

***** **PRESS RELEASE** *****

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Oyster Filtering Demo at Juneteenth

Celebrated nationwide on the third Saturday of June, Juneteenth marks the day that slaves were freed in Galveston, Texas and symbolizes the emancipation of slaves throughout the United States. Last month, the eight annual St. Mary's County Juneteenth Celebration was held in Freedom Park located in downtown Lexington Park adjacent to the Navy Base. Juneteenth provides us with a chance to reflect on this important aspect of American History and to celebrate the rich diversity and heritage in St. Mary's County. Freedom Park is home to the African American Monument, a pyramid of stone and bronze constructed and unveiled in 2000 by the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions, and recognizing the contributions of our elders and ancestors to the development of our county.

The day began on an upbeat note when SMRWA members Merideth Taylor and Johnnie Brown took first and second place for their age group in the Juneteenth 5K walk/run. Live music and countless rows of local business owners, food vendors, and non-profit organizations filled Freedom Park to overflowing. The younger children enjoyed balloon animals, moon bounce, pony rides, and a magic show by SuperMagicMan2, Reginald Rice. The steady flow of children running from one side of the park to the other was interrupted each time when their young eyes fell upon our aquarium of oysters. The oysters were doing what they do best—filtering and cleaning our waters. At 11:30 the aquarium water looked greenish and was so muddy. But by 1:00 PM the water was crystal clear.



Tricia Samford & Allison Rugila at Freedom Park with the oyster demonstration tank and Marylanders Grow Oysters Cage.

“It was unbelievable to see the Juneteenth turnout,” said Allison Rugila, a student intern for the St. Mary's River Watershed Association, “Local folks showed genuine interest in hearing how oysters restore health to our rivers and how we can, individually, decrease our impact on the environment. It was truly a joy to part of the event.”

For more information or if you want to become a oyster restoration volunteer, email info@stmarysriver.org or visit <http://SMRWA.org>.
