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Press Release - March 15, 2011

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Spring Arrives for the Schooner Sultana as New Crew Arrives and “Uprigging” Begins

Chestertown, Maryland: There is no surer sign of spring in Chestertown than the beginning of “uprigging” on the schooner SULTANA. Last week SULTANA’s new 2011 crew assembled in Chestertown and, under the direction of third-year Captain Tanya Banks-Christensen, began the approximately three week process of rigging the schooner for her upcoming sailing season. Each fall, SULTANA’s entire sailing rig – including more than two miles of line, six sails, and 150+ wooden blocks – are removed from the schooner for regular maintenance. With that maintenance now complete and SULTANA’s sailing season scheduled to begin on April 1, Captain Banks-Christensen and her crew will be working against the clock through the end of March to get SULTANA back into sailing shape.

Uprigging SULTANA is a complex process, with much of the work taking place more than 50 feet up in the air. The schooner has more than 60 individual sail and rig controls which serve to raise and adjust her rig of six sails and 12 spars. For SULTANA’s rig to work properly, each sail and rig control must be precisely aligned in what amounts to a 100-foot long by 70-foot high moving puzzle of line, blocks, and spars. Even the smallest of errors in the process can lead to chaffing and binding which can damage the rig or make the schooner difficult to sail.

“The rigging of SULTANA is a fascinating process to watch,” said Sultana Projects President Drew McMullen. “There are only a handful of 18th century replica sailing ships

in the United States and the art of rigging and maintaining them is not one that people generally have the chance to see. Over the past week we have had people from as far away as Canada come to Chestertown to get a look at the work.”

SULTANA’s uprigging will continue at the Cannon Street Pier on the Chestertown waterfront through at least the end of the week of March 25. Weather permitting, the crew will generally work between 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. The public is welcome to come and watch the process. Photos of the uprigging work will be posted on Sultana Projects Facebook site.

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About Sultana Projects

Each year more than 15,000 students of all ages take part in a unique educational experience with Sultana Projects. Whether sailing on the decks of the 1768 schooner SULTANA, paddling on the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail, or restoring wetlands on tidal tributaries, students who participate in Sultana Projects’ programs gain a greater appreciation of the history and environment of the national treasure that is the Chesapeake Bay. Sultana Projects’ programs are accredited by the Maryland State Department of Education and the organization was the recipient of the 2009 American Sail Training Association “Sea Education Program of the Year” award.

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