Carrying the Light Forward

How Travis Gilbert helps guide Old Baldy into its next chapter

When Old Baldy celebrated its two hundredth anniversary in 2017, Travis Gilbert knew he couldn't miss the festivities. Travis didn't know that the evening would mark the beginning of a long and meaningful journey with the Old Baldy Foundation. He served as Old Baldy's Educator from 2018-2021, later joined the Board of Directors, and ultimately returned to the staff as the Director of Philanthropy in 2024. No matter the role, Travis' mission has remained the same: defining Old Baldy's third century.

"Old Baldy's first century is defined by service to countless mariners" says Travis. "The second century of Old Baldy's story is dark, until the lighthouse was reborn at the hands of preservationists. Now, our community must forge a vision for Old Baldy's third century that honors the past while securing the lighthouse's role in the future."



How does this translate into daily operations? On any given day, you might find Travis setting up for events, running the front desk, or catching up with supporters–no two days are the same. While his tasks vary widely, the purpose behind them remains constant. Beneath the surface, Travis sees his work as equal parts connector, facilitator, and steadying force for the organization.

Once referred to as "the straw that stirs the drink," Travis is the person who keeps everything moving while the rest of the Old Baldy Foundation team is focused on their specialized role.

Whether coordinating between departments, supporting staff behind the scenes, or stepping into unexpected gaps, Travis ensures that all the moving pieces of the Foundation work together smoothly, efficiently, and with the mission at the forefront. His ability to anticipate needs, bring people together, and maintain momentum is central to the seamless experience the community sees on the outside.



As a connector, Travis fosters and deepens relationships between the Old Baldy Foundation and the broader community, from individuals seeking to advance the mission to organizations whose work aligns with Old Baldy's purpose. As a facilitator, he helps translate ideas into action, ensuring that opportunities, initiatives, and partnerships move forward with clarity and intention.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Old Baldy Foundation has two major projects on its horizon. First, a complete archaeological investigation of land recently donated to the Foundation by Robin and Mark Prak will be performed, uncovering new insights into Bald Head Island's early history. This investigation will be completed by American Veteran Archaeological Recovery, a non-profit organization that provides real-world scientific research opportunities for veterans to once again serve a meaningful purpose.



Secondly, a comprehensive master plan will be drafted for Old Baldy's historic campus and artifact collection. This master plan will be completed by Design Dimension, Inc., from Zebulon, NC–a firm with more than 57 years of experience interpreting coastal North Carolina through unparalleled exhibits. Community input will be central to this process, so be on the lookout for workshops for an opportunity to make your voice heard

In partnership with the Design Dimension team, key artifacts will be conserved under the direction of Beth Navarez Historical Consulting, ensuring the preservation of the items that help tell Old Baldy's story for generations to come.

For Travis, stewarding Old Baldy's future is more than a job, it's a calling. "It's a distinct honor to work in such a unique place with extraordinary people," Travis said. With Travis's work and the passionate team alongside him, the Old Baldy Foundation is charting a thoughtful and ambitious path forward. Together, the Old Baldy Foundation is poised to protect, interpret, and celebrate this historic landmark for generations to come.





