

# FROM THE VALLEY TO THE BAY

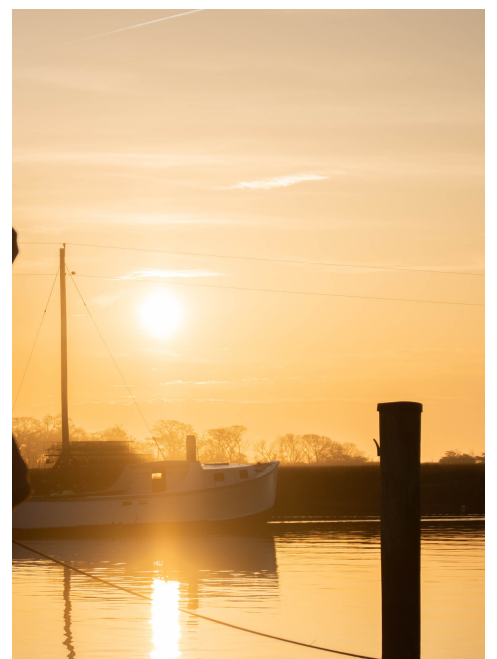
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

## AGRICULTURE & OUR WATERSHED

As part of JMU's commitment to experiential learning, students in the Honors 300 elective "Chesapeake Connections" are given the opportunity to investigate the largest estuary in the United States, the Chesapeake Bay. After spending the semester discussing agriculture, best management practices, and restoration plans, Professor Eric Fitzgerald invites his students to head out to the Bay to visit his colleagues on Smith Island to get an up close-and-personal look at the effects of sea-level rise. Students travel down the Delmarva Peninsula where they board a ferry out to the islands to become immersed in the Watermen's culture.



STUDENTS EXPLORING THE MARSH



WATCHING THE SUNRISE





## OUR LATEST ISLAND TRIP

**MARCH 11TH - 13TH, 2022**

During the first weekend of Spring Break 2022, a group of Chesapeake Connections students headed out to Tylerton, one of the isolated towns of Smith Island, to learn more about the islanders and participate in community service. While on the island, students attended a painting class by Dennis Clary, a self-taught, permanent resident artist on Tylerton, and learned how to make a Smith Island Cake with Mary Ada Marshall. Smith Island residents shared with students about their culture, history, and plans for the future.



The service portion of this trip focused on the dismantling and removal of one of the many old, collapsed sheds the watermen keep their crabbing supplies in, commonly referred to as a "shanty." Because of the island's isolated nature, there is no dumpster to put the materials in or a landfill to dispose of construction waste. Instead, students separated the shanty into organic material that could be taken to the island's burn pile, reusable materials, and trash that will eventually be taken to the mainland by boat.

Students enjoyed a home cooked meal by Mary Ada, who aims to make all visitors of Tylerton feel at home. The meal included crab cakes, corn pudding, and a delicious dessert of Mary Ada's award-winning Smith Island cake, the state dessert of Maryland. Students explored Tylerton's few streets to talk to as many locals as they could, eager to hear their stories and get a better understanding of what life on the island with a full-time residential population of fourteen is like.

The designated island weekend's weather forecast was gloomy, but a little rain couldn't stop these honors students! Even with high winds, low temperatures, and an unexpected snow flurry or two, the weekend trip continued as planned. The students worked for the entirety of Saturday afternoon, enduring the cold to complete their mission. Given the weather, the Tylerton residents were shocked and delighted the project was finished as scheduled.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Professor Fitzgerald's students aren't done yet! This semester, there are 2 other tentative dates to bring students back to the island to continue their research and relationships with the local population.

