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Essex Foundation Helps River Museum Rock the Dock *Awards \$2500 Grant for Free Block Party Event*

Last year, the Connecticut River Museum celebrated its 50th anniversary with a Block Party that welcomed over 500 people. This year, with the help of a \$2500 grant from The Essex Foundation, the non-profit maritime institution grew that impact, inviting even more people to engage with our region's rich heritage. The 2025 Block Party, held on Saturday, September 6, featured historic rope-making demonstrations, hands-on historical activities with the Essex Historical Society, and living history re-enactments with the Dirty Blue Shirts. Families enjoyed a



nature-themed craft activity, a special puppet show, dockside tours of the historic sailing vessel Onrust, and guided tours of the newly restored Samuel Lay House. The day also included live local music, food trucks, and free admission to all Museum exhibits. The Essex Foundation grant helped cover program costs, including craft materials, interpreter and staff support, marketing and outreach to new audiences, and on-site accessibility support to ensure all community members felt welcomed.

“The Block Party creates lasting memories while inspiring pride in the Connecticut River’s maritime, environmental, and cultural legacy,” stated Executive Director Elizabeth Kaeser, “We are grateful for The Essex Foundation’s support of the event and the Museum’s role as a dynamic, inclusive place for learning, connection, and community gathering—a place that develops the next generation of river stewards.”

“The Connecticut River Museum is one of the cornerstones of our local history and its impact on regional and national interests,” commented The Essex Foundation President Strickland Hyde, “The Block Party is a great way to celebrate where we’ve been and where we are going as a community—truly an event that the Foundation was happy to help make happen.”

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Pictured Above (from left to right): Pamela Dumas Serfes and Elizabeth Kaeser of the CT River Museum accept a \$2500 grant from The Essex Foundation board members Cheryl Harger, Strickland Hyde III, and Gary Riggio.