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New Book Explores the World of Star Island's Summer Staff known as "Pelicans"

It's an intimate portrayal of the young people working on the Isles of Shoals

Portsmouth, NH - A newly released book depicting life as a seasonal worker on Star Island is a photographic journey into life as a "Pelican." As a visitor to Star Island, author Jennifer Moore has long been fascinated by the staff who work behind the scenes to make Star Island a serene and memorable experience. Moore and photojournalist Anna Solo collaborated on the project. The book is called "Pelicans: Seasonal Workers of Star Island," and offers an intimate look into this unique island way of life.

Moore, a blogger and library clerk known locally for sustainable events like the Portsmouth Public Library's Clothing Swap and Project Upcycle, often encountered confusion when describing the project; "People would give me a quizzical look and eventually ask some version of, 'There are pelicans on Star Island?' At that point I explain that I'm not talking about birds and that "Pelicans" is the nickname for the seasonal workers on Star. My hope is that this book will make readers more aware and curious about Star Island and the Pelican community."

Together, Moore and Solo shadowed the Pelicans over the summer of 2018, as they worked in the historic grand hotel, The Oceanic, and on the grounds of the small and rugged island. "Pelicans" offers a condensed history of the Isles of Shoals with specific focus given to Star Island. The photography is organized into three sections; On Duty, Off Duty, and End of Season. Matt Ralph at Plainspoke provided graphic design, while artwork and maps were drawn by illustrator Elizabeth DeJure Wood.

Says Solo, "Observing and capturing the way Pels live, work, and unwind in this unique and beautiful pocket off the coast of New Hampshire was one of the most engaging and fulfilling projects I've ever had the privilege of working on. Everyone was so open and willing to share their stories, and I'm grateful that I was able to help tell them. The commute wasn't half bad, either!"

A Book Release Party for "Pelicans: Seasonal Workers of Star Island" will be held on Tuesday, Jul. 2 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Brick & Barn Real Estate Group in the West End. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. A portion of the proceeds will go to Star Island Corporation. All are welcome.

One of the defining characteristics of Pelican life is the strong bonds formed by its members, which carry beyond the island and the summer season. “The world of the Pelicans,” says Moore, “begins on the Seacoast and spreads like a network all over the country. It can lead to lifelong friendships and even marriages, and the roots of these deep connections are captured throughout the book.”

Leadership positions at Star Island Corporation are often filled by former Pelicans, says Joe Watts, Chief Executive Officer of the nonprofit Star Island Corporation, the organization that owns and manages the island. Watts goes on to say, “My years as a Pelican were some of the most rewarding times of my life. I learned the value of hard work, and formed friendships that are strong and true to this day. I learned a lot about myself, and about the value of being in a caring community. The Pelican experience is life-shaping in the right ways, and this book offers more than a glimpse into this truly special experience.”

Peter Squires, Director of Development for Star Island, began attending conferences with his family in 1987. He became a “Pel” at the age of 21, and quickly came to understand the reason for the close bonds he had witnessed between the workers: “You do EVERYTHING together! Live, work, eat, rest, play.” As a result, says Squires, “you learn different sides of people and really see their most authentic self. This is something that people often experience on Star Island even when they just visit for a week. Separated from the routines of everyday life, you're free to just be you.” Squires met his wife Anne, a fellow Pelican, several summers later and they now spend summers together on the island with their young son. “Now that I work for Star Island year-round as part of the senior staff team, I get to watch the current Pelicans experience what I did years ago. It is a beautiful thing to watch.”

Anna Solo graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology with a degree in photojournalism. Originally from New York City, she currently lives in Portsmouth, NH, working on stories about the people and places of New England. Jennifer Moore was born and raised in New Hampshire and grew up sailing off the coast of New England. In addition to working at the local public library, Jennifer maintains a blog called Recovergirl, where she celebrates sustainable style.

Says Moore, “I carried the idea of this book around for years. It’s such a great feeling to see it finally become a reality.”

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