

# Marsh Musings

by Dr. Lenore Tedesco

Greetings, friends and supporters of the Wetlands Institute. I hope you are enjoying the inaugural color edition of *Views from the Tower*. We wanted to bring news and information from the Wetlands Institute to you in a bold and dynamic fashion and believe this is a good start.

My first summer in Stone Harbor has been eventful! I am still learning a lot and enjoying the faster pace and busier environment. The Institute is abuzz with summer camps, education programs, and lots of visitors experiencing some new exhibits and programs. In fact, the number of visitors enjoying the institute is up almost 50% for the first six months of the year compared to last year. The new horseshoe crab exhibit is a hit and represents a great example of how we are linking our conservation programs to public education. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed Dr. Ellen Prager to the Institute, where she spoke to a full house about some of the ocean's oddest creatures – and why they matter to us. Family Nights continue to be a popular attraction and offer live animal programs on Thursday evenings. We are wrapping up the summer research intern program and the interns presented the results of their research at the annual Coastal Conservation Research Program Symposium on July 28<sup>th</sup>. This was followed by a great thank you and retirement party for Dr. Roger Wood! See the article in this edition.

The biggest news of the summer, however, was the new dates of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Wings 'n Water Festival. This year, we held the festival in mid-July with a goal of renewing the festival, reaching a new demographic, and energizing the programs. We are very excited with the outcome. Some of the venues were not as well attended as we had hoped. I learned there is a post-July 4<sup>th</sup> lull on the island so perhaps the timing wasn't ideal. The increased number, content, and engagement level of the educational programs was right on target and a critical component of our mission that I believe really shined. The Miss Avalon Sunset Cruise provided an amazing evening with beautiful weather, interesting bird sightings, and great new friends. The biggest hit was the Benefit Auction Party held on Saturday evening. We had a record crowd, filled with new faces and returning long-time friends and supporters. We saw young people, folks in their prime and lots of wisdom under the tent. The food, catered by the Washington Inn, was fantastic and the vibe under the air conditioned tent energized, excited and in a party mood. The new and exciting auction items went fast with furious bidding and happily the auction sales broke records for the Institute. These programs and components were at the core of our mission and key to our fundraising success. It was a transition year and we are assessing and gathering information, opinions and suggestions. If you have ideas for how we can improve the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual WnW Festival, please send them my way. Look forward to a report of our assessment as we start planning for next summer's festival.

The Institute is busy with exciting programs, events, and exhibits. The transitions continue and we are making NO SMALL PLANS. We are only missing you. Come on by and see what all the excitement is about.



*At Wings 'n Water, Lenore Tedesco presents Wil Hershberger with the 3<sup>rd</sup> place ribbon for wildlife photography. Wil also won a 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the Coastal and Scenic category.*