The 2022 show program is dedicated to German Georgieff. German Georgieff is Chief Naturalist at Ocean County's Wells Mills Park and the Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy & Gunning Show coordinator.



Photo Credit: Pat Johnson

German Georgieff

by Pat Johnson

After Michael T. Mangum and Lillian Hoey-Gomez left the position of Decoy Show coordinator, "In 2004, I slid into the position," German said. "One of my favorite parts of coordinating the show is interviewing the Hurley Conklin Award winners. We have a show committee who selects the winners and they are people who lived their lives in what's considered a traditional but disappearing way — decoy carvers, wooden boat builders, white cedar sawmill owners, trappers, even farmers. I go out and interview them and it allows me to learn more about our natural resources and area history."

"There are a series of deadlines that must be met;" Georgieff explained. "Come the actual weekend, when it all comes together, it's a pleasure seeing and talking with our long-time vendors.

"After it's over, we have a week to breathe and then we have meetings to discuss how things went and what we might like to change."

Georgieff has been with the county for 31 years and is approaching retirement. "But I'm dragging my feet," he joked. He started fulltime as a naturalist at Cattus Island in 1991 and in 1998 he transferred to Wells Mills County Park, which he oversees. "One of the reasons I think about retirement [is] I want to get back into the things I love doing — hunting, fishing, crabbing, decoy carving. I joke with my staff that someday I'm going to be a vendor at the show!"

Director of Ocean County Parks and Recreation, Michael T. Mangum said, "German believes in all the traditional aspects of waterfowling, so that's what he likes to promote. He has done a great job and he likes getting the kids involved as much as possible to hopefully carry on the traditions. German is not afraid to do any job and is a very hard worker. When he has time he likes decoy carving and duck hunting. He particularly likes doing the Hurley Conklin winner interviews."

If you want to know the measure of a man, ask his coworkers and friends: Michelle Pullen, Naturalist at Jakes Branch County Park explained, "The show is just one piece of who [German] is; a naturalist, supervisor, colleague, mentor, and personal friend. He has a deep connection to the simple founding values of the show and a strong desire to preserve the idea of this small-town yet highly meaningful event. In the role of show coordinator, his dedication and concern

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for the show's success is evident in the countless cups of coffee consumed, missed anniversary dinners, and sleepless nights worried about approaching hurricanes and wayward tents! Long-time show staff and vendors alike remember him by his always-cheery pre-dawn greetings, calm and logical demeanor under pressure, and his genuine fondness and extensive knowledge of the Barnegat Bay decoy and gunning traditions."

Assistant Director of Ocean County Parks and Recreation, Mary Jane Bavais said, "German has a passion for life on the Barnegat Bay and keeping traditions alive through his work as the coordinator of the Decoy Show. His knowledge is extensive from history, Pinelands ecology, Barnegat Bay habitat and more. He displays this passion and knowledge through his unwavering dedication to the Parks Department. It is an honor to work with German, who over the many years has taught me so much. I can count on him not only to do the Decoy Show, but to provide recreational and educational program opportunities to enrich the lives of the people of Ocean County."

Amanda Truhan, Principal Park Naturalist at Wells Mills County Park agreed whole-heartedly with Pullen. "I have worked with German for 18 years and he is so much more than just the Coordinator of the Decoy Show," she said. "He's an awesome naturalist, historian, tree climber, chain saw wielder, lost hiker finder, trail maintainer, boss, mentor and, most importantly, friend. German has a deep passion for the Decoy Show and the core traditions that the show is trying to preserve.

"Growing up in Paterson, he came to appreciate the bay and waterfowling during college and wants to do all he can to continue to educate others on the value of these traditions. He is very proud of the quality of the show and all that it represents. The show staff relies on him to be a voice of reason and our calm under pressure. Be it on the stage giving out awards, under the decoy tent organizing contests, out front at 5 a.m. when the gates open up for vendors or during the 11 months out of the year that we are working on the show, German is our rock. The show would not be the same without him."