

[From Winter 2007]

Assateague Lighthouse Recognition Day

By Myrna Cherrix

On October 7, 2007

Standing on the steps of the 140 year old lighthouse, Kim Halpin, Deputy Refuge Manager, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, welcomed guests to Assateague Lighthouse Recognition Day. The U S Coast Guard Color Guard from Chincoteague Station presented our Nation's Colors while Frank Theisen sang our National Anthem and the Coast Guard Anthem; then he was joined by the crowd singing "God Bless America." Distinguished guests included Lt. Jennifer Adams, US Coast Guard, Sector Field Office, Eastern Shore and Ellen Richardson and Terry Howard, Chincoteague Town Council.

The beautiful weather encouraged members of the audience, at the conclusion of the ceremonies to line up and climb the 198 steps to the top of the lighthouse to enjoy the view. The line continued until closing at 2:30 p.m.

Two history presentations, "Assateague Lighthouses and Village" at the Herbert H. Bateman Visitor Center were well attended followed by exhibits of memorabilia and pictures in the Bateman Center Classroom. Refreshments included 3 beautiful cakes provided by the USCG, cut by descendants of Keeper Reynolds, (1872) and Keeper Quillin, (1881 - 1923).

Many members of the Chincoteague Community celebrated their ancestors and shared history. Two and three generations of some families were present to enjoy the festivities. A group picture of descendants of former keepers captured this multigenerational event.

At the conclusion of the day, winners of the elementary school Assateague Lighthouse Poster Contest were announced and awarded their prizes. Division I (grades K-2) Winners -1st Hannah Birch, 2nd Gigi Pisaniello, and 3rd Joseph Mullane: Division II (grades 3-5) Winners- 1st Freda Hill, 2nd Sam Stanfield, and 3rd Raahkema Cropper.

The Chincoteague Natural History Association sponsored the day and is working toward future restoration of the lighthouse. A historical calendar was introduced at this event featuring pictures of life on Assateague and the lighthouse.

Halpin in her introduction said, "For almost a century and a half this lighthouse has shone over the Islands of Chincoteague and Assateague. It has stood tall and strong through both good and adverse weather and has become synonymous with these islands. It is now our responsibility to ensure this lighthouse is protected for the American People." CNHA members agree and see this as their goal for the future.