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February 5, 2015

John S. Johnson
Treasurer
National Coast Guard Museum Association
239 Bank Street
New London, CT 06320

More than a century ago, southeastern Connecticut's business community helped finance the establishment of Connecticut College, following Wesleyan University's decision to close its doors to women. An energized community raised \$135,000 in 10 days (adjusted for inflation, it translates into \$3.5 million today) for construction of the college on a New London hilltop, later described as "the finest college site in the world." The college opened its doors in 1911.

The Connecticut College example serves as a model for today, as plans are well underway to create another larger-than-life institution in New London: the National Coast Guard Museum. Once again, the region's business community can help make it happen.

The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut's board of directors has enthusiastically embraced the museum project and hopes the business community, organizations and individuals, will as well. The plan is for about half of the \$100 million needed to be secured from state and federal governments, leaving about \$50 million to be raised privately. Our state Congressional delegation is working hard to secure the federal component.

The museum would be built at the north end of the city's Waterfront Park, across the railroad tracks from Union Station. It will be a 54,000-square foot, four-story, modern glass building sitting on the edge of historic New London Harbor. It will be home to interactive exhibits, event space and lecture rooms. The Coast Guard's Barque Eagle will be docked at nearby City Pier.

The Coast Guard is the only one of the military services without its own national museum. The selection of New London is a natural one, considering the city's proud connections to the service. This year, the Coast Guard celebrates its 225th anniversary and it is the 100th anniversary of the Coast Guard Academy at its present location on Mohegan Avenue. Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has designated this summer as "Connecticut's Coast Guard Summer 2015." Among many events coming are street festivals, maritime gatherings, fireworks and a 5K road race.

Adm. Robert J. Papp Jr., retired commandant of the Coast Guard, has told of visiting dozens of revitalized waterfronts in the United States and overseas and seeing how they attract businesses and prosperity. "Each time," he said, "I've asked myself, 'Why not New London?'"

The admiral is spot on. The museum will draw hundreds of thousands of visitors to New London's downtown, brought by car, train, bus and ferry. I can see vacant downtown storefronts filled with restaurants and shops. Business throughout the city — and indeed throughout the region — will benefit.

There are thousands of items in Coast Guard storage representing how every day, the men and women of the Coast Guard put their lives on the line, pushing through heavy seas for rescues, participating in risky evacuation efforts, pursuing drug smugglers, and playing a role in national defense. The museum will tell those stories and honor the heroism of those who abide by the Coast Guard motto, "*Semper Paratus*" — to always be ready.

The National Coast Guard Museum Association has launched an aggressive national fund-raising campaign, but help is needed. The eastern Connecticut business community is widely recognized as being civic-minded, organized and caring, and in the past has risen to every challenge. I am confident that it will respond this time as well, considering the importance of the mission.

From a tourism standpoint, the National Coast Guard Museum will add another component to an already big picture. The Chamber believes that donating to the museum project will do more than benefit existing businesses. Being a part of the museum's financial foundation is the right thing to do. The museum will put New London on the national stage.

So why not New London? Why not now? Opportunity is out there, just as it was 104 years ago on a New London hilltop.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Sheridan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tony Sheridan
President/CEO

Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut