



## HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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## STUDENT COUNCIL ASSISTS ANIMAL OUTREACH

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# Weak loonie a threat to strong summer

## Tourism officials fear exchange rate, economy will keep Canadians home

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Traveling to the U.S. is no bargain for Canadians right now, with a Canadian dollar worth only about 70 cents to the U.S. dollar — a trend that is expected to continue. “We’re looking at Canadians losing 30 cents on every dollar,” Cape May County Tourism Director Diane Wieland said. “We are going up to Canada next week to a show, and we’re working with a lot

of our businesses who are willing to offer some incentives to help offset some of the exchange.” She said the county Tourism Office was working with the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) for hotels/motels, campgrounds and retail to offer incentives to help generate interest to get Canadians back to Cape May County. Wieland said she has been watching the currency exchange rate since before New Year’s Day. When the Canadian dollar, known as the loonie, had a 15-cent deficit

to the U.S. dollar last year, she said she started to pay attention to the disparity in the currencies. Wieland said she did not anticipate the exchange rate disparity to change soon since cheap world oil prices make Canadian-produced oil less competitive. “There are a lot of layoffs in that industry and there was money in that industry, so naturally we’re going to see fewer people taking vacations if they don’t have jobs,” she said. She said a Canadian news story

anticipated 1,000 layoffs. Wieland said the Canadian interest rate was lowered, which also devalued the loonie. The loonie has been hovering at about 70 cents to the U.S. dollar for several weeks, Wieland said. “We’re working to offset this, a 10 (percent) or 15 percent discount could put people where they need to be,” she said. “When you’re only getting 70 cents on every dollar, it’s painful.” Wieland spoke with the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape

May last week about the issue. She said the Greater Wildwood Chamber of Commerce has stepped up to gather interested business owners who are willing to offer discounted rates or an incentive such as a free sixth day after a five-day stay. Businesses in Myrtle Beach, S.C., are offering discounts to their winter Canadian visitors, Wieland said. The Charlotte Observer reported Feb. 1 that the Myrtle

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John Cooke/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Kathy Louderback, of Gaiss’ Market, serves her chorizo chili to Jessica and Jonathon Podlaski, of Swoyersville, Pa., during the annual Chili and Chowder Cook-Off at the Grand Hotel in Cape May. Louderback took second place in the chili contest.

# Bitter cold outside, hot and spicy inside

## Hundreds attend annual chili, chowder cook-off in Cape May

By JOHN COOKE  
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — On one of the coldest Valentine’s Days in recent memory, more than 500 people filled the Penthouse Ballroom of the Grand Hotel for the annual Chili and Chowder Cook-Off. A dozen participants prepared 15 different varieties of chili and chowder, all available for tasting by the attendees who paid a \$5 admission charge. The benefit event, organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May, is in its sixth year and supports food banks in the Cape May area. “The event surpassed previous years’ attendance and we had an overwhelming turnout,” said event

‘The event surpassed previous years’ attendance and we had an overwhelming turnout.’  
—Doreen Talley, Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May

organizer Doreen Talley, of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May. “We doubled last year’s attendance.” With each paid admission, attendees or tasters become judges and had a chance to sample all of the offerings

by the participants. Each taster is then asked to vote for their favorite chili or chowder by dropping a ticket into the participant’s numbered bag. Votes are tallied at the end of the event. Ryan Ondrejka, of Kennett Square, Pa., said he liked the chili offered by the Genesis Healthcare Network’s Chris Rue. “I enjoyed the event overall and found the Genesis Healthcare chili to be the best flavored of all I sampled,” Ryan said. Grand Hotel executive chef Jon Davies prepared 12 gallons of his fresh shucked clam chowder and topped each portion with

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# Prestidge to leave TRACEN for Washington assignment

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Coast Guard Training Center Cape May commanding officer Capt. Todd Prestidge will be transferring to a new position in June. A change-of-command ceremony is scheduled for June 17, according to CWO John Edwards, TRACEN public affairs officer. Prestidge’s replacement will be Capt. Owen Gibbons, who served as executive officer at TRACEN two years ago, Edwards said.

Gibbons served as commanding officer of the 225-foot Juniper Class buoy tender from March 2008 until June 2011. According to a Coast Guard website, under his leadership, Willow serviced hundreds of floating aids to navigation from Rhode Island to Maine, conducted patrols to regulate the economically significant fisheries of New England, helped to sustain waterborne commerce through domestic icebreaking operations on the Hudson River, and conducted migrant interdiction during a deployment to



JACK FICHTER/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Coast Guard Training Center Cape May commanding officer Capt. Todd Prestidge is scheduled for transfer. the Florida Straits. Gibbons departed Willow to assume his position as executive officer of TRACEN. Gibbons was confirmed in the rank of captain in December 2014 after returning to the Coast Guard Academy, Edwards said. Prestidge will be working with Adm. William Kelly at Personnel Service Command in Washington, D.C. Edwards said local

residents may remember Kelly as Capt. Bill Kelly, commanding officer of TRACEN three years ago. The mission of PSC is to support mission execution by recruiting, accessing, assigning and developing careers, maintaining well-being, compensating, separating and retiring all Coast Guard military personnel. Three major commands report to PSC: Coast Guard Pay and Personnel Center; Coast Guard Community Services Command, which includes Morale, Well-Being and Recreation and Coast Guard Exchange System; and Coast Guard Recruiting Command. Before coming to TRACEN, from 2008-10, Prestidge served as chief of the Enlisted Assignments Branch at the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center. He was chief of the Office of Military Personnel at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. In that role, he was responsible for all policies regarding accession, pay, compensation, assignment,

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# City board OKs waterway-access plan

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city’s Planning Board approved a Municipal Public Access Plan, which lays out Cape May’s vision for providing access to tidal waters and shorelines within the city. The MPAP next goes to City Council for approval and submission to the state Department of Environmental Protection. If the DEP approves the plan, it would become a part of the city’s master plan in the conservation element. Planning Board engineer Craig Hurlless presented the plan to the board at a Feb. 9 meeting. Mayor Edward Mahaney said the need for such a plan was driven more by northern New Jersey,

where tidal waterways are occupied by commercial and industrial buildings that limit public access to waterways. The MPAP makes the city be compliant with state regulations and maintains priority status for state and federal grant programs, said the mayor. The introduction to the plan notes the “public rights of access to and use of the tidal shorelines and waters, including the ocean, bays, and tidal rivers, in New Jersey are founded in the Public Trust Doctrine.” The city must report back to the state in five years as well as whenever a public project involves any public access to waterways. In addition to inventorying public access locations, the

MPAP presents plans to enhance and preserve access based on community needs and state standards, said Hurlless. “It is a voluntary process,” he said. The plan notes public access in Cape May consists of a variety of access points and facilities including beach walkways, bathroom facilities, guarded beaches, kayak and small boat launches, nature trails, unimproved natural access points and public parks. “Cape May protects and ensures public access through ordinances, beach fees, beach management planning, community clean-ups, yearly inspection and maintenance programs, access easements,

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