



Thank you for a rousing return to live river lessons

"They do not bite but they might tickle" - students meet critters aboard Learning Barge

Hayley White, educator aboard our Learning Barge, paces next to the long planter box where the barge's live wetlands grow.

"Can anyone tell me what a wetland is?" She asks a cluster of third-graders visiting

her learning station, one of six spread across the 120-foot steel deck barge. It's the first field trip many of the W.H. Taylor Elementary students have ever had, no thanks to COVID.

"Maybe land that's wet?" Ventures a girl

with a long ponytail. Soon Hayley has them holding tiny periwinkle snails, one cupped in a hand of each tiny child.

"Now I have some wetland animals with me today," Hayley explains. "Now they do not bite but they might tickle a little. If you're quiet they might come out of their shells a little bit." The children are as quiet as they are able to be, given it's a beautiful fall morning and they are floating on the Elizabeth River, learning river ecology.

Thank you, generous supporters, for making possible a rousing return to live field investigations aboard our Dominion Energy Learning Barge and along the forested shore of our Paradise Creek Nature Park, a partnership with the City of Portsmouth. By mid-fall, the Learning Barge was booked solid with more than 2,500 expected while students of all ages began arriving for river stewardship lessons at our 40-acre park.

All Norfolk third-graders were expected on the barge. One Taylor teacher said it

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Taylor third-graders meet a spider crab at one of the barge's six learning stations.

New education facilities mark a new day

Portsmouth, Norfolk sites to open 2023, thanks to YOU

Behind one construction fence, an elevator shaft now reaches to the sky. That will be how you reach upper floors of the Elizabeth River Project's Ryan Resilience Lab when it opens in fall 2023 on Knitting Mill Creek in Norfolk, ready to teach all ages how to adapt to rising seas in ways that protect the river and her people.

Twenty minutes away in Portsmouth, the walls and windows are roughed in for a new wing that will double the size of our Fred W. Beazley River Academy at Paradise Creek Nature Park. Opening in summer 2023, the expansion alongside the park's revitalized forest and restored wetlands will expand our education

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Walls, windows and a covered pavilion are up for the new wing of our River Academy in Portsmouth, thanks to you.

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From the Executive Director



“A long, dark shape swam toward the dock... It made the tiniest meowing sounds”

I just walked onto my dock. A great blue heron lifted up, the largest heron in North America; enormous wings spread over the greying river as night fell.

Another day, before dawn, a long, dark shape swam toward the dock, just its nose glistening in the moonlight. It made the tiniest meowing sounds. This was a river otter, the sixth or seventh sighting this year for me when 30 earlier years went by with none.

Who does not love the life of a river? Who does not covet to see a river otter again on these shores, urban though they are – but now recovering as they are, with the reward for three decades of education and restoration now to be seen in surprises emerging from the tides.

Yes, otters, swimming east and west, peering at me, the strange shore lifer. Otters observing the restored wetlands created for more than a mile across from my house, thanks to YOU and many partners.

Otters and seahorses, the stuff of aquariums and zoos. Our trawl survey teams pull up the seahorses and return them to the waters each monitoring

season. You have brought them back to life on the Elizabeth River – you through your support of education and restoration programs enlisting 6,500 River Star Homes, more than 140 River Star Businesses and thousands upon thousands of school children who now care, thanks to you.

Often now, I sit still on the dock and just watch. I meant my new dock to be where I launch kayaks and the like. Instead I would rather simply watch the bald eagles circle and land in the trees, and watch the hooded mergansers, fall's dignified ducks.

I watch and am grateful for our journey together; you humans and I and these creatures who create in us wonder and joy.

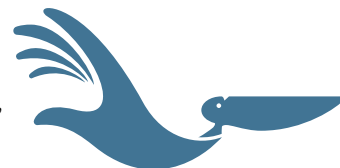
Stay with us. A restored river is worth every investment we can afford together.

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson,
Executive Director

PS Children know the wonder of nature from birth. Your gift today will keep the wonder alive for us all. Thank you.

Mission – To restore the Elizabeth River to the highest practical level of environmental quality through community, business and government partnerships.

JOIN the Elizabeth River Project. Our mission is made possible by generous members like you. Email Jessica Pinsky, jpinsky@elizabethriver.org, for membership questions.



**ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT**

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Welcome to the river's horses, dolphins



Casey Shaw (L), Elizabeth River Project staff, and Marcus Smaltz (R), intern, catch and release lined sea horses during a June trawl survey on the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth.

The lined sea horse is back in the Elizabeth, thanks to YOU, members and partners. Channel 13 was on board in September when our trawl survey captured and released one of 13 of the whimsical creatures that area scientists have encountered so far. In part it's the oyster reefs we've installed to provide habitat, and efforts of many of you who are River Star Homes and River Star Businesses, doing your part to reduce

pollution and restore wildlife habitat. "The increasing number of seahorses could offer a sign of how the tide is turning," reporter Alex Littlehales said. "Seahorse populations on the bay are usually attributed to eelgrass in the middle bay," says Casey Shaw, Director of Marketing. "That's what makes their resurgence on the Elizabeth River so exciting. There's no

eelgrass here... We're a major port. It's incredible to think aircraft carriers are now steaming by oyster reefs with seahorses living on them."

Meanwhile, our learning barge crew was inspired by dolphins swimming by November 9.

"A reminder of the reasons we do what we do," said the barge's Summer Mace.



A pod of dolphins passes by our Dominion Energy Learning Barge, on the Eastern Branch of the river on Nov. 9. Education staff took a quick video, advising the rest of us to "mute if you don't want to hear our gasps!"

New shoreline stopped erosion, brought dolphins

We see it with so many properties along the river. With each storm, sections of wetlands vital to the river's health erode and disappear. Figuring out what to do can be a daunting and confusing process for any waterfront property owner.

Carrie Baker of Portsmouth, one of our River Star Homes, did not want to put in a bulkhead or rip-rap. "I wanted to protect my investment. But I also love birds and wildlife; so I thought it would be best to have a natural marsh ecosystem."

Farther up the Western Branch in Portsmouth, Luana Hugel faced similar challenges as she watched her marsh erode away. Both Carrie and Luana found their way thanks to the streamlined shoreline restoration process developed by Elizabeth River Project's restoration team. **"You will not meet a more dedicated and professional group of people to help you preserve and protect your shoreline,"** Luana says, praising help she and others received with everything from permitting to shared costs, thanks to our grant funding.

Both shorelines incorporated oyster castles, concrete blocks that stack together to provide oyster habitat and protect against erosion. After their



"I studied geology in school, and I understand that bulkheads are not the answer to erosion and rising sea levels," says Carrie Baker who completed a living shoreline with the Elizabeth River Project. The oyster castles are already home to baby oysters.

installation, **"We had zero loss of marsh grasses during the last hurricane. That's a first!"** says Luana. This fall, our restoration team returned to plant the steep bank behind with hundreds of native blooming plants and grasses along with shrubs to feed the birds. Carrie had a new living shoreline with native wetland grasses planted behind her oyster castles. She has since photographed herons, kingfishers, and even dolphins off her shoreline.

For both River Stars, the project was about more than protecting her property.

According to Luana, "ERP has helped us leave a legacy. Those who live on the river have a responsibility to be a good steward of it. Because we partnered with the Elizabeth River Project, we can trust that the health of the river will continue to improve."

As sea levels rise, shorelines will be at greater risk. **Act now so your shoreline won't be in crisis. Email Barbara Gavin, bgavin@elizabethriver.org, to get started on your river-friendly shoreline.**



These two River Star Homes in Portsmouth were among 21 that tapped into the guidance, technical assistance, and funding from our River Star Homes team to create healthier shores this busy restoration season.

Impaired waters report: The need to restore the Elizabeth is still pressing

Despite milestone successes, there are miles still to go and constant new challenges to clean our urban river.

This fall, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality released a report summarizing water quality state-wide. The Mainstem and the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River, including Broad Creek and Indian River, continue to be listed as impaired for dissolved oxygen.

When dissolved oxygen is low, generally relating to excess nutrients, it becomes difficult for fish and other aquatic life to survive.

Thank you for your membership support to continue our work with businesses, homes and schools to reduce pollution and restore the river's natural filters, from wetlands and trees to oysters, even

as rising seas present greater runoff pollution challenges.

Removing all areas of the river from the state's list of impaired waters would be "a big step... a step that we work on every day," says Joe Rieger, our Deputy Director – Restoration.

Please help. Return the enclosed card with your special gift today.

Fly something beautiful - flag refresh

“My niece flew the first one, her small hands clutching the flagpole for my camera one early morning before school,” says Executive Director Marjorie Mayfield Jackson. Amelia’s away at college now, and after flying for 6,500 homes committed to a cleaner river, our River Star Homes flag has been refreshed for a new era of river restoration.

Our River Star Homes pledge to follow 7 simple steps to make the Elizabeth River cleaner. Many go further to add backyard rain barrels, living shorelines, native plants and more - and often we help them do it, with grant funds and more.

Other environmental groups have even adopted our flag-flying approach and much else our program entails, from Pearl Homes in Virginia Beach to

as far away as Canada. “I remember getting my flag at RIVERFest in Colonial Place before I worked for the organization,” says Director of Marketing & Communications Casey Shaw. “Now I am thrilled to be on the other side of things to bring this bright, fresh flag to re-inspire and grow our community of river lovers.”

The flag might look different, but one thing remains the same. Your River Star Home flag indicates a resident who wants the river to be a healthy home – for dolphins, otters, and even seahorses. Fly something beautiful with your newly re-designed River Star Home flag.

Order your new River Star Home flag or join the program at elizabethriver.org/river-star-homes.



Volunteers honored for “ripple of change”

Imagine singlehandedly keeping 500 pounds of trash out of the river. Marie Jensen did. Or clocking 77 volunteer labor-intensive hours bringing the shore to life? Volunteer Austin Connito did - and he can tell you just how heavy an oyster castle or wheelbarrow of sand is! These are some of the countless stories and faces of volunteer work this year to restore our home river.

This is what restoring an urban river looks like: A community of passionate individuals who hope for a cleaner river, but also put their time, sweat, energy, and heart into making it happen. We finally got the most dedicated batch (each with 15 volunteer hours or more this year) to set down the shovels and litter grabbers long enough to honor their achievements over this past year at our First Annual Volunteer Appreciation Party.

Jimmy Entas took top honors as Elizabeth River Project’s 2022 Volunteer of the Year. Jimmy has

logged the most volunteer hours at 85 hours (so far!) this year. He has helped with restoration projects, litter cleanups, and at Paradise Creek Nature Park. “He is a loyal, reliable, and dedicated volunteer!” - Kayla Gradwell, Volunteer Coordinator.

“I love the Elizabeth River. I’m on and around it all the time on my bike, in



Volunteers of the year hold awards, surrounded by staff and board, Nov. 12 at our first volunteer recognition event.

my kayak, and on my feet. I think the wetland restoration and oyster castle projects that ERP does are not only amazingly cool, but also incredibly important to me and everyone else,” says Jimmy. “I am so grateful for what ERP has done. I have seen an improvement of the Lafayette River and to see results so quickly is so rewarding. Cleaning the streets is cleaning the waterways. I thank ERP for their continued battles and victories.”

“The ripple of change these volunteers are making has grown into an unstoppable wave for the Elizabeth River. Because of them, we are able to amplify our efforts and build a stronger, healthier river community,” says Kayla.

2022 Elizabeth River Project Top Volunteer Honorees:

Volunteer of the Year: Jimmy Entas
Restoration Volunteer: Austin Connito
Litter Cleanup Volunteer: Marie Jensen
Spat Catcher Supreme: Julia Tye
Paradise Creek Volunteers: The A-team
Club Volunteers: Elizabeth River Garden Club
River Star Business Volunteers of the Year: Pender and Coward

Special thanks to event sponsor Cox Communications and host Smartmouth Brewing.

Want to get involved as an Elizabeth River Project volunteer? Reach out to Volunteer Coordinator Kayla Gradwell, kgradwell@elizabethriver.org, or sign at elizabethriver.org/volunteer.

Deepest thanks to our donor circles

The Elizabeth River Project is proud to recognize members of our leadership giving circles. Thank you for contributing \$250 or more annually to support our award-winning restoration and education programs. Join us! For more information, contact Susan Smith at 757-399-7487 or 757-407-1406 (c) or ssmith@elizabethriver.org.



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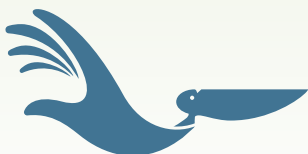
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Mr. Richard Yoder
Wayland W. Yoder
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Douglas Ziegenfuss
Lawrence Zittrain

Bald eagles return

"Took my lunch break and right as I was about to make food spotted this young bald eagle, so I grabbed my camera and sprinted down the berm into the marsh of the river in hopes to get a decent photo."

- Taylor Byrd, @taylorsbirds

Submit your river photos to #DoSomethingBeautiful or email cshaw@elizabethriver.org for a chance to be featured in our bi-weekly e-newsletter.



Special Tribute Gifts

DONATED BY

Bill and Sandra Brown
Paul Busick
Jeffrey & Diane Fine
Pam and Byron Kloeppel
Robert Loomis
Jacqualyne McFarlane
Catherine Robertson
Albert Roper
Kenny Skees

DONATED BY

Blaire Bycoffe
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Albert Roper
Casey Shaw
Susan Smith
Jean and Chuck Townsend
Skyler Weber

IN HONOR OF

Their 25th Wedding Anniversary
McKenzie Arrington
Barbara Fine
Mr. and Mrs. Ned Lilly
David and Julia Dorsey Loomis
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Mary Parker Vaughan
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IN MEMORY OF

Clyde Price
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In Kind Gifts received April 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022

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Students meet marsh periwinkles aboard the barge.



Taylor Elementary third graders aboard our Learning Barge - spider crabs are exciting but a little scary (left). Hydrometers help students measure river salinity (middle and right).

Cont'd from p. 1

was the first field trip she'd accompanied in five years, for one reason or another including the pandemic. She said some students told her they had never been on a bus before the trip to the barge, currently docked at Grandy Village Learning Center as part of our focus on the river's troubled Eastern Branch.

At another station, seven tanks hold labeled critters hoisted from over the barge's side, from juvenile blue crabs to spider crabs, barnacles and an adult oyster toad fish. At another, the youngsters are queried as to how long a plastic bag

remains intact in the environment – 15 days? (Most think so). Correct answer, 20 plus years, they are told.

"That's how long a bag can live?" an incredulous boy responds. They practice picking up trash with tongs from the barge's observation pond. The children also measure river salinity, hauling up river water in buckets and testing it with hydrometers. Observing a chart, they track changes in salinity across the year: Spring rains lessened salinity while increased hurricanes in the summer and fall drove salinity up.

It's time for the bus to load for the return to school. A boy turns back from the line to speak to Summer Mace, managing the field trip as our Assistant Director for Education. "I learned a lot," he says.

"It feels good to be back," says Summer, watching the youngsters load and leave.

Thank you for educating the next generation of Elizabeth River stewards with your generous gift on the enclosed reply card or at elizabethriver.org/donate.



Donors enjoy full moon in “Paradise”

Magic is the word multiple guests have used to describe their evening with us under the full moon in October. The setting: Our Paradise Creek Nature Park. The lure of flute and violin music drifted through the woods while lanterns floated in the trees and twinkling lights led the way to the waterfront.

“Magical is exactly the word I’d use to describe it. The choral singers and musicians and decor along the pathways was like stepping into a fairyland,” said Karen Sallez, who set up her easel to paint in the sunset.

Moon River Supper, our fifth annual event for leadership circle donors, was held Oct. 7 on the banks of the park’s restored wetlands. A signature drink involving herbs from the edible gardens welcomed the 150 guests.

Party-goers enjoyed a catered picnic, beer and wine bars, samplings by Reverend Spirits Distillery and gourmet popsicles. They hovered over the silent auction of original river art by local artists, took golf cart tours of the 40-acre park, paused to admire the talent of two plein air artists and applauded moon

songs from Porte Towne Magic and Show Choir.

Mary Vaughan lead the Elizabeth River Garden Club who provided fall arrangements. “This year’s Moon River Supper was the best ever,” says Mary. “When music filled the air, the moon rose and darkness settled in, it was a magical night for all.”

Experience the magic. Make sure you’re invited to Moon River Supper 2023! Return your Oyster Circle or higher gift on the enclosed card.





ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT

RIVER STAR BUSINESS

Save the Date

2023 RIVER STAR BUSINESS RECOGNITION LUNCHEON

THURSDAY, 01.19.23

Elizabeth River Project's River Star Businesses Annual Recognition Luncheon will be held IN-PERSON this year on Thursday, January 19, 2023 from 11:30 am – 2:00 pm at the Founders Inn. Don't miss this chance to celebrate the finest environmental stewards on the river! Email Pboatwrite@ElizabethRiver.org to be sure that you are on the invite list.

Cont'd from p. 1

New education facilities

capacity along the Elizabeth River's Southern Branch.

It's a new day for engaging our region in restoring our home river – thanks to your extraordinary generosity, supporters of the Next Wave Campaign. Louis and Pru Ryan, lead donors to the campaign, on Nov. 7 were named Outstanding Individual Philanthropists of the year at the annual recognition event of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Hampton Roads Chapter.

"No other philanthropist has made as deep, as long and as catalyzing a difference to our mission as Louis

Ryan and his wife Pru," Marjorie Mayfield Jackson Executive Director, Elizabeth River Project, told the gathering. "Louis took the helm of our fundraising committee back when pretty much nobody else in the philanthropic community had heard of our little non-profit with the big idea, cleaning up one of America's dirtiest rivers."

Fast forward: Most recently, Louis co-chaired the Next Wave campaign, our most successful ever, "expected to make a profound difference to the future of your home river," Jackson said.



Louis Ryan (R) tours the site of the Ryan Resilience Lab early in construction with Tyler Park, Hourigan construction team.

Not yet a Next Wave contributor? Watch for the final phase of the campaign this spring, or contact Susan Smith now, Ssmith@elizabethriver.org, for remaining naming opportunities.

Spend quality time in Paradise

Join the Elizabeth River Project for family fun at Paradise Creek Nature Park, 1141 Victory Blvd. Our 40-acre partnership with the City of Portsmouth is made possible by members like you. Join us today.



No public programs will be held during the month of January due to River Academy construction. We look forward to seeing you again in February!

Volunteer Service Days

Saturdays, February 4 & 11, March 4 & 11 | 9:00am–11:00am

Target age: 16 and above

Volunteers will work with our staff on seasonal tasks such as weeding, planting, cleaning, pruning and light maintenance. Dress for working outdoors, and bring your work gloves and reusable water bottle.

Register online at [ElizabethRiver.org/events](https://elizabethriver.org/events).

Winter Bird Walks

Saturdays, February 18 & March 18 | 8:30am–10:00am

Target age: 16 and above

Cost: \$10 per person for Elizabeth River Project members, \$15 per person for not-yet members

Join Master Birder James Abbott and observe some of the many birds that stop at our park. More than 165 species of Birds have now been identified at Paradise Creek Nature Park! Please bring your binoculars.

Register online at [ElizabethRiver.org/events](https://elizabethriver.org/events).

Bring Your Dog! Pack Walk

Saturday, February 18 | 10:30am–11:30am

Target age: All ages, children accompanied by adults

Bring your dog for a guided pack walk full of sights and smells through the trails of Paradise Creek Nature Park.

Dogs, please make sure your owners keep you on your leash at all times, scoop the poop, and bring water for those on two and four legs!

FREE! Register online at [ElizabethRiver.org/events](https://elizabethriver.org/events).

FREE Workshop - Basics of Pruning

Saturday, February 25 | 10:00am–11:00am

Target age: 16 and above

Did you know that pruning is an excellent gardening practice to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides? Join the Elizabeth River Project's Conservation Landscape Curator Yolima Carr for this free workshop to learn hands-on the best practices for pruning your trees. Dress for working outdoors.

Register online at [ElizabethRiver.org/events](https://elizabethriver.org/events)

St. Patrick's Day - Go Green for Nature

Friday & Saturday, March 17–18 | 10:30am–11:30 am

Target age: All ages, children accompanied by adults

Join Elizabeth River Project educators to make the park a little greener this St. Patrick's Day for a special native tree planting. Native trees support local wildlife, provide valuable shade, create oxygen, and even help reduce flooding by soaking in rainwater.

FREE- Register online at [ElizabethRiver.org/events](https://elizabethriver.org/events)

Spring Kickoff Community Walk

Saturday, March 25 | 9:30am–10:30 am

Target age: All ages, children accompanied by adults

Celebrate the start of spring and get those steps in with a community walk across the South Norfolk Jordan Bridge and back. We will meet at the bottom of the bridge on the Portsmouth side. There is parking available in the lot on the corner of Victory Blvd. and Elm Street.

FREE - Register online at [ElizabethRiver.org/events](https://elizabethriver.org/events)

Paradise Creek Nature Park Field Trips

Date: Now scheduling for Spring starting first week in April

Time: 10:00am – 11:30am

Target Age: Grades 3 - 12

Cost: Sliding Scale \$10 - \$15 per student

(Financial assistance may be available)

Student groups rotate through four outdoor learning stations centered on the park's forest, wetlands and River Academy's green features. Hands-on activities are inquiry-based where students explore and discover best ways to create a resilient community with nature as the teacher. All activities reflect Virginia Standards of Learning.

Contact: Sarah McBride, smcbride@elizabethriver.org to schedule



Learn more: