

BRIDGE-TUNNEL HOSTS ITS OWN 50TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Story and Photo by Ron West

How do you find a venue large enough to handle a few hundred folks who have come to celebrate your 50th birthday? Why not do it in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay? That's exactly what the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel commissioners decided to do Tuesday, and to top that, they invited anyone and everyone who happened to be in the "neighborhood."

Topping the invite list was Gov. Terry McAuliffe, who "just happened" to be driving by. The governor was joined by a posse of state senators and delegates and dozens of commissioners, former commissioners, employees, and former employees.

While most birthdays begin with a more traditional song, this celebration got underway with former employees Michael Flanagan and David Mitchell leading the group in a rendition of the National Anthem.

McAuliffe praised those who had

the vision over 50 years ago to try the unthinkable of building a crossing over 17 miles of open water at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The feat took five years to plan and obtain the necessary funding and another four to build. Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors marvel at the islands that seem to have risen from the ocean along with seemingly endless rows of pilings that support the roadway that rests just 20 feet above the surface of the water.

Virginia Transportation Secretary Aubrey Layne Jr. joined McAuliffe and pointed out that over 100,000,000 vehicles had passed over the "floating" roadway since it was opened in 1964. He added that 25 percent of Virginia Beach visitors use the bridge. "The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel is a good example of how the state and private individuals can come together for a project," Layne said. "This was built without a penny of state funding." Layne noted the need for new tunnels

and a deepening of the existing channels to handle deeper draft vessels that will want to use the port of Hampton Roads once the Panama Canal expansion has been completed.

Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam spoke of being raised on the Eastern Shore and coming from a family of watermen and what the bridge meant to the Shore. Prior to 1964 when the bridge was opened, the trip from Northampton County to Norfolk meant a 90-min-

ute ride on one of seven car ferries on open water.

The bridge has aged gracefully but like many who reach middle age, a bit of plastic surgery has been needed. The tunnels have had a facelift and the piles have on occasion needed a "knee job." The parallel span of bridges and trestles, added a few years ago, has enabled traffic to move more safely and efficiently, but traffic continues to increase every year.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

NORTHAMPTON SHERIFF'S OFFICE TAKING BACK UNWANTED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ON APRIL 26, 2014 AT 5211 THE HORNES EASTVILLE, VA

Eastville - On April 26, 2014 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Northampton Sheriff's Office and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will give the public another opportunity to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous, expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs. Bring your medications for disposal to Northampton Sheriff's Office at 5211 The Hornes. The service is free and anonymous, no questions asked.

Last October, Americans turned in 377,080 pounds - 188.5 tons - of prescription drugs at over 5,300 sites operated by the DEA and nearly 4,000 state and local law enforcement partners. In its three previous Take Back events, DEA and its partners took in almost a million pounds - nearly 500 tons - of pills.

This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue. Medicines that languish in home cabinets are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the U.S. are alarmingly high, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to these drugs. Studies show that a majority of abused prescriptions are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet. In addition, Americans are now advised that their usual methods for disposing of unused medicines - flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash - both pose potential safety and health hazards.

Four days after the first event, Congress passed the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010, which amends the Controlled Substances Act to allow an "ultimate user" of controlled substance medications to dispose of them by delivering them to entities authorized by the Attorney General to accept them. The Act also allows the Attorney General to authorize long term care facilities to dispose of their residents' controlled substances in certain instances. DEA is drafting regulations to implement the Act, a process that can take as long as 24 months. Until new regulations are in place, local law enforcement agencies like Northampton Sheriff's Office and the DEA will continue to hold prescription drug take-back events every few months.



Pictured is the first vehicle to cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. It was a 1948 Willys Jeep owned by Welford Lucy of Norfolk, an engineer who worked on the CBBT project and used the Jeep for that work. The Jeep is currently owned by Jeff Walker of Nassawadox.