Winners



NASCAR Experience

Exclusive Climb to the Top Lighthouse Tour



Jeffrey O'Brien - NASCAR Experience

Scott Wiles

Susan Lewis

Greg Lowdermilk



Action at the Auction



Wild Ocean Market– Delicious hors d'oeuvres

## Volunteers Decorate for the Holidays

On 1 December a great group of volunteers came out to bring the holiday spirit to the Cape Canaveral Light Station! The cottage and the lighthouse are all dressed up. The Coast Guard Aids to Navigation Team even came down again from Ponce Inlet to help us install the huge wreath at the top of the tower! If you've wondered how they do it, they climb to the top and send a rope down to be connected to the top of the wreath because the stairs are too narrow to carry it up the inside stairwell. They connect a stabilizing rope to the bottom that keeps the wreath from banging into the lighthouse as they raise the wreath up. You'll still have a few weeks in January to see everything, if you missed it!



## Space Force T - Minus 10 - Miler Run to the Lighthouse



On 13 December, the lighthouse was the busiest it's been all year. Around 2,000 people were able to climb to the third level of the lighthouse, visit the museum, buy souvenir items in the Keeper's Closet and tour Hangar C during and following the annual Space Force T-Minus10-Miler. With the finish line right in front of the lighthouse, the runners and their supporters had a great backdrop to their successful efforts. It's always amazing to see people who just ran 10 miles want to climb the lighthouse, as well, although most come down the outside stairs very carefully, as their legs protest!



## New Cottages Construction Update

At last, what was once WILL be again! The site clearing has begun for the construction of the two new cottages!



The oak trees were saved.



Not all residents were in awe.

## Keeping the Light Shining -Membership Musings

What a year 2025 was, beginning with terrorists in Louisiana and Nevada impacting trips to the lighthouse, and then again in October when the Government shut down due to their inability to agree on a 2026 budget. We in the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation (CCLF), however, have had no such issues with agreements, and pretty well met all our obligations, except one. Due to the shutdown through no fault of our own, we had to cancel the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter convoy to the lighthouse; however, we more than made up for it with the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter convoy on 27 December 2025 which filled up in record time.

With the new year beginning, I would like to spend a little time talking about the Florida Lighthouse Association (FLA), of which the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation is a member in good standing, and has benefitted through grants totaling \$100K. The purpose of the FLA is to support member lighthouse organizations in Florida with financial help garnered through the sale of the specialty license plate, 90% of which MUST be spent on Florida's lighthouses, not administrative fees, etc. These structures have weathered harsh weather and conditions over the years, and often require extensive maintenance to repair damage, especially after storms. After the last two years of hurricanes, this was crucial for our southwest and west Florida lighthouses that sustained damage.

In addition to the CCLF itself being a lighthouse member, several of our CCLF members have also joined the FLA. FLA has quarterly meetings at lighthouses around the State of Florida with interesting speakers and fun activities and opportunities to learn what other lighthouse organizations are doing. Recently the Mayport Lighthouse Association (MLA), another FLA member, had a fundraising opportunity to take boat rides to see the Sombrero Reef Light and the American Shoals Light; it was a weekend trip and such fun. Several CCLF members were on this trip and enjoyed beautiful weather, smooth boat trips, and got up quite close to the two lighthouses for photos.

Because the CCLF has benefitted from FLA grants, we encourage our members to join the Florida Lighthouse Association and attend the periodic meetings. The next FLA meeting will be in February at St. Mark's in Florida's Big Bend area. It's sure to be an interesting, fun meeting. We would love for CCLF to be well represented at these meetings.

*Photos: With Sombrero Light in background we have Eric Sharp, Eric Martin, Ron Ecker, Mike Ecker, Chris Ecker, and Coleen Seitter; Photo 2: Bev Merrilees in front of Sombrero Light; Photo 3: A Grand day (Ron & Chris Ecker with their grandson); Photo 4: Photo American Shoals Light; Photo 5: Chris Ecker with newest CCLF member, Robyn Richards with American Shoals in background. Photo 6: Santa even came along and visited Bev Merrilees at dinner.*



## Members and Volunteers Appreciation Lunch

The Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation Members and Volunteers Appreciation Lunch was held on Nov 1 at Field Manor Homestead. Lunch was provided by Sonny's Barbecue and included Ribs, Pulled Pork, Pulled Chicken and all the fixins'; incredibly awesome live music by Rick Brensinger; and phenomenal cupcakes by Marcia Jordan! Huge thanks to our organizers Chris Ecker, Bev Merrilees, Patrica Lautner and Sharon Crockett, and everyone else who supported with time and talent! Whoever said, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch" was wrong! And a fun time was had by all!



***Welcoming the newest members of the  
Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation Family!***

**NEW MEMBERS 21 October —20 December 2025**

**Assistant Keeper (\$35 - 1 Member)**

Robyn Richards

**Lighthouse Keeper (\$50 - 2 Members)**

**Head Lighthouse Keeper (\$100 - 2 Members)**

Walter Guptill

**Student Membership (\$15 = 1 Member)**

**Lifetime individual Membership (\$1,000 = 1 Lifetime Member)**

**Lifetime Family Membership (\$1,500 = 2 Lifetime Members)**

***...And celebrating our renewing members of the  
Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation Family!***

**RENEWALS 21 October—20 December 2025**

**Assistant Keeper (\$35 - 1 Member)**

Barbara Hardy    Patricia Lautner    Daniel Luna    Lisa Maslyn    Mary Merritt  
Robert Munchbach    Boneta Nord    Barbara Rankin    Richard Sanchez  
Cheryl Thornton    Paul Willis

**Lighthouse Keeper (\$50 - 2 Members)**

Russell & Deborah Allison    Gary & Karen Barrows    Michael & Barbara Danagher  
Kelly & James Guldi    Linda Halpin    Steve & Paula Lo    Pat & Penny McMahon  
MSgt Michael J & Bekah Brink-Mitchell    Michael & Kristen Moehle    Kathy Neff  
Shane & Marian Smith    Debbie Strawhand    Willa & Flora Wood

**Head Lighthouse Keeper (\$100 - 2 Members)**

Jim Chamberlain & Karen Dyson    Larry G. Clark    Gary & Wanda Cordelli  
Larry Nisivoccia & Sandy Rea    Alan & Patti Pickering    Kim & Jim Turner

**Student (\$15 = 1 Member)**

**Lifetime Individual Membership (\$1000 = 1 Lifetime Member)**

**Lifetime Family Membership (\$1,500 = 2 Lifetime Members)**

**Mark & Nancy Tomassone**



# Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation Lifetime Members

Pierre & Kathy Alix Titusville, FL	Bob & Dianne Heidersbach Cape Canaveral, FL	Dixie & [Jerry] Sansom Cocoa, FL
Julia & Joseph (Jett) Black, III Cocoa Beach, FL	Christy & Randy Horn Oviedo, FL	Michael & Susan Schwarz Port Canaveral, FL
Ginny Blaetz Cocoa, FL	Jerry & Darleen Hunt Merritt Island, FL	John "Tank" & Rheta Sherman Cocoa, FL
Gail Browning Cape Porpoise, ME	Bill Jelen Merritt Island, FL	Dave Spain Merritt Island, FL
Carolyn Burby Port St. John, FL	Gene Johnson Merritt Island, FL	[Yvonne]/Bob Thornton Titusville, FL
Jack Burrie Deerfield Beach, FL	Rocky & Lisa Johnson Cocoa, FL	Mark & Nancy Tomassone Rockledge, FL
Lloyce Campbell Merritt Island, FL	Larry Kaczor & Caroline Kaczor Elliott Cocoa Beach, FL	James Trammell Melbourne, FL
Barry & Sheila Compagnoni Melbourne Beach, FL	Al & Carol Koller, Jr. Titusville, FL	RADM Jim & Kathie Underwood Merritt Island, FL
Scott & Liz Cooper Greenwood, IN	[Eric Kucera] Merritt Island, FL	Celeno West & Allen McFarland Cocoa Beach, FL
Preston A., Jr & Nancy C. Creech North Augusta, SC	Lynn & Mike Mariotti Naples, FL	Rose Marie Wiley Cocoa Beach, FL
Sharon Crockett Rockledge, FL	Jeanna & Mike Merrifield Titusville, FL	Dr. Elbert [Sonny] & Kay Witt Melbourne FL
[Charles] & Ginny Davis Titusville, FL	[RADM Robert] & Beverly Merrilees Merritt Island, FL	Dr. Jess & Bertie Yates Melbourne, FL
Robert Davis Merritt Island, FL	Joe & Barb Mihelcic Cocoa Beach, FL	
Debra Divich Merritt Island, FL	Teresa Moore & Don Nawalany Cape Canaveral, FL	
Jill & [Jim] Dooley Merritt Island, FL	Cal & Virginia Myer Naples, FL	
Cynthia Dropeski Melbourne, FL	[Donald] Ellen Myer Washington DC	
Ron & Christine Ecker Satellite Beach, FL	Jamie & Jessica Myer Los Angeles, CA	
Albert & Marie Elebash Melbourne, FL	Jeff & Cathi Myer Burlington, MA	
Rodger S. Fowler Merritt Island, FL	Larry & Elva Ostarly Rockledge, FL	
Ric & Nancy Garwood Merritt Island, FL	Caroline & Jimmy Raleigh Merritt Island, FL	
Rep. Tom Goodson Rockledge, FL	Jim Ravitch Merritt Island, FL	
[Bud] & Liz Gravuer Cocoa, FL	Rick & Michele Rohrmann Cocoa Beach, FL	
Beth & Dwight Greenberg Cocoa, FL	Hal Row Mims, FL	
[Bobbie Grine] Tuscaloosa, AL		

**\*\*\* CCLF Membership Application Form \*\*\***

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY & JOIN CCLF TODAY!**

Completed forms should be submitted along with payment to:  
CCLF | P.O. Box 1978 | Cape Canaveral, FL 32920

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes, please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities.**

Please select a membership level from the categories below:

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head Lighthouse Keeper                   | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lighthouse Keeper (Family)               | \$50  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Lighthouse Keeper (Individual) | \$35  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Lighthouse Keeper                | \$15  |

**LIFE MEMBERSHIPS**

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership (Family-2 member) | \$1,500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Membership (Single)          | \$1,000 |

**TOTAL AMOUNT DUE:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Chris Ecker, CCLF Membership**  
Phone: (321) 591-9844  
Email: [cclfmbrship1@aol.com](mailto:cclfmbrship1@aol.com)

**Bev Merrilees, CCLF Volunteers**  
Phone: (321) 452-5426  
Email: [bmerrilees@cfl.rr.com](mailto:bmerrilees@cfl.rr.com)

**To pay your membership dues online via PayPal, visit [CanaveralLight.org](http://CanaveralLight.org)**

**CCLF Member Benefits**

- Admittance to annual membership appreciation meeting held at the lighthouse;
- Subscription to *The Canaveral Beacon*, CCLF's bi-monthly newsletter;
- Discounts at the Keeper's Closet Gift Shop, including 10% off commemorative brick orders;
- Volunteer opportunities to support & promote the lighthouse in its historical context; and, most importantly,
- Supporting CCLF's efforts to restore the lighthouse grounds and resurrect history!

**MEMBERS SAVE 10% AT  
KEEPER'S CLOSET**

Stop by the Keeper's Closet gift shop during your next visit to the lighthouse. Browse our selection of souvenirs, books, apparel, jewelry, children's items and other lighthouse memorabilia. Proceeds support Foundation initiatives and community events. Members who present their membership card when shopping will receive a 10 percent discount on their purchase.

## Volunteer Spotlight on Jim Ravitch

When Jim Ravitch started working in the space industry, he would often see the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse from the roadway as he drove by.

“I started working out here since ’95,” he said while volunteering at the lighthouse recently. “When I was working here, I would drive by here back and forth.”

Ravitch said that in the early days working at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station (then the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station), workers could bring visiting family members out on the weekend to see the lighthouse. In 2002 the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation was formed to preserve the history of the Lighthouse and provide tours to the public.

“When I first learned about it, I joined” as a member of the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation. “It was several years later before I began volunteering,” he said.

Ravitch serves at least once a month as a tour escort at the lighthouse. Ravitch, a mechanical engineer, said he will likely spend more time volunteering at the lighthouse once he retires.

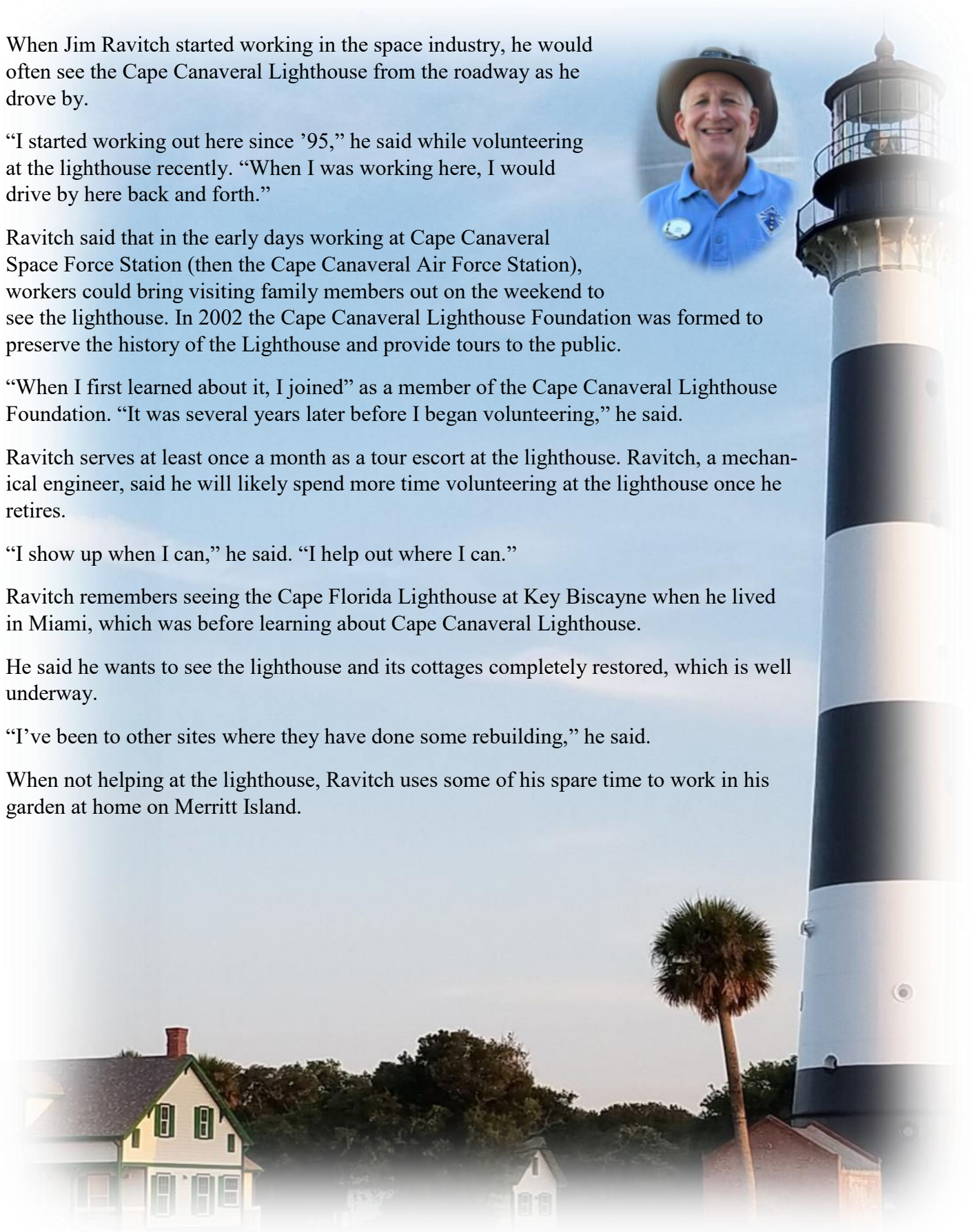
“I show up when I can,” he said. “I help out where I can.”

Ravitch remembers seeing the Cape Florida Lighthouse at Key Biscayne when he lived in Miami, which was before learning about Cape Canaveral Lighthouse.

He said he wants to see the lighthouse and its cottages completely restored, which is well underway.

“I’ve been to other sites where they have done some rebuilding,” he said.

When not helping at the lighthouse, Ravitch uses some of his spare time to work in his garden at home on Merritt Island.



## Museums of Brevard Spotlight



*The Cape Canaveral Lighthouse has been a member* of the Museums of Brevard (affectionately know as the “MOB”) since its inception over 10 years ago. One of our primary goals is to increase public awareness of all our members.

*In each issue of the Beacon, we will put a spotlight on one of our member museums.* You can find out more about what the MOB members are doing individually and collectively by visiting our website at <https://MOBFL.org> While you’re there, plan a trip to visit one of our members! The MOB recently added two new members: the CAPE Center in the City of Cape Canaveral, and Bensen House in Grant.

Our Spotlight for this edition is the Brevard Veterans Memorial Center. The Brevard Veterans Memorial Center is located on Sykes Creek Pkwy behind the Merritt Square Mall. They’re open Monday thru Saturday 10am -4pm and Sunday Noon-4pm.

From their website [Home | Brevard Veterans Memorial Center, Inc.](#)

Since 1978 the Brevard Veterans Memorial Center has taken on many missions to support over 70,000 Brevard Veterans and their families as well as to help all citizens and visitors learn firsthand about what U.S. veterans have contributed to make our country great. With an amazing array of military artifacts ranging from the Revolutionary War to our current conflicts in the Middle East, we strive to educate the public on our military’s efforts both past and present in our **FREE** [museum](#), [library](#), and [memorial plaza](#). The [82-acre park](#) has walking trails, a playground and pavilions to rent.



## Much Appreciation to Our Climb to the Top Auction Winners

The Foundation's new 2nd Vice President and Marketing Director Laura Lee Walko has transformed the exclusive "Climb to the Top Lighthouse Tour" auction prize. The new theme is an elegant Victorian Garden Party which includes hors d'oeuvres, champagne, and other beverages for up to 20 people following their escorted tour to the top of the lighthouse. This opportunity is only auctioned twice a year with up to six winners who pay approximately \$1000 each for the experience! Below are guests of the Mully family-winners of a Christmas in July auction.



## 2026 Cape Canaveral Lighthouse Foundation Board of Directors & Advisors

### OFFICERS

Mr. Shane Smith, President  
 Mr. Todd McDowell, 1st Vice President  
 Ms. Laura Lee Walko, 2nd Vice President  
 CAPT Jim Passarelli, Treasurer  
 Ms. Robyn Clark, Secretary  
 Mr. Ronald L. Ecker, Past President & FLA Liaison

### DIRECTORS

Ms. Sharon Crockett, Speakers Coordinator  
 Mrs. Chris Ecker, Membership Chair  
 Mr. George Eustis, Jr., Docents Coordinator  
 Mrs. Nancy Garwood, Archivist & Photographer  
 Mr. Rocky Johnson, Director  
 Mr. Brendan McMillin, Asst. Treasurer  
 Mrs. Jeanna Merrifield, Major Events Chair  
 Mr. R. Norman Moody, Public Relations/Media  
 Ms. Mary Anne Moore, Tours Co-Chair  
 Ms. Michele Rohrmann, Tours Co-Chair  
 Mrs. Dixie Sansom, Legislative Advisor  
 RADM Jim Underwood, *Canaveral Beacon* Editor  
 Ms. Laura Lee Walko, Marketing Director  
 Maj Gen Ed Wilson, Director  
 Mrs. Lisa Wilson, Director & Education Chair  
 Ms. Becky Zingarelli, Museum Director, *Ex Officio*

### ADVISORS

Mr. Ken Arbuckle, Keeper's Closet Co-Leader  
 Mrs. Karen Arbuckle, Keeper's Closet Co-Leader  
 Mrs. Cheryl Bennett, Advisor & Photographer  
 Ms. Ann Bolton, Brick Project Leader  
 Mr. Chris Broome, Esq., Legal Advisor  
 Mr. Ric Garwood, Maintenance Team Leader  
 Ms. Patricia Lautner, Community Outreach  
 Mrs. Bev Merrilees, Volunteer Coordinator  
 Mr. Ciro Morales, Social Media Guru  
 Ms. Barbara Moser, Museums of Brevard Advisor  
 Mr. Ray Valley, Webmaster

### 45TH SPACE DELTA REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Jamie Draper, SLD 45 Command Liaison  
 Mr. Mike Blaylock, CCSFS CE Liaison  
 Mr. Tom Penders, CCSFS Advisor

# Please Thank Our 2026 Sponsors With Your Support



## Sailor's Beacon



## Fresnel Lens Crystal



Easy Peasy  
Science

## Brass



## Wick



PROPELLER CLUB PORT CANAVERAL  
CHARTERED 1999



Cal Myer



The Ostarly's



## Friends

Aggressive Pest Management  
Satellite Family Dentistry

Canaveral Pilots Association\*  
Liz and Scott Cooper Foundation

AOTC\*