

# Inside Business

The Hampton Roads Business Journal

## Saluting the Finest Environmental Stewards on the Elizabeth 2025



**ELIZABETH RIVER  
PROJECT**

---

**RIVER STAR BUSINESSES**

## SPONSORS

MEDIA (\$10,000+)

# Inside Business

The Hampton Roads Business Journal

PLANTINUM (\$5,000)

BAE SYSTEMS

GENERAL DYNAMICS  
NASSCO-Norfolk



ROARING BROOK  
FAMILY FOUNDATION

GOLD (\$2,500)



COX



WM

SILVER (\$1,000)

- Bay Environmental
- Elizabeth River Crossings
- Boyd Gaming
- The Port of Virginia
- CITGO Petroleum
- Southern Bank and Trust Company

BRONZE (\$500)

- Pam Boatwright
- Rivers Casino Portsmouth
- Smartmouth Brewing Co.
- Wicker's Crab Pot Seafood

# Business partners doing something beautiful

## You, too, can be a star

**B**ecause the Elizabeth River is one of the mightiest military and industrial ports in the world, restoring this urban river to health depends on leadership from the business, community and government facilities that line its shore.

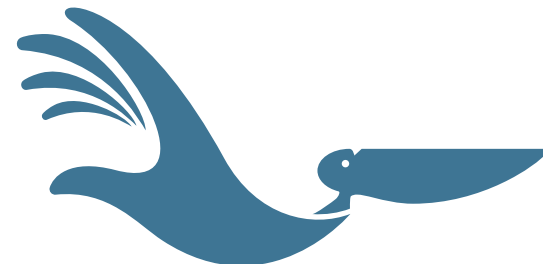
**Thank you to this year's record 167 facilities** who together are making environmental stewardship the business standard on the Elizabeth. The non-profit Elizabeth River Project salutes these business and government facilities and other organizations for reducing pollution voluntarily by 391 million pounds since the program started in 1997. Each year a committee of participant peers and technical experts recognizes new efforts documented for committee review. Often the company achieves additional benefits while reducing pollution or restoring wildlife habitat. An example from this year's documentation: Norfolk State University saved more than a \$1M through energy saving efforts on campus.

**Free for any facility** in the Elizabeth River area, River Star participation is most successful where it can make the most difference. That's usually with sites presenting large opportunities to reduce toxic pollution or restore and conserve wildlife habitat. If this sounds like you, there's a starring role for you in the restoration of your home river.

Among typical projects, our River Star facilities may help bring back the native oyster while addressing erosion with "living shorelines," or add stormwater controls, or perhaps switch to pollution reducing technologies. Others improve energy efficiency, restore native plants and much more. In return, River Stars may not only discover cost savings, but also reduce liability and improve worker safety and morale. And then, as you're seeing here, there's the positive publicity awarded by media such as Inside Business, which each year sponsors this special report as well as a River Star Business Hall of Fame award to the top program participant. New this year: The Norfolk Innovation Corridor is providing joint recognition for excellence in environmental resilience.

*Recognition is just part of the program. Elizabeth River Project also provides free assistance to help you identify and carry out projects, with technical staff and peer mentors at the ready.*

*Find out if your company is right for River Star Businesses. Contact Pam Boatwright, River Stars Businesses Program Manager, Elizabeth River Project: 757-828-5422, pboatwright@elizabethriver.org. Find out more at [www.RiverStarBusinesses.org](http://www.RiverStarBusinesses.org).*



ELIZABETH RIVER  
PROJECT

RIVER STAR BUSINESSES

## The Event ANNUAL RIVER STAR RECOGNITION LUNCHEON

presented by  
*Elizabeth River Project.*

**WHEN:**  
**THURSDAY,**  
**JANUARY 23, 2025**

11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**WHERE:**  
Chesapeake Conference Center

**COST: \$25**  
**TO REGISTER:**  
**757-399-7487**

## WHAT'S INSIDE

**3** Best of the Best -  
Model Level

**4** Well-Rounded -  
Achievement level

**5** Start-up -  
Commitment Level

**6, 7** Sustained  
Distinguished  
Performance

**8** Inside Business  
Hall of Fame

**8** Norfolk Innovation  
Corridor Recognizes  
Resilience

## Congratulations, River Stars!

The Elizabeth River Project launched River Star Businesses for organizational partners in 1997. Since then, River Star Businesses have become the finest environmental stewards on the Elizabeth.

POLLUTION REDUCED:

**391**  
MILLION POUNDS

WILDLIFE HABITAT  
RESTORED, CONSERVED:

**2,583**  
ACRES

OTHER MATERIALS REDUCED, RECYCLED OR  
REUSED: **MORE THAN A BILLION POUNDS**

# ADVANCING TO MODEL LEVEL 2025

*This year's best of the best... These River Star facilities lead the community in environmental stewardship through exceptional results in pollution prevention and wildlife habitat - and mentor others.*



Low-income residents enjoy a beautiful restored waterfront at The Retreat at Harbor Pointe Apartments. Courtesy of Lawson.

## The Retreat at Harbor Pointe

It's the rarest of convergences. Not just a barren, rubble-strewn shore transformed into lush wetland and oyster habitat. Not just carefully selected construction approaches meeting green building certification. But also, the Retreat at Harbor Pointe, rising at the foot of the Campostella Bridge, is an affordable housing project.

Graced with a pool, a riverfront boardwalk and the offer of binoculars and nature activity kits for residents, this beautiful site excels in a new focus area of the River Star Businesses program, to provide access to the benefits of a healthy river for historically marginalized communities.

An elevated boardwalk provides public access to this Norfolk shore along the Eastern Branch. Lawson, the developer, achieved sea level resilience while also capping contamination, an approach that raised the site above the floodplain. Each year, Lawson hosts a shoreline cleanup, most recently collecting 3,700 lbs. of debris. Elizabeth River Project's Learning Barge on Wheels visited to engage residents in eco-learning. The project is Earth-Craft certified and has won multiple awards including "Best Affordable Community" (Coastal Virginia Building Association). Bike racks and proximity to light rail and the Elizabeth River Trail encourage alternative transportation.

## Wicker's Crab Pot Seafood

Say you've only read about crabs in books. You're a kid living near the Elizabeth, but you've never been on the water. Then one morning, you're on the Elizabeth River Project's floating wetland classroom, the Dominion Energy Learning Barge. A fourth-generation waterman has pulled his crab boat alongside and is introducing your field trip to his live catch.

"Transformative," says Summer Mace, Elizabeth River Project's Director of Education. The waterman, Ray Wicker Jr., has become a fixture of student field trips to the barge, playing a starring role in "bringing science to life," as Mace puts it.

Meanwhile at Wicker's Crab Pot Seafood, near Indian River in Chesapeake, Wicker lives what he teaches with a 130-gallon cistern gathering rain water for his tanks, simultaneously reducing runoff; oyster cages capturing oyster spat, and a closed loop management system to reduce cooking oil waste and spillage. The restaurant uses all washable, reusable dinnerware and drinkware and added a water bottle refill station. Also, Wicker last year helped community partners ground-truth locations of derelict vessels for a removal effort.



Fourth-generation waterman Ray Wicker, Jr. enthralls students with his "catch," bringing the science to life aboard Elizabeth River Project's Dominion Energy's Learning Barge. Courtesy of Larry l'Anson.

# Advancing to Achievement Level 2025

Achievement Level River Stars document significant results in both pollution prevention and wildlife habitat.



The Colley Community Center in Norfolk's new EcoDistrict installed a pollinator meadow in collaboration with multiple partners as part of an environmental workshop. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.

## Colley Community Center

This is how Norfolk's new EcoDistrict translates on the street. Coneflowers, butterfly weed, winterberry and more now line Colley Avenue in front of Colley Community Center. Planted by Elizabeth River Project, Norfolk Master Gardeners, the City of Norfolk and volunteers, the 520-sq. ft. native pollinator meadow provided hands-on experience for workshops. Sustainable practices include LED lighting.

## Larchmont United Methodist Church

The Larchmont neighborhood is built out to the max. So when Larchmont United Methodist bought four adjacent lots and demolished the structures, the sprawling new green space is significant - especially since an Eagle Scout added a rain garden last year with native trees and flowers. The church switched 500 bulbs to LED.

## Daphne's Hair Studio

Daphne's defines EcoDistrict hair care. The studio participates with Green Circle Salons to avoid waste. The studio collects hair, color waste, foils for hair color and more to ship to Green Circle for recycling or repurposing of up to 95%. On the grounds, Daphne's converted 328 sq. ft. of turf into a native pollinator garden.



Daphne's Hair Studio participates with Green Circle Salons to reduce waste. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



An Eagle Scout recently constructed a rain garden with native plants in the church's green space. Courtesy of Larchmont United Methodist Church.



This mermaid grows flowers with the river in mind. Courtesy of Kate Thompson.

## Mermaid City Flowers

Dee Hall Goodwin, urban cut-flower farmer, maintains multiple plots where her flowers support pollinators and she recently increased the native plant species. Last year, Goodwin converted another 600 sq. ft. of turf to flowers. She is sharing a collaborative studio with four other woman-owned businesses, conserving resources. She mentors other women and minorities.



SGA incorporated native plants and rain gardens in the Water Street Open Space near downtown Norfolk. Courtesy of SGA.

## Stromberg/Garrigan & Associates

(Also see NIC Resilience Awards)

These landscape architects incorporated native landscaping, innovative stormwater management and advanced soil remediation to design and help implement the Water Street Open Space Project on the downtown Norfolk riverfront near Harbor Park. The City of Norfolk project elevates segments of the Elizabeth River Trail for resilience.

# Entering at Commitment Level 2025

Commitment Level River Stars documented significant results in either pollution prevention or wildlife habitat.



Alycia Archer cannot wait to harvest from the new edible landscape in Norfolk. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



This real estate agency in Norfolk is retrofitting its building with LED lighting and more. Courtesy of Distinctly Real Estate.



This garden in Norfolk has native plant gardens and a large community vegetable garden. Courtesy of Fred Heutte Garden.



This restaurant in Norfolk boasts great biscuits and beautiful native landscaping. Courtesy of Orbis Landscape Architecture.

## Breakthrough Glow Counseling Services

Edible landscapes, urban orchards, and pollinator gardens are among food security and sustainability initiatives spearheaded by this counseling service in the Diggs Town public housing community of Norfolk. In collaboration with Elizabeth River Project and Southside Boys and Girls Club, the efforts promote community well-being, mental health, and ecological restoration.

## Distinctly Real Estate

This EcoDistrict agency is pursuing pollution prevention through sustainable practices including retrofitting its building with energy-efficient LED lighting, low-flow toilets, low-VOC paints, and pesticide-free grounds, promoting water conservation and improved air quality.

## Fred Heutte Garden

This garden surrounding an old ferry terminal in Ghent is enhancing wildlife habitat enhancement through the cultivation of native plants and a large community vegetable garden. About 2,000 lbs. of produce from the garden is donated each year to those in need.

## Handsome Biscuit

A finalist for “Best Biscuit in the South” (Garden & Guns), this Norfolk restaurant has transformed its tiny site to include a native pollinator garden along its frontage. The thoughtfully designed landscape enhances biodiversity and makes a striking impression.



This flower shop in Norfolk's EcoDistrict is saving energy and reducing waste through creative reuse of cardboard for mulch. Courtesy of The Little Meadow.



Visit this newly designated waterfront open space in Norfolk. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



Orbis Landscape Architecture designed and help install a native landscape at Ronald McDonald House in Norfolk for families and butterflies. Courtesy of Orbis Landscape Architects.

## The Little Meadow

Find this “interactive” flower shop (you’re encouraged to make your own bouquets) in the EcoDistrict. Little Meadow saves energy through efficient HVAC and LED lighting. Other stewardship efforts include turf conversion to a pollinator meadow at a plot where the owner grows flowers, avoiding plastic.

## Norfolk Parks and Recreation

Banner day for Norfolk open space: On April 8, 2024, the City of Norfolk officially designated 15.1 acres of the former Lambert’s Point Golf Course as public waterfront open space. Some of the best views of the Elizabeth River are now conserved in perpetuity. The site’s rolling hills meander through native habitats.

## Orbis Landscape Architecture

This landscape architecture firm donated design and helped install an 800-sq. ft. native plant garden at Ronald McDonald House. The pollinator garden provides a peaceful, colorful space for families of patients at Virginia’s only freestanding children’s hospital.

# Sustained Distinguished Performance 2025

Sustained Distinguished Performance is awarded when a River Star completes a significant new initiative with no change in recognition level. The stars reflect the participant's level in the program.

★★★ **BAE Systems Norfolk Ship Repair**, inaugural Hall of Fame winner, launched a new composting program in the cafeteria, diverting 3,750 lbs. of food from the landfill.

★★★ **Buckeye Terminals Chesapeake** now hosts two successful breeding pairs of ospreys after adding more osprey platforms along their waterfront at Money Point.

★ **Celebrate! Trees** and partners planted native trees and cleared invasive Chinese Privet at Plum Point Park in Norfolk.

★★★ **Chesapeake Parks, Recreation & Tourism** opened Blue Heron Landing Park on Indian River complete with a living shoreline, native plantings, boardwalk and kayak launch.

★ **Coastal Virginia Conservancy** pioneered a new conservation tool for wetlands, the nation's first "rolling conservation easement," to adapt to sea level rise.

★ **Cox Communications** achieved "zero waste to landfill" at their headquarters and has reached 79% waste diversion at the Crossways site in Chesapeake.

★★★ **Elizabeth River Crossings** planted native



Chesapeake Parks, Recreation & Tourism recently opened the much-anticipated Blue Heron Landing Park on Indian River. Courtesy Chesapeake Parks, Recreation & Tourism.

trees and avoided 513,326 lbs. of air emissions through energy efforts.

★★★ **Elizabeth River Trail Foundation** installed 450 mostly native plants along the trail, added a rain barrel, pollinator garden, trees and a Lamberts Point micro-farm as well as oyster growing and numerous litter cleanups.

★★★ **General Dynamics NASSCO-Norfolk** - This

River Star Hall of Fame shipyard re-used extra paint saving disposal costs and organized a stormwater workshop for area shipyards.

★★★ **Hampton Roads Transit** was the only transit agency in the nation to be selected for resilience planning assistance from FEMA.

★★★ **Hermitage Museum & Gardens** added rain harvesting for irrigation

and composting to improve soil health.

★★★ **HRSD**, Hall of Fame winner hosted a new oyster reef and formally conserved nine acres of waterfront for additional Lambert's Point Open Space access.

★★★ **Keep Norfolk Beautiful/Norfolk Environmental Commission** is piloting an innovative cigarette

butt recycling program at Norfolk Naval Base.

★★★ **Kinder Morgan Elizabeth River Terminals'** new phased mowing over 16 acres is now a certified habitat by Wildlife Habitat Council.

★★★ **Lady Fern's Native Plants** converted more turf into pollinator habitat (see Hall of Fame).

★★★★ **Lafayette Wetlands Partnership** coordinated the planning and planting of 5,000 new wetland grasses at a restoration site in Norfolk.

★ **McAllister Towing of Virginia** recycled 12 million lbs. of concrete at its new port in Norfolk that is being redeveloped.

★★★★ **Nauticus** has launched a pilot composting program, improved recycling, and continues to be a leader in addressing marine debris.

★★★★ **NOAA Marine Operations Center - Atlantic** installed 258 sq. ft. of new “green roof” sections to the parking lot to reduce impervious area along with two EV charging stations.

★★★★ **Norfolk Environmental Storm Water Management**, Hall of Fame winner, continued to lead the region in restoring wetlands and vegetated buffers with 14,260 sf of “living shorelines” over three sites on the Lafayette River.

★★★★ **Norfolk Naval Shipyard** Hall of Famer, constructed a new highly efficient combined heat and power plant as well as a new waste water treatment plant.

★★★★ **Norfolk State University** avoided an astounding 16M lbs. of air emissions through energy efforts that also realized a cost savings of more than a \$1M.



Lafayette Wetlands Partnership along with City of Norfolk and other partners planted 5,000 new wetland grasses in Norfolk alongside innovative oyster structures. Courtesy Elizabeth River Project.

★★★★ **The Port of Virginia**, Hall of Fame winner, completed its hybrid shuttle carrier fleet, now totaling more than 100, helping the port to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70 percent.

★★★★ **Portsmouth Parks and Recreation** added “water bars” to reduce erosion on the earthworks mound and rebuilt the path to a vernal pool at Paradise Creek Nature Park.

★★ **Rivercrest Condominium Association** on Indian River in Chesapeake discontinued fertilizer and herbicide on

22,000 sq. ft. of lawn for a healthier river.

★★★★ **US Coast Guard Base Portsmouth** now has more electric than fossil-fuel vehicles, while also reducing single-use plastics and conserving energy and water.

★★★★ **Virginia Wesleyan University** Hall of Famer, is protecting native Ash trees on campus, while conducting heat island mapping in Portsmouth towards community-led solutions.

★★★★ **Virginia Zoo** in Norfolk added rain harvesting, is encouraging bird friendly practices to protect migrating birds and is supporting conservation of Monarch butterflies.

★★★★ **Volvo Penta of the Americas** assembly plant in Chesapeake now sources all green electricity and is striving to reduce waste and energy.

★★ **West Park View Community League** in Portsmouth launched a tree-growing program by purchasing 10 native Eastern Redbud saplings for families to tend until they can be planted in the community’s Owens Creek Park.



Visitors including bird experts are delighted to see signs of successful osprey nests at Buckeye’s terminal in Chesapeake. Courtesy Elizabeth River Project.

The Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame recognizes one business each year that best exemplifies the spirit of the River Star business program. Results of “doing something beautiful” can be cumulative.

## Lady Fern's Native Plants



Lady Fern's Native Plants in Norfolk harvests rain and other stewardship efforts. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.

**P**ots of plants are everywhere. They cover every surface. So how is it possible that this retail nursery sidesteps city water to maintain these thirsty guests?

Nicole Knudson will be happy to show you how. She teaches re-use of rainwater at the EcoDistrict shop she co-owns, Lady Fern's Native Plants.

Norfolk's only nursery focusing primarily on native plants, the shop saves an estimated 27,000 gallons of

municipal water each year, thanks to 1,800 gallons of cisterns. And Knudson is constantly applying her conservation ethics off-site as well as on-site.

She's the volunteer lead for a 350-foot shoreline restoration, robust with native plants, at Granby Street and Willow Wood Drive with the Lafayette Wetlands Partnership and the City of Norfolk. Knudson contributed many of the plants for this and other projects. She's mentoring

other EcoDistrict shops too.

The River Star Businesses peer review committee “is really impressed with how a small business can make so much difference – on and off site,” says Pam Boatwright, program manager. For substantial impact on wildlife habitat enhancement, pollution prevention, and community outreach, Lady Fern's wins Hall of Fame 2025 for exemplifying the River Stars program.

- > **2011 Inaugural Winner**  
*BAE Systems Norfolk Ship Repair*
- > **2012 Winner**  
*The Port of Virginia*
- > **2013 Winner**  
*Kinder Morgan/  
Elizabeth River Terminals*
- > **2014 Winner**  
*Old Dominion University*
- > **2015 Winner**  
*Win-Waste Innovations  
(Wheelabrator Portsmouth)*
- > **2016 Winner**  
*HRSD*
- > **2017 Winner**  
*Norfolk Naval Shipyard*
- > **2018 Winner**  
*Naval Support Activity  
Hampton Roads Portsmouth Annex*
- > **2019 Winner**  
*General Dynamics NASSCO-Norfolk*
- > **2020 Winner**  
*Naval Station Norfolk*
- > **2021 Winner**  
*Norfolk Southern Corp.  
Lambert's Point*
- > **2022 Winner**  
*Norfolk Environmental  
Storm Water Management*
- > **2023 Winner**  
*Virginia Wesleyan University*
- > **2024 Winner**  
*Chesapeake Parks,  
Recreation & Tourism*
- > **2025 Winner**  
*Lady Fern's Native Plants*

## Inaugural Award for Innovation in Resilience, Norfolk Innovation Corridor

- ▶ Norfolk Office of Resilience for Ohio Creek Project
- ▶ The Port of Virginia Norfolk International Terminals for Central Rail Yard
- ▶ Stromberg/Garrigan & Associates for Water Street Open Space

**R**aised roads. Neighborhood streets converted to “pervious” paving that lets the rain soak in. Entire creek beds, “daylighted” to remove fill and return them to the way they once functioned to absorb floods. A huge new open space doubles as a park and as flood absorption.

The City of Norfolk's Ohio Creek Project represents “transformative change on a global scale,” says Dr. Jessica Whitehead, Executive Director, Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience at Old Dominion University. Sprawling some 15 blocks along the Eastward end of the Norfolk Innovation Corridor (NIC), the \$112 million

project is one of three winners of an inaugural award for innovation in resilience, presented jointly by the Elizabeth River Project and the NIC.

Also winning: The Port of Virginia Norfolk International Terminals - Central Rail Yard for an \$83 million project expanding rail capacity while transitioning to more efficient, sustainable and innovative operations including all-electric rail cranes. Stromberg/Garrigan & Associates is also recognized for the Water Street Open Space. Next to the Berkley Bridge, the project transforms a Brownfield into a vibrant public space with excavated soils reused as a raised meadow.



Norfolk Office of Resilience's Ohio Creek Project demonstrates innovation in resilience through a variety of approaches. Courtesy of City of Norfolk.