Summer 2015

elizabethriver.org

Newsletter of the Elizabeth River Project

making restoration a reality

The festival that's inspiring a song

RIVERFest Goes River-Wide

- Free sailing
- Oyster oasis
- New river song
- New brew
- It's your time to celebrate river cleanup!

Saturday, Sept. 12, 10 am -5 pm Free All Day, Nauticus Waterfront

kye Zentz, the trending young Norfolk singer, showed up ukulele in hand at Elizabeth River Project a few months ago. She is a colorful artist, her long hair streaked in unexpected hues. At first, just a small RIVERFest committee gathered around her in the conference room.

Then, hesitating over some of her newly written words, Zentz sang her Riversong, as she has now named it. By the time she closed, the room was packed, staff drifting in from all over the office, joining the

> committee in a standing ovation. "She has this gorgeous voice, as rich



Free rides with Sail Nauticus are part of the new, expanded RIVERFest.

and varied as the river itself," recalls Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Executive Director.

"It's a heartfelt anthem."

Skye Zentz on her new song to debut at RIVERFest 2015.

"It's a heartfelt anthem and a call to action," Skye says of her "ode" to the Elizabeth. Skye is now the featured artist for a new closing party for Elizabeth River Project's RIVERFest 2015, moving this year to the Nauticus waterfront on Saturday, Sept. 12, 10 am - 5 pm, to reach as wide an audience as possible. -Continued on pg. 5



Skye Zentz will debut her new song inspired by The Elizabeth River Project.

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Join the Thousands Making River Restoration Possible



Photo courtesy Bill Tir The Virginian-Pilot

From the Executive Director

curly haired, fresh faced guru of river restoration said something I've never forgotten in the more than 20 years since he spoke to our first community team, organized in 1994 to plan what seemed impossible: the cleanup of the Elizabeth.

Tom Scheuler, who then had been at it for a while on DC's Anacostia River (he's still there, heading up Chesapeake Stormwater Network), told our Watershed Action Team of that time, "cleaning up an urban river takes thousands of people and organizations working patiently on hundreds of projects, over several decades."

You might wonder why we devote so much of this newsletter to a great big party, RIVERFest 2015. First, this is our chance to gather you and thousands of others for the one big day of the year when you and your kids can explore first-hand the hundreds of river cleanup projects underway with our many partners. We promise it

won't be "teachy" but fun and interactive; in fact that's the requirement for any festival activity.

Second, you deserve to celebrate. Thank you for making possible incredible progress on our urban river through your generous support of Elizabeth River Project. Come on down Saturday, Sept. 12, 10 am – 5 pm at our new location, the Nauticus waterfront. Eat an oyster in the new Oyster Oasis to celebrate all the new oyster reefs you've made possible in the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth. Take a free spin on the river thanks to Sail Nauticus and celebrate the C this urban river earned last year on its newest scorecard (up from "dead!"), thanks to you.

Mayr-

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson

This Year's RIVERFest Focus: Erasing the Eastern Branch F's

ilma Gerald lives a block from a stretch of river we've come to call "the Lost Branch." But lately she's become so inspired by Elizabeth River Project's new focus on the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth that she wove her hopes into a quilt, bright with fish, turtles and waving river grasses. She offered it to us for the Living River Art Show coming up at RIVERFest 2015, and said to keep the proceeds.

"Wonderful things are happening here," Ms. Gerald said. Join the buzz. The Eastern Branch is our focus area for RIVERFest 2015, with free boat tours from Nauticus to the branch, a new film and displays on Eastern branch history, health and promise.

Mudflats is the newsletter of the Elizabeth River Project, a membership-based non-profit working to restore the Elizabeth River through government, business and citizen partnerships. "Mudflats" refers to that slippery, biologically active zone where land and water meet, symbolizing our search for common ground among diverse interests.

www.elizabethriver.org



Students help JPixx pros shoot the new Eastern Branch film for RIVERFest.



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"That is a major find"

Scientists Find Holy Grail at Money Point Clean Up

here's a holy grail in cleaning up contaminated river bottom. In the case of our Money Point site in Chesapeake, it's small, white - and we found it this summer.

"That is a major find," said Dan Dauer, a professor at Old Dominion University, when we showed him photos of the white soft-shelled clam, found this July at Money Point.

Dauer studies the health of the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay. Until Elizabeth River Project and partners removed 36 million pounds of contamination and restored clean habitat over the last few years, Money Point had been one of the most contaminated areas of the bay. Dauer and other scientists hoped to see the area return to its role as foundation of the food chain. But they couldn't know for sure until they found species like the clam.

"Worms and stuff are one thing, but when you see clams – that's what you're looking for," said Dave Koubsky, Elizabeth River Project's construction manager at Money Point. Out of hundreds of samples of river mud Dave's collected in the Elizabeth River over the years at many sites, he had never found clams until this summer at Money Point.

Thanks to the supporters like you, cancer rates in the mummichog indicator fish have dropped to background levels at Money Point. Old Dominion University also has found the "bamboo worm" at Money Point, another indicator of healthy habitat. Elizabeth River Project and the Living River Restoration Trust are completing design for the final phase of cleaning up Money Point, in partnership with Virginia Port Authority and Hess Corp.



These soft-shell clams mean our clean up has succeeded in bringing back healthy life at Money Point, thanks to you!

Meet the Scientists & River Critters at RIVFRFest





Meet river scientists, and many of the live critters they study, at the Living River Science Dome at RIVERFest on Sept. 12! It's free but register ahead

at ElizabethRIVERFest.org for the chance to win an oyster dinner at A.W. Shucks.



Slurp for a Cause! Win a Pearl Necklace at RIVERFest

- Taste an oyster for a \$1 minimum donation to oyster reef restoration
- Learn how oysters make pearls
- Donate for a chance to win a pearl necklace
- Play the "Guess the Age of the Oyster" game
- Discover the amazing things oysters do for our river

7 New Oyster Reefs: Lafayette Comes Alive

"The shore birds... show up right away"

ave Koubsky, Elizabeth River Project's field manager for construction, likes to check on his oyster reefs first thing in the morning, on the way to the office. Even on reefs still under construction, an egret or heron is almost always there to greet him, already fishing the returning life.

"There's little nooks and cranies to the oyster reefs, and the first thing you see is the mummichogs (a small bottom fish), starting to forage there – they like to stay out of harm's way," Dave says. "Then the shore

birds see this and they show up right away." Dave has overseen construction of four new oyster reefs this year in the Lafayette, offshore of the Virginia Zoo, Lafayette/Winona and Larchmont neighborhoods.

Counting three we built earlier, we've now added 7 oyster reefs totaling 5.2 acres to the Lafayette! Partner Chesapeake Bay Foundation seeds the reefs with young oysters - more than 13 million so far. Learn more at the Oyster Oasis, new at RIVERFest 2015.



It's low tide at a new oyster reef on the Lafayette. The reefs provide habitat for much more than oysters.

"She's Absolutely Beautiful"

Learning Barge "Splashes" After Donated Spruce Up Thanks for Unprecedented Support, Maritime Heroes!



obin Dunbar watched her 210-ton vessel hang in the air. "I was tearing up, and everybody else was too," she recalled.

The moving moment: Elizabeth River Project's Dominion Learning Barge was about to "splash" gently back into the river July 31 after a two-month haul with multiple partners donating more maritime services than anyone involved says they've ever heard of.

Inspired by the Children

Derek Breckenridge said Sherwin Williams donated the hull's new paint, a \$2,700 value, because his company is super-inspired by the barge, "America's Greenest Vessel," educating 6,000 students a year.

Colonna's Shipyard starred in this season's maintenance, donating services of the world's largest travel lift, plus carpentry and rigging, valued at more than \$40,000. Steve Walker, vice president of operations, said the Colonna family has lived and worked on the river's Eastern Branch for 140 years. "No family has more reason to work to protect the river,"

said Walker, indicating that helping maintain the barge is "a small part" of the family's commitment to river health. Dunbar says it's the latest chapter in a growing book of the barge's maritime maintenance heroes.

"Everybody keeps saving they're amazed that the barge is in such good shape," said Dunbar, Deputy Director -Education, Elizabeth River Project. "It's because of their

continual care," she said, referring to the maritime partners including BAE Norfolk Ship Repair, which regularly adopts the barge for winter care. Robbins Maritime once again donated tug services to move the barge.

With a live wetland on board and sun and wind power, our Learning Barge won a

dozen national awards for its design by the University of Virginia. First splashed in 2009, the barge has booked to capacity for student field trips every season. Counting public visitors as well, 57,000 guests have now been aboard.

Barge Lowers, Excitement Rises

Excitement built as Colonna's lowered the barge slowly toward the river. Shipyard workers walked on each side, guiding the 120-foot vessel to the water's edge. To Robin, it seemed they treated her with the honor of pall bearers, but for a joyous occasion, not a sad one.

"She's absolutely beautiful," Robin recalls saying as the barge touched the water (12:59 p.m.).

Come Aboard at RIVERFest

The Learning Barge is now extra gorgeous for you to visit for free at Elizabeth RIVERFest, Saturday Sept. 12 on the Nauticus waterfront. Then she welcomes students for the school year including all Norfolk fourth graders –

> thanks to generous recent grants from three Rotary Clubs (Norfolk, Portsmouth and Rotary District 7600), Luck Companies Foundation, PNC Bank, PRA Group and

Of the haul-out heroes, Dunbar said she found most remarkable: "They all did it without asking for anything in return, except for a T-shirt."

NOAA!

For more about the Learning Barge, contact Robin at rdunbar@elizabethriver.org, 757-392-7132.



Thanks, Rotary Clubs of Norfolk, Portsmouth & District 7600 for new grants for river education!



Our Learning Barge heads back in the water thanks to Colonna's. The shipyard and other maritime partners say they're inspired to take care of the barge by the children she reaches, such as Norfolk fourth graders (below).





THANK YOU to In-Kind Donors to the Learning Barge and More!

Congratulations to this

vear's 169 schools!

See the list at

elizabethriver.org

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Mega Pollution Reduced Gets Wheelabrator in Hall of Fame

heelabrator Portsmouth sorts and burns a lot of your trash. This was once a dirty business, taking place along Paradise Creek.

But a \$60 million plus turnaround at the "refuse derived fuel plant" earned Wheelabrator Portsmouth Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame for 2015 at our annual recognition luncheon for River Star business and government facilities, attended by 300 on Jan. 22 at Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel.

"They're exemplary in every way," Pam Boatwright, River Star Businesses Program Manager, says of Wheelabrator.

Advancing to Model or top level recognition this year, among 114 participating facilities,

Congratulations, River Star Businesses!

The Elizabeth River Project launched River Star Businesses in 1997. Since then, River Star business and government facilities have become the finest environmental stewards on the Elizabeth.

- Pollution reduced: 312 million pounds.
- · Wildlife habitat: 1,390 acres.
- Other materials reduced, recycled or reused: More than a billion pounds.

were Norfolk Environmental Stormwater Management and SKW Constructors.

Thanks to you, our supporters, Elizabeth River Project has been able to provide the free technical assistance and public recognition that so far has inspired businesses to reduce pollution voluntarily by 312 million pounds since 1997. Help keep the momentum growing with your donation today.

To find out if River Star Businesses is right for you, contact Pam Boatwright, pboatwright@elizabethriver.org. or visit RiverStarBusinesses.org





Thanks for way less pollution — Wheelabrator Portsmouth won Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame 2015 for mega pollution reductions with Elizabeth River Project. Here's Wheelabrator seen from our Paradise Creek Nature Park during construction of the park's wetlands and footbridge.

Continued from page 1 - Also new this year: A "Living River Art Show" with a prize for the best art depicting Elizabeth River Project's new focus area, the Eastern Branch. A professional video about the Eastern Branch, for which high school students were allowed to help shoot footage.

There's also a new "Oyster Oasis" where you can taste an oyster for a \$1 donation while you learn more about how you're helping bring back the river's best filter. If you join River Star Homes or return for the latest on the free program, you'll have a chance to win a recycled bike donated in honor of your efforts by Hund's ReCyle Factory in Norfolk. Tried and true activities return from when the festival was located in Colonial Place to focus

on the Lafayette: the Learning Barge, made possible by you, our generous donors; the Scoop the Poop relay race and dozens of other children's activities including live critters at the Living River Science Dome. Bring your pooch in a river costume for the dog parade. Your kids can join in as "puppy panelists" to judge the costumes.

You won't want to miss the closing party, 3 pm -5 pm with a new brew compliments of Smartmouth. The brew name's a secret, as are the words of Skye's song, all meant to thank you for your key role in the revival of your home river, the Elizabeth.

Chance to win a gift certificate to A.W. Shucks when you register ahead: ElizabethRIVERFest.org.



Hund's ReCycle Factory in Norfolk is donating a hand-built, recycled bike to a lucky River Star Home at RIVERFest.

Deepest Thanks to Elizabeth River Project Investors Contributions Received November 19, 2014-July 30, 2015

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Societies, who contribute \$1,000 or more annually to support the ongoing work of the organization. To learn more about becoming a River Otter or Mummichog Society member, please contact Susan Smith at (757)399-7487 or ssmith@elizabethriver.org

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River Academy Coming to Paradise Creek Nature Park

Visiting Scholars Expected from as far as Scotland - Plus Kayaks & More

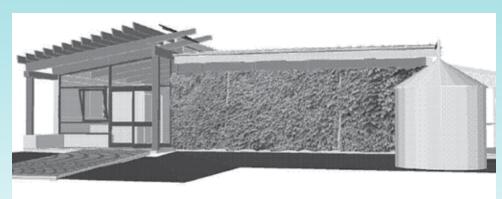
The Fred W. Beazley River Academy is coming your way with visiting scholars including a renowned Scottish sculptor, a living wall, composting toilets, kayak paddles through a new wetland, and much more.

Elizabeth River Project with many generous funders is adding a green education center, a kayak launch, a maritime playground, the Dominion Wetland Learning Lab and more green parking at Paradise Creek Nature Park. We broke ground May 19 for construction at the 40-acre site, the City of Portsmouth's third largest park and our largest field station for education.

National Endowment for the Arts is among our newest park funders with a grant to bring Rob Mullholland to "Paradise" in 2016 for



Volunteer with our new Forestry Stewardship Corps at Paradise Creek Nature Park. Orientation, 3 pm Sept. 26; RSVP, ssumoski@elizabethriver.org.



The Fred W. Beazley River Academy will feature a living wall, rain cisterns & composting toilets. The classroom will host river education and visiting scholars. Artist's rendering, Petrus + Crisman.

his first installation in America of outdoor environmental sculptures. He'll be our first visiting scholar at the River Academy, lead funder, Beazley Foundation. Hampton Roads Community Foundation is funding an enclosed classroom. HRSD is funding education related to the center's composting toilets. Many thanks to the Portsmouth Rotary Club for education supplies!

But don't wait for your river education experience. The park is open throughout construction. Join our new Forestry Stewardship Corps of volunteers or come out for Children's Halloween Day. And it's not too late to help with funding for the new facilities! More at ParadiseCreekNaturePark.org. To donate, call Susan Smith, 399-7487.



Rob Mullholland's sculptures will add to paradise in 2016.

NEW: Pelican Society to Recognize Extraordinary Donors

hank you if you are part of our River
Otter and Mummichog Societies,
started a few years ago to recognize donors
investing in restoration of the Elizabeth
with \$1,000 or more a year. River otters'
return means life is coming back in the river.
Mummichog fishes are recovering from
cancer, heralding a cleaner river.

This fall, you can also join the Pelican Society, honoring the return of the brown pelican, absent from the Elizabeth until the 1980s. Our newest society will recognize those extraordinary supporters who give



The Elizabeth River Project

\$5,000 or more annually to Elizabeth River Project. We'll launch the new society this fall on the annual societies cruise aboard the American Rover.

Learn how you can join one of the societies and receive an invitation to the cruise. Contact our new Development & Communications Director, Susan Smith, at (757)399-7487 or ssmith@elizabethriver.org.

Welcome to Susan, joining us after 14 years as Executive Director of the Greater Hampton Roads March of Dimes. In an earlier career, she wrote for The Virginian-Pilot!



Development & Communications Director Susan Smith