

Report to All Star One Governing Council – September 2021
“Star Island Council of Conferences”
from Louise Williams, SIC Board Liaison to CoC

Greetings, again, All Star One Friends:

As a reminder, as stated in its Charter, the mission of the Council of Conferences is:

- To share ideas and best practices among the various conferences that meet on Star Island
- To study issues and make recommendations to the full Star Island Board, at its request
- To have members that are receptive and open to ideas, have perspective and vision, are familiar with the Star Island, can give the necessary time, and think in terms of Star Island citizenship.

As of September 2021, the Council of Conferences is administered by a 7-member Board of Directors:

Sarah Phipps Gordon (Arts), President
Bob Clay (Faith Development), Vice President
Mary Pietrusko (Young Adults), Secretary
Ann Etter (All Star I), Board Member
Fiona Monllor (All Star II), Board Member
Ben Soule (Pelican Reunion, All Star I), Board Member
Louise Williams, SIC Liaison

In general, the CoC holds two meetings annually. In the spring (before the COVID-19 pandemic), the CoC has convened prior to the annual meeting of the SIC. A fall meeting takes place each October on the Saturday that follows Indigenous Peoples Day. Each conference is invited to send representative(s) – Conferences with more than 100 people are represented by up to two delegates, and conferences with fewer than 100 people are represented by one delegate.

On October 17, 2020, the CoC convened a virtual meeting in which conference representatives shared experiences from the 2020 SIC season, when the Island was formally closed, but conferences continued to engage in programming. Beth Corsa and Ann Etter represented All Star One. A summary of “success stories” shared during that meeting is attached to this report.

The April 2021 CoC meeting was cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis.

Since summer of 2020, the CoC has maintained an active Facebook group, open to all interested shoalers and oriented toward sharing experiences and best practices among conferences. Also in the past year, the CoC contributed to a “Journey to the Beloved Community” handbook for conference leaders (see <https://starisland.org/beloved-community-project/>).

This year's fall CoC meeting will take place virtually on October 16, 2021 from around 9 am to 1 pm. In addition to a staff update on the Summer 2021 conference season and Beloved Community initiative, conference representatives will be invited to speak to the following questions:

- Provide feedback and/or adaptation strategies regarding changes that happened on Star this year
- How does your conference plan to maintain and/or restore off-season engagement with either conferees who attended or did not register in 2021?

Any Star Island conferee is welcome to attend the meeting (details will be posted at the Council of Conferences Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/starislandcoc>) and participate.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Williams

2021 CoC Report - Attachment A

Success stories and ideas from 2020 conference season (from October 17, 2020 virtual meeting):

- Having two Zoom lines/accounts (or a Discord server), with one serving as a 24-hour “virtual porch” for anyone to drop in and hang out at any time
- Staying in touch during the off-season with monthly Zoom social hours
- Utilizing Event Brite as a master location for all links to daily activities and announcements (emailed daily)
- Opening chapel services and activities to all shoalers as well as the general public; this attracted people who have never been to Star Island, as well as those who have not been able to attend in many years
- Offering a daily newsletter with photos and engaging material, such as talking about past conferences or favorite island spots – appealing to those who are reluctant to use Zoom
- Sharing talks and recording them so they would continue to be available, such as those by Ann Beattie, Tracy Blackman, and Kemp Harris
- Writing personal daily emails (by different conferees)
- Providing ideas for and encouraging conferees to take part in outdoor conference activities wherever they may live, such as coffee outdoors or polar bear swimming
- Emailing a daily virtual chalkboard to conferees
- Encouraging conferees to eat like they were on Star Island (Arts created a public Pinterest Board with links to original and similar recipes), including suggesting daily menus
- Administering a virtual auction to benefit SIC
- Signing up in advance for an in-home craft kit, akin to what would take place on-Island
- Providing music during virtual chapel ingress and egress
- Hosting a virtual memorial service for conferees who have passed over the year
- Creating a round-table discussion
- Designating a “frappy hour” for conferees to share
- Availing ourselves (gratefully) of the sunset cam and chapel cam
- Providing on-line workshops (e.g. writing prompts)
- Physically gathering to take the *Thomas Lighthouse* on an Isles of Shoals tour or to play Frisbee golf
- Stretching the conference week well beyond a 7-day period, thanks to virtual connections
- Re-creating late-night music gatherings/open mics, with a mix of live and recorded performances

- Running daily challenges to conferees and rewarding those who have completed them by adding daily beads for a mailed-out necklace (for example)
- Finding ways to navigate the challenges inherent in a group representing a great diversity of tech-abilities, such as emailing Zoom tutorials, calling conferees individually to assist them, adapting programming for both collaborative and individual practice
- Collaborative Zoom activities conferences offered were: Bingo, Drawful (on-line version of Pictionary), painting with Bob Ross, “The Moth”-style story hour, poetry reading, prom, chapel service, expert story hour, cooking together, social hour, yoga, ghost stories, tai chi

Conference suggestions for an unsure 2021:

- Consider shortening the length of conferences to allow for a thorough sanitizing on changeover day
- Delay opening of the Island, subsequently pushing each conference one to three weeks ahead (not likely)
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- Keep one’s list of conference leaders current and updated for more effective communication
- Investigate more effective ways of reaching a broader audience with Board decisions and Island updates
- Disseminate information in a more streamlined way, from Star Island to Chairs and Registrars to conferees
- Increase Star Island’s social media presence in order to facilitate increased communication (because of an overabundance of email from other sources)
- Look into ways to communicate effectively with an older/less tech-savvy crowd
- Expand the reach of the Council of Conferences and SIC mailing lists (let conferees know how to sign up)
- Assign each Council of Conferences board member up to three conferences’ delegates to liaise with regarding meetings, agenda, updates, etc.
- Survey the sholaer community to ascertain communication preference (email vs. social media vs. regular mail, etc.)
- Recognize the logistical issues, especially acceptance turn-around time, sold-out conferences face with delayed registration and a waiting list
- Consider offering paid virtual programming; conversely, continue to offer free virtual programming and rely on donations (mixed feelings and results with other local Unitarian conference centers); perhaps a mix of the two?
- Keep channel of communication open regarding when and how the distribution of the Blue Book and registration will take place