



Photo by A. Aubrey Bodine/© Jennifer B. Bodine
Steve and Lem Ward outside their shop on Sackertown Road in an undated photograph. The Crisfield brothers are well known for decoy carving in a distinctive style, and the Salisbury museum in their name along with related events generate over \$6 million into the regional economy.

Ward Museum pumps \$6M into local economy

For the Crisfield-Somerset County Times

SALISBURY — Decoys carved by Crisfield's famed "counterfeiters in wood" Lem and Steve Ward today routinely sell for thousands of dollars.

According to Salisbury University's Business, Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON), however, the legacy the brothers left on their native Eastern Shore is worth much more. A recent BEACON study placed the annual economic impact of SU's Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art at some \$6.1 million on the local region.

"The Ward Museum strives to enhance the cultural and educational fabric of this area through its events, programs and exhibits," said Lora Bottinelli, executive director. "The economic impact of these activities is equally important and significant to the strength of our community."

According to the BEACON study, some \$4 million of the museum's annual imprint on the community comes from direct impacts — money spent by visitors drawn to the area.

This includes hotel stays, as well as gas and food purchases, especially during three of the museum's biggest annual events: the Ward World Championship Carving Competition, held each spring in Ocean City; the Chesapeake Wildfowl Expo, held at the museum each fall; and the spring Art in Nature Photo Festival, also

held at the museum.

Another \$2.6 million is a result of the museum's operational expenditures in the region. This includes salaries, services and supplies purchased by the museum, etc.

"By the time the various direct expenditures of the museum and of its visitors finish churning in our local economy, we are talking about a \$6 million economic engine," said Memo Diriker, BEACON director. "Since a significant part of this economic impact is based on visitors spending money, it is almost as if we are 'exporting' the Ward Museum experience."

The study also shows how much the community puts back into the facility and its activities. In fiscal 2012, volunteers contributed an estimated 19,000 hours to the museum. That translates to approximately \$433,000 in donated services, the study says.

Accredited by the American Association of Museums, the Ward Museum was established at SU by the Ward Foundation in 1975. Its current facility, on Schumaker Pond, opened in 1992. The museum strives to promote wildfowl art while preserving the Ward Brothers' legacy. *USA Today* has named it among "10 Places to Admire American Folk Art."

Theresa Colvin, executive director of the Maryland State Arts Council, said "At the state level, the combined economic impact of nonprofit arts organizations is \$1 billion annually."