PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2022

Despite the rough start to the year, our progress in saving The Sullivans and developing forward-looking programs to ensure our ships will be around to tell their important stories is moving forward full steam ahead.

On the evening of April 13th, 2022, our World War II veteran destroyer, USS The Sullivans developed a near-catastrophic leak. Through the monumental efforts of key partners and staff, the ship has been righted. But we’re not out of the woods yet, and the long road to a fuller, longer-lasting recovery still lies ahead.

This inaugural issue of our ships-specific newsletter and the editions that follow, will cover where we’ve been, where we are now, and our future plans to keep these treasures around for a long time.

USS THE SULLIVANS

USS The Sullivans shortly after the flooding event that began late in the evening of April 13th, 2022. Severe deterioration of her hull over the 80 years since her launch made her steel plating dangerously thin and brittle.

THE RECOVERY

Saving a warship of the advanced age and condition of The Sullivans is dangerous, complex, and largely unprecedented. Experts from a variety of disciplines were brought in to assist in the recovery. The potential hazards to personnel and the ship were seemingly innumerable.

Key members of the recovery team included the Coast Guard, T&T Marine Salvage, Bidco Marine Group, Erie County Sheriff’s Office and deputies, the City of Buffalo, Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Homeland Security, and of course our dedicated staff, and so many more.
In order to make careful, thoroughly informed decisions about how to preserve our ships for the long term, we need expert insights. That starts with inviting the most experienced and trusted marine surveyors in the country to examine precisely their present conditions. From their hull plating, interior tanks, and frames to their superstructures and masts, we want as clear a picture as possible. We’re happy to report, that process has begun. When the intensive surveys are completed, we’ll be ready for next steps.

After the completion of the survey, the Buffalo Naval Park will have a number of options to consider. Among those presented are temporary mobile cofferdams to complete repairs where the ships are now, a large enveloping and permanent cofferdam to surround all three ships, and taking the ships one or more at a time to a drydock to have work done while the ships are completely out of the water.

All of these options have their plusses and minuses, and each will be weighed carefully. The primary consideration will be which of the methods will produce the best long-term result for the ships. Cost will be a very important factor as any of the choices will involve considerable financial resources. Lastly, time is a critical factor since their respective age and structural conditions require addressing soon, and we want the ships to be available to the people of Buffalo, our country, and the world as soon as can be practically managed.

Want to volunteer? We’ve got lots of opportunities to fit your interests! Give us a call at 716–847–1773 or email brendan@buffalonavalpark.org
JOINING US

VOLUNTEER

The Buffalo Naval Park has lots of opportunities for volunteers. Do you love sharing your passion for history? Join our docents! Do you like working with your hands? Join us to in maintaining our fleet. Do you have a love of gardening? We’d love to have you work with our garden and grounds crew. Do you love social events? Consider becoming one of our events volunteers. Whatever your interest, we’d love to have you join us!

When the USS Little Rock was active, she had a crew of 1,100 sailors to maintain her. The Sullivans had 300 and the Croaker had 75. Today, we have a few very busy staff members working hard to care for these ships. Without our volunteers it’d be a losing battle. Join us in preserving this priceless legacy and their stories so that future generations will know them.

Some areas of skill and experience that we’d particularly like to have join us are metal workers, welders, electricians, plumbers and carpenters. We’ve got lots of ongoing projects that would benefit from those areas of expertise as well as those with more general abilities - all are welcome!

VOLUNTEERS AT WORK

The hard-working volunteers from the M&T Bank Veteran’s Resource Group (VRG) who generously gave time out of their busy schedules to help us restore parts of The Sullivans with a fresh coat of paint.
ALL WORK AND NO PLAY?

NO WAY!

MOVIE NIGHT

Question: What could be more fun than watching family-friendly and classic movies on the flight deck of a Navy cruiser moored in our own Buffalo Harbor? Answer: Nothing. It’s not possible to get any better than that. With a 20 foot wide, 10 foot high movie screen, digital projector and sound system, you’ll enjoy films like you never have before. Hot buttered popcorn, candy and refreshments will all be available for your enjoyment. Stay tuned for dates and movie titles – coming soon!

ARMY/NAVY FOOTBALL

What better location to watch your favorite military team battle it out on the gridiron than the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park? Join us this fall for epic fun, food and the finest football rivalry in our Nation’s history!

Our ships are available for private events as well. We regularly host weddings, retirements, family and veteran celebrations among others. If you’re interested in learning more, or you’re looking for a unique venue for your gathering, give us a call at 716-847-1773.

When it comes to fun at the Naval Park, we’re just getting started. We’re working with local partners to bring in social events and entertainment to celebrate life in our city, our great history, and our magnificent veterans. Movies, sports, music, dancing - gatherings of all sorts, we hope we see you here.
THANK YOU!

This year has presented us with major challenges to say the least. Without the emotional, financial and moral support of the amazing people of Buffalo, of New York State, of our beautiful country, and the world, we wouldn’t be able to forge ahead in our efforts to Save The Sullivans and preserve all three of our World War II combat veteran warships. Their stories need to be told. Without the incredible support we have and continue to receive, our efforts would fall short of the necessary mark. Thank you!

EYES ON THE PRIZE

There are a good many challenges yet to face, but we’re optimistic about the future. Stay tuned and we’ll share with you our progress and add more features to this newsletter – much more to come.

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