

The 2018 All Star I Conference, July 1-8

Report of the Co-Chairs

The 2018 edition of All Star I was well received by 320 conferees and guests. The conference ran smoothly, with support from numerous volunteers who helped organize more than 150 activities during the seven days, as well as excellent weather that kept morale high and allowed us to stick to our schedule with minimal disruption. Our speakers, Sarah Somers and Wayne Turner, were very popular and drew large audiences that actually increased during the week. One conference evaluation even lamented that senior teens should have been permitted to attend the lectures, surely the first time that such a request has been put forward.

We benefited from lots of advance planning and frequent communication among ourselves and with key conferee volunteers. Many of the important volunteer jobs were agreed during the previous fall or even earlier. We relied heavily upon the experience of Tom and Debbie Walton in organizing the outstanding children's program (see separate report). We were in touch frequently with island staff in the two months prior to the conference and closely followed their timetable and templates for scheduling individual events. The period between March 10, the application deadline, and the start of the conference on July 1 was busy, especially in organizing timely communications with conferees via several blast emails and fine-tuning our schedule.

The logistics of planning so many events in a seven-day conference could easily have become overwhelming, and we kept control by holding regular Skype meetings and communicating by email almost daily. We divided responsibilities in a way that reflected our skills, with Jenny handling volunteers, Louise recruiting our speakers and writing the Porch News, and David overseeing scheduling, including on-island adjustments when necessary. We made group decisions about program choices such as the lineup of evening activities and the addition and subtraction of certain events during the day. We had a lot of fun, and we are grateful for having been chosen as conference chairs.

Innovations introduced to the conference this year included spice baskets in the dining room, the family collages, plein air painting, and the All Star Bazaar, among others. Jenny and Louise contributed a carefully rehearsed musical number to the fire-and-water orientation. Some of these additions were our own ideas, and others were due to conferee suggestions. It will be up to future chairs to choose which ones to continue, and whether to revive old favorites such as 15 x 20 that we did not have room for. On the whole, we found that some change to the conference program was welcomed.

The main issue facing our conference appears to be the maximum number of attendees. Over three decades All Star I has grown from a limit of 240 conferees to 260, then 280, and now more than 300. We had been concerned about the possibility of a long waiting list, but we opened the gates after island management made clear that it would accommodate as many people as possible; we were told that dining room tables could be set on the porch if necessary, although we did not quite reach that point. Evaluations

reflected concerns about mealtime overcrowding and the limited sleeping space available for 300+ people. The conference size has implications for the children's program, the assignment of volunteer jobs, and several other areas, and some of these require thoughtful discussion. On the other hand, we seem to have largely avoided administering a contentious admission policy that created dissension in the 1990s and 2000s, and we have been able to enjoy the company of larger numbers of friends each summer. Our opinion is that the conference ran well even with its largest-ever attendance.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Easter Nelson
Louise Williams
David Yermack