

askHRgreen.org

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Prepared By:
HRPDC
EE24-01



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Report Documentation

TITLE:

askHRgreen.org Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

REPORT DATE

September 2024

GRANT/SPONSORING AGENCY

Local Funds

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ABSTRACT

The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) is one of 21 Planning District Commissions in the Commonwealth of Virginia and is a regional organization representing the 17 local governments of the Hampton Roads area. This report provides an overview of the askHRgreen.org regional public outreach program and campaign results for fiscal year 2023-2024. It also provides an overview of the individual initiatives and results from each of the four askHRgreen.org environmental education committees: Recycling and Beautification, Stormwater Education, Water Awareness, and Fats, Oils & Grease Education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the HRPDC staff in cooperation with the member localities. Preparation of this report was included in the HRPDC Work Program for Fiscal Year 2024, approved by the Commission in May 2023.

About askHRgreen.org

Launched in 2011, askHRgreen.org is more than just a robust website; it is an award-winning comprehensive public outreach initiative. The program combines traditional and social media with grassroots outreach efforts to not only educate but inspire residents of Hampton Roads to make changes that have a positive impact on the environment. By combining local expertise and leveraging economies of scale, the askHRgreen.org program is able to help local jurisdictions fulfill requirements of MS4 stormwater permits, groundwater withdrawal permits, and the state consent order to prevent sanitary sewer overflows. For citizens, it has become a “one-stop shop” to find answers, resources, and inspiration for a cleaner, greener Hampton Roads. From water-wise landscaping ideas and pointers for preventing water pollution, to recycling tips and simple ways to prevent sewer overflows, all you have to do is askHRgreen.org.

Financial support for askHRgreen.org is made possible by the following member localities and agencies: the cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield and HRSD. Members of locality staff and HRSD comprise four askHRgreen.org committees who meet monthly to develop and implement the regional program.

Recycling and Beautification Committee - A coalition of local government staff members from across Hampton Roads who are working together to share ideas and pool resources for various education programs tailored towards community beautification, litter prevention, waste reduction, and recycling education. This group has been working cooperatively since 1981.

Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) Education Committee - A coalition of local government staff members working together with HRSD to protect wastewater infrastructure, reduce sanitary sewer overflows, and improve local water quality. The Committee shares both technical resources and educational strategies to prevent improper disposal of fats, oils, and grease. This cooperative effort has been underway since 2007 when 13 of the region’s localities and HRSD entered into the Regional Special Order by Consent with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Water Awareness Committee - Regional public utilities staff members working together to educate citizens about aging infrastructure, the value of tap water, and the importance of water conservation. This cooperative effort assists localities in meeting education requirements of water supply and groundwater permits as well as increasing public awareness of the vital role water plays in the quality of life of Hampton Roads and the need to conserve it.

Stormwater Education Committee - A cooperative partnership of the region’s 17 member jurisdictions which has served as a formal adjunct to the required public information component of the Virginia Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permits (VPDES) for Phase I and Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) since 1997. Local government staff members work together to share ideas and pool resources for various education programs and outreach initiatives -tailored to stormwater pollution prevention.



2023-2024

by the numbers



24.9 million

opportunities to see or hear about
askHRgreen.org in FY24



152,880

students impacted by \$6,843 in
environmental education mini grants



over 200,000

people in attendance at community
events with askHRgreen.org



95,604

visits to the askHRgreen.org website



\$31,005

grant funding for special projects
and programs



3,983

participants in the Bay Star Homes &
Bay Star Business programs

Website Analytics

The askHRgreen.org website continues to be the cornerstone of our outreach efforts where campaign news and events are featured prominently and content is delivered seamlessly to users on all types of devices. In FY24, we saw a decrease in website traffic over FY23 due largely in part to reduced sessions coming from foreign countries like Indonesia, Singapore, Mexico, and Germany. However, this change translated into improved engagement from our visitors. Our U.S. traffic remained steady and we saw overall improvements in the number of pages per visit, how much time users spent on the site, and how many visitors returned to browse again. The majority of web traffic continues to be new visitors, demonstrating the growing awareness and effectiveness of our outreach efforts and paid media campaigns.

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15	2013-14	TOTAL
Visits / Sessions	95,604	166,589	144,282	88,544	73,379	58,893	55,735	58,113	52,530	58,279	55,505	940,150
Unique Visitors	79,236	155,636	130,929	77,212	63,146	49,816	45,661	46,282	42,539	46,994	43,547	806,090
Pageviews	135,675	206,511	188,867	125,529	117,463	86,538	93,589	92,681	93,177	103,228	116,818	1,432,346
Pages per Visit	1.72	1.24	1.31	1.42	1.60	1.47	1.68	1.59	1.77	1.77	2.10	
Average Visit Duration	0:37	0:28	0:38	0:55	1:02	1:03	1:27	1:12	1:32	1:26	1:48	
% New Visits	83%	93%	90%	87%	86%	84%	81.48%	79.62%	80.44%	79.87%	77.74%	
Mobile Devices	68%	75%	71%	57%	58%	57%	54%	53%	40%	39%	34%	
Desktop Devices	32%	25%	29%	43%	42%	43%	46%	47%	60%	61%	66%	

AVERAGE 372 PAGES VIEWED/DAY

While overall website traffic decreased, we saw a 39% increase in pages per visit, 32% increase in time on site and 143% increase in returning visitors. We also saw increased visits to seven of our top 20 most visited pages, and new pages/topics make the top 20 list with all four committees represented.

WEB TRAFFIC SOURCES

29.7% Paid Search, Display, Other
25.3% Organic Search
21.3% Direct
13.9% Unassigned
5.7% Social Organic, Paid
3.5% Referral
0.3% Email
0.3% Organic Video

TOP TWENTY VISITED PAGES

14,856 **Home** +45.8%
 9,104 Good to Know/Do: **Recycling Lookup** +2.7%
 8,875 Good to Know/Do: **Start Smart, Recycle Right** +80.6%
 4,780 Good to Know/Do: **Electronics Recycling Donating** +9.5%
 3,982 Campaign: **Pet Waste** +not in top 20 last FY
 3,917 Good to Know/Do: **Single-Use Plastic** +26.9%
 3,775 Good to Know/Do: **Fat-free Drains** +not in top 20 last FY
 3,695 Good to Know/Do: **Plant Native Plants** +8.29%
 3,539 Good to Know/Do: **Recycling Lookup - Virginia Beach**
 3,304 Campaign: **What Do You Know About Storm Drains** new page
 3,244 Program: **Great American Cleanup** +27.7%
 2,382 **Events**
 2,363 Good to Know/Do: **Clean, Affordable Tap Water** new page
 2,165 Campaign: **No Wipes In the Pipes** +not in top 20 last FY
 1,865 Good to Know/Do: **Recycling Lookup - Hampton**
 1,769 Good to Know/Do: **Recycling Lookup - York County** +not in top 20 last FY
 1,719 Good to Know/Do: **Lawn Garden Best Practices**
 1,686 Good to Know/Do: **Recycling Lookup - Newport News**
 1,626 Good to Know/Do: **Recycling Lookup Chesapeake**
 1,609 Good to Know/Do: **Illegal Dumping**

Search Engine Marketing

The askHRgreen.org Search Engine Marketing (SEM) program employs Google pay-per-click advertising to increase traffic to the website. By bidding on select keywords and phrases, our ads direct search traffic to relevant content on the askHRgreen.org website. In FY24, we had more than 211,000 impressions of our search ads delivered to users through the Google platform. Those searches drove over 20,600 clicks to relevant content on the askHRgreen.org website. That equates to an incredible click-thru-rate (CTR) of 9.76%. Year-over-year, we continue to optimize our SEM campaign to drive visitors to the askHRgreen.org website for important news, events, information, and resources.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING RESULTS

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Impressions	211,072	216,247	274,428	376,459	342,690	210,695	169,140	107,920
Clicks	20,607	20,040	21,771	16,103	12,449	11,087	7,330	4,226
Click Thru Rate (CTR)	9.76%	9.28%	7.93%	4.28%	3.63%	5.26%	4.33%	3.92%

TOP 10 KEYWORD AD GROUPS (by impressions)

	Impressions	Clicks	Click Thru Rate
Recycling At Home	48,463	5,577	11.5%
Native Plants	45,853	2,972	6.5%
Electronics Disposal	23,769	4,051	17.0%
Lawn Care / Yard Waste	22,917	1,122	4.9%
Fats Oil Grease Disposal	13,989	1,478	10.6%
Fertilizer Tips	12,098	1,103	9.1%
Tap Water	9,094	547	6.0%
Great American Cleanup	6,638	600	9.0%
Battery Disposal	4,827	716	14.8%
Medication Diposal	3,869	716	18.5%



Sponsored

askHRgreen.org
http://www.askhrgreen.org

Fertilizing Do's & Don'ts

When to **Fertilize** Your **Lawn** – Stop & Think Before You **fertilize**. Save Time & Money While Saving Our Local Waterways. Be Sure To Test Your Soil First. Follow These Easy Steps Today. Keep Virginia Clean.

[Green Living Blog](#) · [Upcoming Events Near You](#) · [Green Education](#) · [Great American Cleanup](#)

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Great American Cleanup	6,638	600	9.0%
askHRgreen General	1,710	558	32.6%

Community Outreach

Part of the success of askHRgreen.org is the strong public engagement program that includes face-to-face interaction with community members. Each year, askHRgreen.org volunteers attend dozens of events across a wide variety of community sectors. From Earth Day celebrations to public festivals and farmers markets, there is always a reason to talk about what we can do to protect and preserve this great region. Often, the focal point of this participation is the askHRgreen.org educational trailer which has become its own attraction and is seen as a helpful resource by event organizers and attendees alike. The askHRgreen.org trailer is a benefit to have on site at a community event because it comes stocked with a variety of resources from all education committees, including informational brochures and eco-themed promotional items such as reusable shopping bags, sink strainers, shower timers, dog waste bag holders, and more. In FY24, askHRgreen.org team members participated in 33 diverse community events across Hampton Roads. In total, more than 200,000 people had the opportunity to see and interact with askHRgreen.org at a community event.

2023-2024 OUTREACH EVENTS

			Estimated Attendance
8/1	National Night Out	Suffolk	7,000
8/11	TGIF Concert	Suffolk	1,000
8/18	TGIF Concert	Suffolk	1,000
9/14 - 9/17	Isle of Wight County Fair	Windsor	38,675
9/30	Hilton Village Farmers Market	Newport News	500
9/30	Hilton Art Walk	Newport News	2,500
10/3	Smithfield NNO	Smithfield	800
10/7	VBMG Fall Gardening Festival	Virginia Beach	890
10/5 - 10/8	Peanut Festival	Suffolk	70,000
10/13 - 10/15	Barry Art Museum Public Art Festival at Old Dominion University	Norfolk	5,000
10/14	Norfolk Arbor Day Tree Adoption Festival	Norfolk	100
10/20 - 10/22	Poquoson Seafood Festival	Poquoson	35,000
10/26	VB Public Works Picnic	Virginia Beach	300
10/31 - 11/2	NN Shipyard Employee Safety Expo	Newport News	100
11/4	Mariner's Fall Festival	Newport News	3,000
11/8	Anheuser Busch Employee Event	Williamsburg	450
1/20 - 1/21	Mid Atlantic Home & Garden Show	Virginia Beach	2,400
2/24 - 2/25	Home & Garden Show	Hampton	5,000
2/24 - 2/25	Waves of Change @ Virginia Aquarium	Virginia Beach	7,087
3/7	Sharks After Dark @ Virginia Aquarium	Virginia Beach	203
3/23	Suffolk Eggstravanganza	Suffolk	900
4/13	Go Green Market	Yorktown	2,000
4/17	Christopher Newport University Event	Newport News	50
4/20	Earth & Arts Festival	Suffolk	6,500
4/20	Earth Day Celebration	Virginia Beach	1,800
5/2	Wellness Day	Newport News	300
5/16	HRPDC Meeting	Chesapeake	75
5/18	Party for the Planet	Norfolk	540
5/18 - 5/19	Tidewater Comicon	Virginia Beach	5,000
6/4	NASA Langley Safety & Health Expo	Hampton	2,000
6/6	NN Waterworks Safety Day	Newport News	250
6/8	HRSD Atlantic Treatment Tour Event	Virginia Beach	25
6/14	TGIF Concert	Suffolk	350
Total			200,795



Bay Star Homes

One of the most important messages of askHRgreen.org is that our actions, big or small, can have a lasting impact on the environment. In order to help residents put that message into practice, askHRgreen.org offers the Bay Star Homes program. To become a Bay Star Home, residents simply pledge to implement at least eight environmentally-friendly practices in and around their homes. This includes proactively implementing stormwater best management practices such as installing rain barrels and rain gardens, disconnecting downspouts and redirecting runoff, and planting native plants and trees to help absorb and filter water. Other pledges address issues like recycling and conserving water and energy. Participants in the program get early access to special askHRgreen.org programs like rain barrel workshops and tree giveaways and receive special newsletters with seasonal tips and helpful information. The Bay Star Homes program welcomed 78 new participants in FY24, bringing the total number of Bay Star Homes in Hampton Roads to 3,902.

BAY STAR HOMES IN FY24

FY24 Bay Star Homes Registrants	
City/County	Number
Chesapeake	8
Hampton	6
Isle of Wight	1
Newport News	7
Norfolk	24
Poquoson	2
Portsmouth	2
Suffolk	6
Virginia Beach	19
York	3
Total	78

Total Bay Star Homes Registrants	
City/County	Number
Chesapeake	180
Franklin	14
Gloucester	18
Hampton	143
Isle of Wight	14
James City	18
Newport News	310
Norfolk	2569
Poquoson	21
Portsmouth	47
Smithfield	12
Southampton	4
Suffolk	162
Surry	3
Virginia Beach	288
Williamsburg	8
York	91
Total	3,902

GOOD TO DO

Become a Bay Star Home and Make a Difference!
It's FREE, FUN, EASY TO DO and GOOD for our local waterways.

GROW GREEN pick at least 2

- ☐ Get a soil test before fertilizing
- ☐ Plant a tree
- ☐ Choose native plants & avoid invasive species
- ☐ Reduce my fertilizer and pesticide usage
- ☐ Reduce my lawn area and convert to planted beds
- ☐ Compost leaves and grass clippings or use proper disposal methods
- ☐ Raise the mower blades to three inches or higher to keep the lawn a little longer
- ☐ Participate in a community garden
- ☐ Buy local produce or grow my own

WATER CONNECTIONS pick at least 2

- ☐ Keep gutter area in front of my house clear of dirt, leaves, grass clippings and debris
- ☐ Redirect my downspouts into a planted bed away from a paved surface
- ☐ Keep kitchen fats, oils and grease out of my drain
- ☐ Reduce or eliminate my use of the garbage disposal
- ☐ Dispose of household hazardous waste and electronic waste properly
- ☐ Keep litter and cigarette butts out of waterways by disposing of them properly
- ☐ Dispose of medicines properly - never flush them
- ☐ Flush only my "personal" contributions - never flush paper towels, wipes, feminine hygiene products or other trash down the toilet

CONSERVE RESOURCES pick at least 2

- ☐ Turn off lights and appliances when not in use
- ☐ Install low flow faucets and toilets
- ☐ Reduce, Reuse and Recycle
- ☐ Use reusable shopping bags
- ☐ Choose refillable water bottles over bottled water
- ☐ Line dry laundry whenever possible
- ☐ Drive fewer miles, bike, combine trips, and/or use public transportation

GET INVOLVED! pick at least 2

- ☐ Scoop the poop
- ☐ Do not feed geese and migrating ducks
- ☐ Install storm drain medallions in my community
- ☐ Volunteer to help on a restoration project
- ☐ Attend an environmental workshop/seminar annually
- ☐ Participate in a community event or clean-up

I'M ALSO INTERESTED IN...

- ☐ Installing a rain barrel on my property
- ☐ Installing a rain garden on my property
- ☐ Planting a buffer or living shoreline
- ☐ Installing and maintaining a pet waste station in my neighborhood
- ☐ A lawn care nutrient management plan

YES, I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Neighborhood _____ Email _____

☐ I'd like to receive information from my local watershed restoration group

☐ Sign me up to receive the askHRgreen.org newsletter

A local Bay Star Homes representative will contact you regarding your welcome packet and yard flag.
Apply online at www.BayStarHomes.org or submit your application by mail to: HRPDC, 723 Woodlake Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia 23320



Great American Cleanup

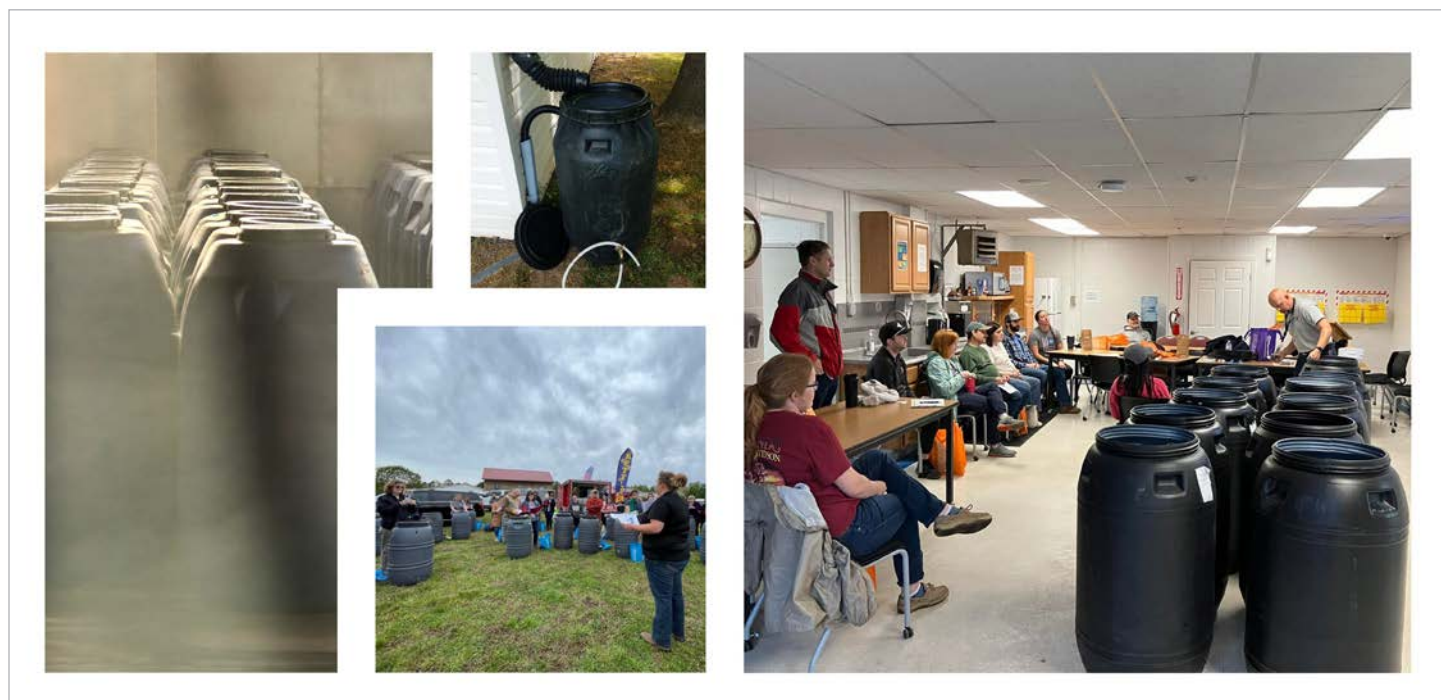
The askHRgreen.org Recycling & Beautification Committee collaborated to host the Hampton Roads regional kickoff to the Great American Cleanup (GAC) on March 22-23, 2024. A part of the committee's "Team Up 2 Clean Up" initiative, GAC engages neighbors, school groups, faith communities, military commands, and local businesses in litter cleanups and beautification projects throughout the region. In recent years, several localities have also focused on engaging locality staff in GAC activities. The two-day cleanup initiative grows in size each year and had another record-breaking year in FY24. The original GAC dates were impacted by inclement weather so many cleanups and beautification projects were rescheduled during the month of April. In total, over 3,000 volunteers across 11 cities and counties participated in GAC events in 2024. Working together, volunteers cleared more than 4,700 bags of litter and 442 tires from roadways, tree lines, neighborhoods, parks, and waterways. That's an estimated 63 tons of trash found and removed from public spaces. There were also a total of 60 new trees planted. GAC continues to be an effective strategy for sparking community action and building regional support for litter prevention programs in Hampton Roads.



Rain Barrel Workshops

The Stormwater Education Committee received grant funding through the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund to host rain barrel workshops in FY24. These workshops remain a popular offering of askHRgreen.org due to their low cost. Because the grant funding offsets the cost of supplies, workshop participants pay just \$25 to attend and build a 50-gallon rain barrel. The goal of these workshops is to provide affordable access to rain barrels while educating attendees about stormwater runoff, best management practices, and the impact on local water quality. Rain barrels reduce the amount of runoff flowing to the stormwater system while also providing residents with a free source of water for outdoor use. In total, 108 rain barrels were distributed to the community during eight workshops held from April through June 2024. The workshops were conducted both in-person and virtually via “do-it-yourself” curbside pickups where supplies were distributed along with detailed instructions for construction, installation, and maintenance. Chesapeake, Hampton, James City County, Newport News, Suffolk, and York County hosted the rain barrel workshops.

Date	Locality	Format	Event Location	Participants
4/20/2024	James City County	In-person	James City County Library	17
4/23/2024	York	In-person	Yorktown Library	17
5/13/2024	Newport News	In-person	Denbigh Community Center	10
5/18/2024	Chesapeake	Curbside	Chesapeake Stormwater Office	18
5/18/2024	Hampton	In-person	Hampton Public Works	10
5/18/2024	Suffolk	In-person	Suffolk Public Works	19
6/15/2024	Hampton	In-person	Hampton Public Works	12
6/20/2024	Newport News	Curbside	Newport News Stormwater Office	5
				108



RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS WERE MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE CHESAPEAKE BAY RESTORATION FUND.

You can support restoration activities in Virginia, such as this, by purchasing a Chesapeake Bay license plate.

Student Outreach

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION MINI GRANT PROGRAM

askHRgreen.org is proud to support hands-on environmental education opportunities for K-12 students in the region. Through the Environmental Education Mini Grant Program, Hampton Roads teachers, youth leaders, and youth-centric organizations can apply for grants of up to \$500 per year to fund environmentally-themed projects.

In FY24, askHRgreen.org received 19 applications for the mini grant program and funded 15 of them, for a total of \$6,843. These projects provided youth in Hampton Roads with expanded environmental learning opportunities, such as access to environmentally-themed books, recycling programs, upcycling, composting, and wildlife habitat creation. These valuable experiences help nurture a connection between our environment and the future leaders of tomorrow. Overall, the mini grant program impacted more than 152,880 students in FY24. This increase in impact is largely due to funding improvements to the children's garden at the Virginia Living Museum, which is expected to benefit approximately 150,000 children. To learn a little more about each of these exciting projects, see Appendix A.

FY24 Environmental Education Mini Grant Projects

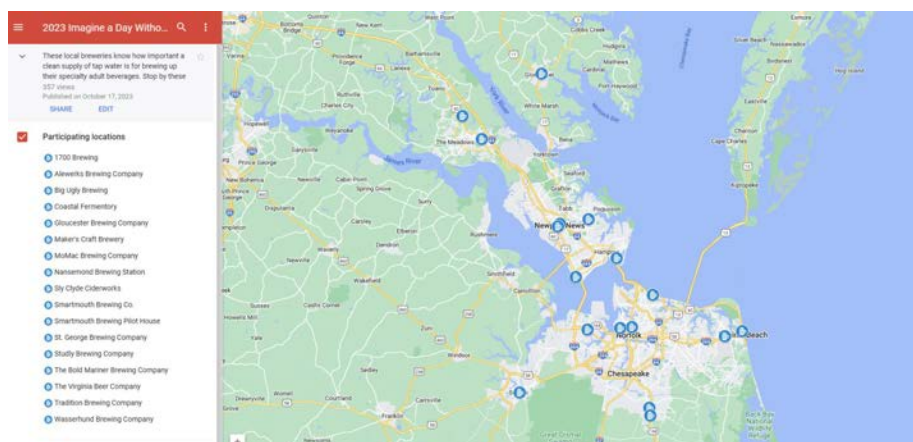
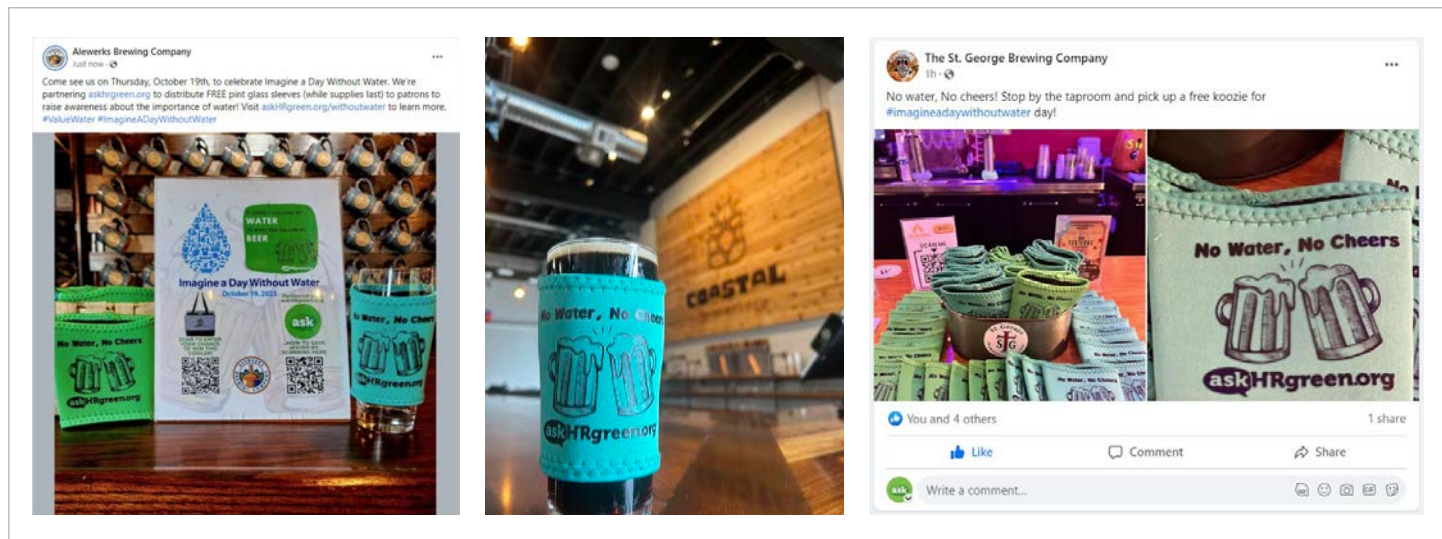
Project	Students	School/Organization	City/County	Grant
Recycled Tire Pollinator Planters	65	Asbury Elementary Green Team	Hampton	\$300.00
Monofilament Recycling Bins	15	Boy Scouts of America	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Butterfly Garden	29	Hampton Roads Academy	Newport News	\$415.00
Reusable Writing Surfaces	290	Bethel Elementary	Gloucester	\$500.00
Composting to Reduce Waste in Schools	55	Windsor Oaks Elementary	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Educational Composting Program	140	Virginia Beach Friends	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Composting	204	Sunnybrook Day School	Virginia Beach	\$245.00
Compost Education Program	80	Norfolk Academy	Norfolk	\$433.00
Green Shelf	550	Hermitage Elementary	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Monarch Butterfly Waystation	17	Princess Anne Middle School	Virginia Beach	\$450.00
Pathways into the Native Plant Habitat	650	Bethel Manor Elementary	Hampton	\$500.00
Pollinator Habitat	50	Williamsburg Communi-ty Growers	Lightfoot	\$500.00
Beautify Woodside	20	Woodside High School	Newport News	\$500.00
Children's Garden	150,000	Virginia Living Museum	Newport News	\$500.00
Pond Pals	55	Christopher Academy	Portsmouth	\$500.00
152,880			\$6,843.00	



Business Outreach

IMAGINE A DAY WITHOUT WATER 2023

Celebrated annually in October, Imagine a Day Without Water is a national outreach campaign designed to highlight all the ways we use water each day. In FY24, the Water Awareness Committee promoted Imagine a Day Without Water on October 19, 2023 by partnering with 17 local breweries to distribute specially-themed pint glass sleeves. Participating breweries also received trivia night materials and a social media toolkit. To further the promotion, each brewery also received an askHRgreen.org cooler bag to fill with their own promotional wares and raffle off to a lucky customer or social media follower.

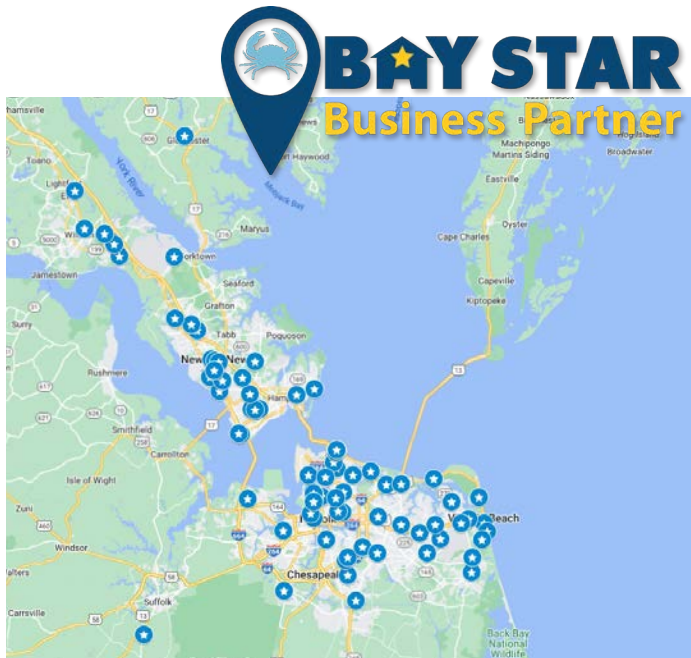


Imagine a Day Without Water
October 19, 2023

Business Outreach

BAY STAR BUSINESS

The Stormwater Education Committee launched the Bay Star Business program in 2018 to engage the Hampton Roads business community in protecting local water quality and other environmental stewardship activities. Businesses can sign up online by pledging to implement environmental practices such as conserving water, recycling, cleaning up and preventing litter, properly maintaining company vehicles, and more. There is no cost to join and businesses receive a welcome packet that includes Bay Star Business window decals to display at the office or on company vehicles to show their partnership for a cleaner community. Participating businesses are also recognized through the askHRgreen.org website and social media accounts. By the end of FY24, the Bay Star Business program had a total of 81 participants.



Bay Star Businesses in FY24

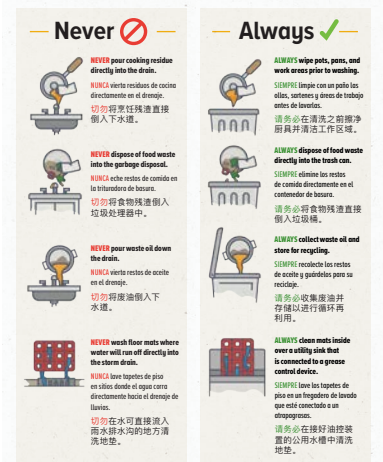
City/County	Number
Chesapeake	6
Gloucester	2
Hampton	8
James City County	2
Newport News	14
Norfolk	20
Portsmouth	1
Suffolk	2
Virginia Beach	22
Williamsburg	1
York	3
Total	81

FATS, OILS, AND GREASE TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The regional Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) Training and Certification program is designed to educate local food service workers and grease haulers on how to prevent sanitary sewer backups caused by improper handling and disposal of fats, oils, and grease. Most localities require some level of FOG certification in their local FOG ordinances and the regional FOG certification programs offer this required training to the public at no cost. All training and testing is available at www.HRFOG.com.

For several years, the FOG Committee has documented workflows and technical requirements in preparation for modernizing the regional FOG training program with a new online platform. TalentLMS was identified as the preferred solution in FY23 and HRPDC staff spent much of FY24 working with developers to build and test the new website. Additionally, as part of the update, the FOG Committee invested in transforming the Food Service Employee and Grease Hauler Training programs into video format. The training videos are both easier to understand and more interactive for users with test questions integrated into the training itself. When it launches in the fall of 2024, the new HRFOG.com platform will provide businesses with a seamless FOG education and certification process that will help them comply with local FOG ordinances.

Managing Fats, Oils and Grease



For more information, please contact the askHRgreen.org FOG Program
757.420.8300 | HRFOG.com

Business Outreach

CIGARETTE WASTE RECEPTACLE GRANTS

The Cigarette Waste Receptacle Grant Program was launched in 2021 as a partnership between the Recycling & Beautification Committee and the Stormwater Education Committee. This community grant program offers free cigarette waste receptacles to businesses and other facilities experiencing a cigarette litter problem. Based on research from Keep America Beautiful, the proper placement of a cigarette waste receptacle at transition points in the community (i.e. walking from a parking lot into a business establishment) is strongly correlated with a significant decrease in cigarette litter. To date, 204 free cigarette waste receptacles have been distributed to a diverse mix of businesses in Hampton Roads. Of those awards, 54 receptacles were distributed in FY24.

Receptacles in FY24

City/County	Number
Chesapeake	4
Gloucester	5
Newport News	37
Norfolk	2
Suffolk	3
Virginia Beach	3
Total	54

Total Cigarette Waste Receptacles

City/County	Number
Chesapeake	10
Franklin	1
Gloucester	4
Hampton	14
Isle of Wight	0
James City	11
Newport News	97
Norfolk	36
Poquoson	0
Portsmouth	5
Smithfield	0
Southampton	0
Suffolk	6
Virginia Beach	4
Williamsburg	4
York	12
Total	204



Promotional Campaigns

WASTE REDUCTION & RECYCLING

The Recycling & Beautification Committee is dedicated to promoting waste reduction and effective recycling practices across Hampton Roads. Central to these efforts is the Start Smart, Recycle Right (SSRR) campaign, which began in January 2021. This campaign aims to encourage consumers to make thoughtful choices when purchasing and to recycle only items that are accepted by their local recycling programs. The SSRR campaign offers various resources, including a dedicated website, an online recycling and disposal lookup tool, a series of educational videos, and an interactive recycling quiz. In FY24, the committee maintained its partnership with TFC Recycling, which has committed to matching the committee's media spending dollar-for-dollar over three years. Additionally, the committee was awarded nearly \$2 million from the EPA Recycling Education & Outreach Grant Program to amplify these efforts over the next three years.

Paid Media

Through the TFC Recycling partnership, the committee was able to purchase eight months of ongoing campaign coverage for the SSRR campaign. The campaign launched October 29 and ran through June 29 with concentrated media coverage in November, February and April. The campaign included traditional and digital streaming TV, radio, digital display ads with retargeting, social media, a radio interview, and three appearances on Coast Live. Throughout the year, specific messages about recycling and waste reduction were included in the Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

The committee used banner displays and rack card distribution to communicate with the public about recycling basics and contamination. The rack cards are also available in Spanish to reach Latino audiences.

Public Relations

Public relations efforts supported recycling and waste reduction through news releases and articles in the Virginian-Pilot, Daily Press, and askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram. Outreach included sharing organic and branded posts on recycling basics, avoiding recycling contamination, waste free living, composting, recycling facts, and more.

Start Smart, Recycle Right LOVE Sign

In 2023, askHRgreen.org and partner TFC Recycling recruited Tom Shirk and his welding students from Suffolk Public Schools' College & Career Academy at Pruden to build an 8'x5' recycling-inspired LOVE sign. The LOVE sign now travels across Hampton Roads making stops at local events and is on display in public places to help inspire meaningful conversations about the importance of recycling. The LOVE sign toured Hampton Roads in FY24 visiting 20 locations including the ODU Barry Art Museum Public Art Festival, Party for the Planet at Virginia Zoo, National Night Out in Suffolk, and other public spaces including municipal buildings, libraries, and recreation centers.



METAL CANS



PAPER PRODUCTS



PLASTIC BOTTLES



EMPTY • CLEAN • DRY

Back to Basics



START SMART, RECYCLE RIGHT LOVE SIGN

Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum in Virginia Beach, VA

Promotional Campaigns

LITTER PREVENTION

The Recycling & Beautification Committee is dedicated to reducing litter in Hampton Roads by focusing on both prevention and cleanup initiatives. Through the Team Up 2 Clean Up program, the committee engages residents, businesses, and local groups in community cleanup efforts. This program empowers volunteers by providing them with accessible litter kits, available at libraries and recreation centers throughout Hampton Roads. In FY24, the committee also expanded the “You Literally Can” litter prevention campaign with new creative content. With funding from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Competitive Litter & Recycling Grant program, the committee developed a 30-second musical jingle and animated video to enhance the campaign. The catchy pop tune and animated video highlight simple, everyday actions that can prevent litter. Additionally, the campaign includes stickers and posters for distribution at events to further promote the message.



Paid Media

Throughout the year, specific messages about litter prevention were included in the Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

Lendable litter kits are available in various locations across Hampton Roads to make organizing cleanups easy for community groups, businesses, and neighborhood associations. The committee distributes “You Literally Can” stickers and also purchased auto litter bags to distribute at local events to promote the message of mitigating roadway litter.

Public Relations

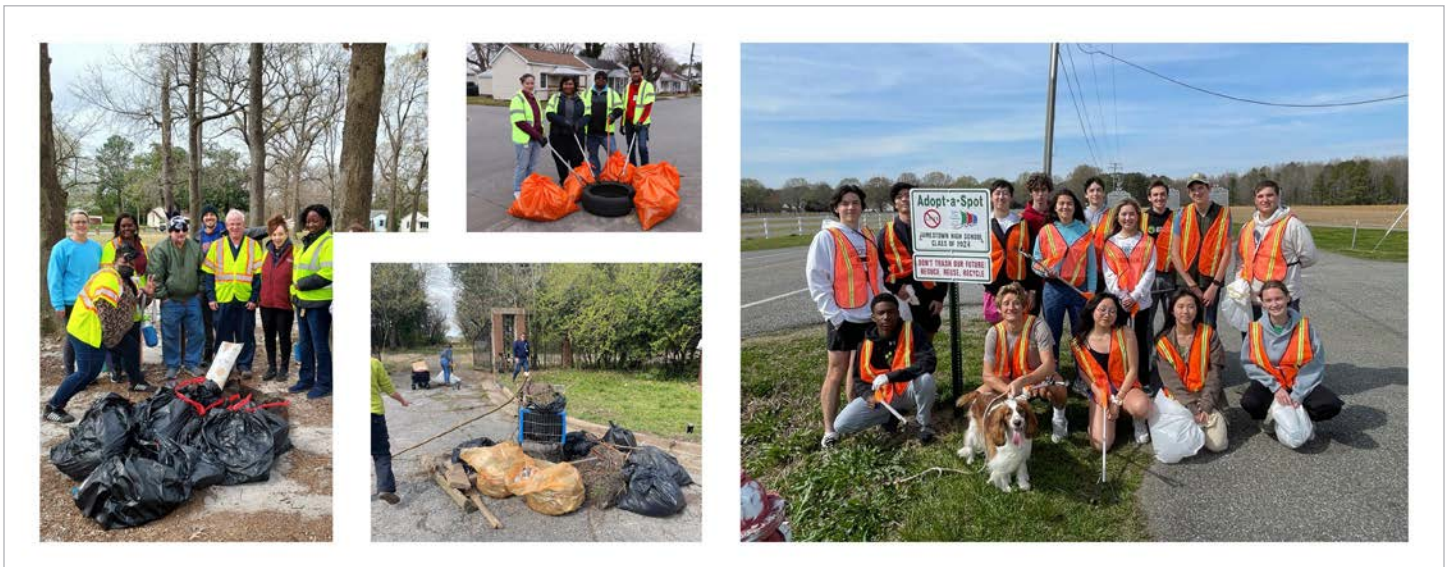
Public relations efforts supported litter prevention and community beautification through news releases and articles in the Virginian-Pilot, Daily Press, and askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram. Organic and branded outreach topics included cleanup recruitment, cleanup results, litter prevention strategies, and seasonal reminders.

Great American Cleanup

The committee hosts the Hampton Roads Great American Cleanup annually in late March. The 2024 cleanup was a great success with more than 3,000 volunteers who collected over 63 tons of litter. Inclement weather pushed back some events into April, but the volunteers still came out in full force to support a cleaner Hampton Roads.



Promotional Campaigns

CIGARETTE LITTER PREVENTION

In FY24, the Recycling and Beautification Committee continued its efforts to educate the public about the issue of cigarette litter in Hampton Roads. Cigarette butts are not only the most common type of litter but can also easily be swept into storm drains, eventually becoming marine debris in local waterways. To highlight the harmful effects of cigarette litter, the committee employed several strategies:

Paid Media

Throughout the year, specific messages about cigarette litter were included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

Cigarette litter rack cards and pocket ashtrays were made available for distribution at local events.

Public Relations

Cigarette litter prevention was featured in the askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram to educate smokers on the proper disposal of cigarette butts and the general harmfulness of cigarette litter.



Cigarette Waste Receptacle Grant Program

To date, 204 free cigarette waste receptacles have been distributed to a diverse mix of local businesses in Hampton Roads through this grant program. Of those awards, 54 receptacles were distributed in FY24.

FATS, OILS, AND GREASE DISPOSAL

The FOG Committee aims to reduce sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) by educating the public on the proper disposal of fats, oils, and grease (FOG). When FOG is poured down household drains, it can cause damage to pipes both within homes and in the public sewer system. The committee advises residents to can the grease, scrape plates into the trash, use sink strainers to catch food scraps, and recycle fryer oil. Although managing FOG is important throughout the year, there is a strong focus on this topic during the holiday season from November to December. To enhance year-round education, a new campaign was launched to promote the Grease Grinch as an all-season character. This effort included the following strategies:

Paid Media

The committee developed a new Grease Grinch campaign with an all-season theme highlighting that FOG is a year-round concern. The new campaign ran August 14-20 and included radio, digital display ads with retargeting, streaming TV, and social media. The committee also picked up the existing holiday-themed Grease Grinch for a one-week campaign during the Thanksgiving holiday, November 20 to November 26. The holiday campaign included traditional television, radio, digital display ads with retargeting, streaming TV, and social media. Throughout the year, specific FOG messages were included in the Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.



Outreach Materials

The committee continued to distribute relevant promotional items including sink strainers, grease can lids, pot strainers, children's activity books, and brochures.

Public Relations

Proper FOG disposal was featured in the askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram to educate the public about the proper disposal of FOG and the potential harmfulness to sanitary sewer systems.

WHAT NOT TO FLUSH

The FOG Committee also educates the public about another major cause of sanitary sewer overflows: improper flushing. Sanitary sewers are designed to handle only human waste and toilet paper. However, many people today use toilets as trash cans, flushing items such as personal hygiene products, "flushable" wipes, dental floss, cotton swabs, and more. To address this issue, the FOG Committee runs a comprehensive public education campaign to discourage flushing wipes and other materials that can cause clogs.

Paid Media

There were two "What Not to Flush" media campaigns in FY24. The first campaign ran for one week, January 15 to January 21, on radio, digital display ads with retargeting, streaming TV, and social media. The creative for this campaign was a pickup of existing creative that features a clog monster made of not-so-flushable wipes. A second campaign ran February 5 to February 11. The campaign was a pickup of a chalkboard-style animation walking viewers through the items that should not be flushed and explains how backups can occur on both the public and private side of the sewer system. The campaign included traditional and digital television, radio, digital display ads and retargeting, and social media. Throughout the year, specific what not to flush messages were included in the Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.



DO NOT FLUSH THESE ITEMS



PAPER TOWELS



DIAPERS



HYGIENE PRODUCTS



OTHER TRASH



ANY WIPES (EVEN THE 'FLUSHABLE' ONES)



Outreach Materials

The committee continued to distribute toilet stress squeezers, “what not to flush” stickers, and brochures in support of this message.

Public Relations

Public relations supported the what not to flush topic with articles in the *Virginian-Pilot*, *Daily Press*, and the askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

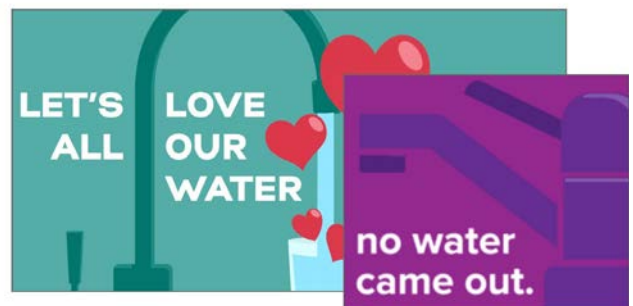
We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram. Outreach topics included organic and branded posts on the myth of flushable wipes, World Toilet Day, and a what not to flush true or false quiz.

COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF WATER

The Water Awareness Committee continues to highlight the importance of drinking water to the quality of life in Hampton Roads. While often seen as a basic convenience, drinking water is essential for powering businesses, healthcare, fire protection, and sanitation. Water is not just for enjoying a hot shower; it’s vital for fighting fires, disinfecting, and maintaining cleanliness. It quenches thirst but also allows businesses and hospitals to carry out their critical functions. The committee emphasized the importance of drinking water through the following initiatives:

Paid Media

The committee ran a one-week media campaign from October 16 to October 22 as part of the national Imagine a Day Without Water awareness initiative on October 19, 2023. The ad creative was a pickup campaign featuring a catchy poem and vibrant graphics to describe everything we’d miss on a “waterless” day. The campaign ran on traditional television, radio, digital display ads with retargeting, streaming TV, and social media. Throughout the year, specific messages about tap water were included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.



Outreach Materials

The committee continued to distribute a variety of promotional items including reusable water bottles, mood pencils, toothbrushes, koozies, and more.

Public Relations

Public relations supported the value of water message through news releases and articles in the *Virginian-Pilot*, *Daily Press*, and askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram. Outreach topics included organic and branded posts about gratitude for water, drinking tap over bottled water, and the importance of investing in water infrastructure.

Imagine a Day Without Water Brewery Promotion

The committee partnered with 17 breweries to distribute Imagine a Day Without Water branded pint glass sleeves and hosted a social media giveaway which resulted in 122 new newsletter signups.



DRINKING WATER QUALITY

In FY24, the Water Awareness Committee focused on a new priority area to address growing concerns about the safety of drinking water in Hampton Roads. Widespread media coverage of issues like lead contamination and PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, know as forever chemicals) has undermined public confidence in local water systems. Many people are unaware of the extensive efforts and processes involved in ensuring the safety of our tap water. Local utility staff work tirelessly to ensure that the water delivered to every home and business meets all health and safety standards and is of the highest quality. To communicate this important message about Hampton Roads drinking water, the committee undertook the following initiatives:

Paid Media

The committee launched a one-week media campaign from May 6 to May 12, showcasing a new 60-second video that featured water utility employees from across the region discussing their vital role in ensuring the safety and quality of tap water. The campaign centered around the catchphrase, “We think about water so you don’t have to.” The radio portion of the campaign was a pickup of the “thank a water worker” campaign. This media campaign ran during Drinking Water Week on traditional television, radio, digital display ads with retargeting, streaming TV, and social media. Throughout the year, specific messages about tap water were included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

The committee continued to distribute a variety of promotional items including reusable water bottles, koozies, and resources for checking your home for lead pipes.

Public Relations

Public relations supported the value of water message through an article in the Virginian-Pilot and the askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

We engaged with the community via Facebook and Instagram. Outreach topics included organic and branded posts about gratitude for water, drinking tap over bottled water, and a water trivia quiz.

Technical Workgroups

In December 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) to take additional steps to address the potential for lead to enter drinking water through household plumbing. Drinking water that leaves the water treatment plant is free of lead; however, lead is sometimes present in the pipes of homes built prior to 1986. In FY24, the Water Awareness Committee met quarterly with other local utility staff to discuss implementation of new LCRR regulations.



We think about water around the clock so you don't have to.

CAREERS IN THE WATER INDUSTRY

Water utilities in Hampton Roads face a common challenge with hiring and retaining staff, especially for essential positions. To attract more workers to the water industry, the committee continued its efforts through the “Work for Water” campaign, which promotes the benefits of careers in this field and encourages job seekers in Hampton Roads to explore opportunities with local water utilities. The campaign includes interviews with current utility employees who share their positive experiences working in the water sector. The committee addressed this focus area using the following strategies:

Paid Media

As part of the “Work for Water” campaign mentioned above, a radio ad was featured expressing appreciation for local water workers. The one-week media campaign from May 6 to May 12 on traditional television, radio, digital display ads with retargeting, streaming TV, and social media.

Public Relations

Public relations support included articles in the askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

Relevant messages were shared via Facebook and Instagram both organically and through the askHRgreen branding campaign.



WATER CONSERVATION

Water conservation remains a key focus for the Water Awareness Committee. The EPA estimates that household leaks can waste nearly 10,000 gallons of water annually, with leaky toilets being a common culprit. Fortunately, these issues often have easy, do-it-yourself fixes. Fixing leaks is crucial not only for conserving water but also for helping residents lower their water bills. Alongside promoting leak repairs, the committee provides a wide array of water-saving tips for both indoor and outdoor use throughout the year.

Paid Media

The committee ran a one-week media campaign from March 18 to 24 promoting fixing leaks. The campaign was a pickup of existing creative which focuses on the amount of water wasted by a leaking faucet. The campaign ran on traditional and digital television, radio, digital display ads with retargeting, podcasts, and social media. Throughout the year, specific messages about water conservation were included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.



Outreach Materials

The Water Awareness Committee distributed numerous promotional items to help residents conserve water including rain gauges, shower timers, and toilet leak detection dye tablets.

Public Relations

Public relations support included articles in the askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

Water-saving tips were featured regularly on Facebook and Instagram. Conservation messages included finding and fixing household leaks, installing rain barrels, waterwise landscaping, and an indoor water conservation true or false quiz.

ONLY RAIN DOWN THE DRAIN

The Stormwater Education Committee works to inform the public about the negative impact of illicit discharges on local water quality. Central to this effort is the “only rain down the drain” message, which covers a range of potential pollutants, including litter, household hazardous waste, car washing, yard waste disposal, pool maintenance, and more. The committee addressed the issue of storm drains and illicit discharges through the following initiatives:

Paid Media

The committee created a new media campaign to make the connection that what goes into a storm drain ends up in waterways. The campaign ran for one week from April 22 to April 28 and featured streaming television, digital display ads with retargeting, and social media. Throughout the year, storm drain topics were included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

The committee maintains a comprehensive collection of brochures and rack cards on best practices for preventing illicit discharges in both commercial and residential settings. In FY24, the committee began development of a pressure washing rack card to inform commercial operations of their responsibility to prevent dirty wash water from entering storm drains. The committee also maintains multiple rack cards in Spanish to reach the Latinx population. The committee also continues to promote the storm drain marking program and received four applications in FY24.

Public Relations

Public relations supported this focal area through news releases and articles in the *Virginian-Pilot*, *Daily Press*, and askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

Information about storm drains and the “only rain down the drain” message were also featured in social media branding efforts, increasing the number of users who see this content on Facebook and Instagram. Organic and boosted outreach topics included car washing tips, proper disposal of HHW, a stormwater runoff true or false quiz, and marine debris.

Cigarette Waste Receptacle Grant Program

In partnership with the Recycling & Beautification Committee, 204 free cigarette waste receptacles have been distributed to a diverse mix of businesses in Hampton Roads. Of those awards, 54 receptacles were distributed in FY24.



PET WASTE

In FY24, pet waste continued to be a significant focus for the Stormwater Education Committee. While not picking up after pets is commonly viewed as inconsiderate, many people are unaware that it also contributes to water pollution. Pet waste contains harmful bacteria that can be carried into local waterways via stormwater runoff. The committee addressed the “Scoop the Poop” message through the following initiatives:

Paid Media

The committee ran a one-week media campaign from April 29 to May 5 using the existing “a dogs gotta do” creative. The campaign featured digital television, digital display ads with retargeting, Wavy News in-app ads, and social media. Throughout the year, pet waste messages were also included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

The committee maintains and regularly distributes rack cards and stickers in multiple sizes to promote the “Scoop the Poop” message at various community events throughout the year. In addition, branded dog waste bag holders and portable pet bowls are also distributed.

Public Relations

Public relations supported this focal area through news releases and articles in the Virginian-Pilot, Daily Press, and askHRgreen.org newsletter.

Social Media

Pet waste messages were also featured in the Facebook and Instagram branding campaign. Branded and organic social media posts were targeted towards pet owners and specifically promoted scooping the poop “even in your own yard.”

Scoop the Poop Pledge

Though not promoted heavily in FY24, there were 5 new pledges via the online Scoop the Poop pledge on askHRgreen.org.

Pet Waste Station Grant Program

The askHRgreen.org Pet Waste Station Grant Program supports local efforts to reduce nutrient and bacteria pollution by promoting the installation of pet waste stations. Neighborhood associations, community groups, and property management companies can apply to receive free pet waste stations for their areas. Recipients are responsible for maintaining the stations, which includes emptying the trash and replenishing bags as needed. In FY24, 65 pet waste stations were distributed through this program. The initiative was partially funded by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund Grant and the sale of Friends of the Chesapeake license plates.



Pet Waste Stations in FY24

City/County	Number
Hampton	14
James City County	9
Newport News	19
Norfolk	1
Suffolk	5
Virginia Beach	10
York County	7
Total	65



LAWN CARE & FERTILIZER

The Stormwater Education Committee promotes responsible lawn care and fertilizing practices to help protect local water quality. When it rains, runoff can carry grass clippings, dirt, leaves, and lawn chemicals into storm drains and ultimately into local waterways. To prevent this, the committee advocates for waterway-friendly lawn care practices, such as keeping yard debris out of storm drains, conducting soil tests before fertilizing, mulch mowing grass and fall leaves, and planting more trees or native plants, among other strategies.

Paid Media

The committee picked up an existing chalkboard art-themed media campaign for a one week campaign from September 11 to September 17. A supporting radio contest ran September 18 to September 22, extending the campaign for an additional week of radio impressions. In addition to radio, the campaign included digital display ads with retargeting and social media. A variety of lawn care topics are also included in our Google SEM campaign, driving traffic to the askHRgreen.org website from relevant keyword searches.

Outreach Materials

The committee distributes garden kneelers, soil test kits and a brochure on common lawn care best practices. There is also a rack card for commercial landscapers which is now available in Spanish to better reach the Latinx community. Additionally, Southeastern Virginia Native Plant Guides are handed out to encourage Hampton Roads residents to choose native plants for their landscapes.

Public Relations

Soil testing and other lawn care best management practices are commonly included in various public relations strategies throughout the year including news releases and articles in the Virginian-Pilot, Daily Press, and askHRgreen.org newsletter. The Bay Star Homes program is another important tool for encouraging residents to use waterway-friendly lawn care practices.

Social Media

Lawn care and fertilizing tips were routinely posted to Facebook and Instagram. The content highlighted a variety of best management practices including soil testing, keeping yard waste out of storm drains, replacing turf grass with native plants, installing rain barrels, and a lawn care true or false quiz. The “Are You a Lawn God or Goober” quiz hosted on the askHRgreen.org website received 36 completed responses.

Rain Barrel Workshops

With funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund grant, the committee was able to host eight low-cost rain barrel workshops in FY24. Workshops were hosted in Chesapeake, Hampton, James City County, Newport News, Suffolk, and York County. In total, 108 rain barrels were distributed to residents through this effort.



2023-24 Media Campaigns

JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN



Public Relations Activities

Date	Media Outlet	Topic	Length	Circ/Imp	PR Value
Sunday, July 29, 2023	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Small yard? Just a patio? Anyone can compost	41.5 column inches	219,079	\$20,220.00
Sunday, July 29, 2023	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Small yard? Just a patio? Anyone can compost	41.5 column inches	95,728	\$2,490.00
Sunday, August 12, 2023	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Make your garden's growing season last	40 column inches	219,079	\$19,488.00
Sunday, August 12, 2023	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Make your garden's growing season last	40 column inches	95,728	\$2,400.00
Thursday, September 07, 2023	WHRO News	Newest Green Beats video is foam free	140 words	66,000	\$1,500.00
Wednesday, November 15, 2023	WTKR-TV Coast Live	SSRR ARD interview with Michael Benedetto and Katie Cullipher	5:00 minutes	10,000	\$2,400.00
Friday, December 22, 2023	Hampton Roads Messenger	Recycle, repurpose household items after the holidays	275 words	1,000	\$900.00
Sunday, December 24, 2023	The Virginian-Pilot	Holiday recycling tips for a sustainable season	44 column inches	219,079	\$21,438.00
Sunday, December 24, 2023	The Daily Press	Holiday recycling tips for a sustainable season	44 column inches	95,728	\$2,640.00
Tuesday, January 02, 2024	WYDaily	askHRgreen.org offers tips for recycling Christmas trees in Hampton Roads	150 words	30,000	\$900.00
Thursday, January 4, 2024	WYDaily	How to recycle and repurpose household items after the holidays	520 words	30,000	\$900.00
Wednesday, January 24, 2024	WTKR-TV Coast Live	SSRR interview with Sarah Sterzing and Kathy Russell	5:00 minutes	10,000	\$2,400.00
Wednesday, January 24, 2024	The Gazette Journal	Recycle right	125 words and photo	8,000	\$1,050.00
Monday, February 12, 2024	WTKR-TV Coast Live	SSRR interview with Samantha McNeil and Kathy Russell	5:00 minutes	10,000	\$2,400.00
Monday, February 26, 2024	The Virginian-Pilot	Get ready for the Great American Cleanup / here's how to sign up	75 words	219,079	\$3,000.00
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	Gloucester-Matthews Gazette-Journal	The Great American Cleanup to be held March 22-23, 2024	200 words	8,000	\$1,200.00
Thursday, March 07, 2024	The Suffolk News-Herald	The Great Suffolk Cleanup returns for 2024	250 words	11,165	\$1,200.00
Thursday, March 14, 2024	The Smithfield Times	The Great American Cleanup, promoting local events	Calendar listing	25,000	\$1,200.00
Friday, March 15, 2024	The Hampton Roads Messenger - published March-April newsletter	The Water Issue	1,365 words	1,000	\$900.00
Sunday, March 17, 2024	Audacy Radio, "Hampton Roads Perspective"	Great American Cleanup interview; Katie and Wayne	20 minutes	6,200	\$7,500.00
Tuesday, March 19, 2024	Gloucester-Matthews Gazette-Journal	Recycle right, brief about LOVE sign and SSRR	100 words	8,000	\$600.00
Tuesday, March 19 2024	WAVY-TV Hampton Roads Show	Norfolk Great American Cleanup; mentions askHRgreen.org	Mention	10,000	\$3,000.00
Tuesday, March 19 2024	WAVY-TV News	Great American Cleanup underway in Norfolk	Online report	50,000	\$10,500.00
Thursday, March 14, 2024	WTKR-TV Coast Live	SSRR interview with Katie Cullipher and Amber Zufelt, Mrs. USA Earth Water	5:00 minutes	10,000	\$2,400.00
Saturday, March 16, 2024	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Fix-a-Leak Week reminds consumers to save water, money	33 column inches	95,728	\$1,980.00
Saturday, March 16, 2024	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Fix-a-Leak Week reminds consumers to save water, money	33 column inches	95,728	\$1,980.00
Thursday, March 21, 2024	The Flagship News	Put rain to work with these DIY home and garden improvements	56 column inches / 3/4 page	40,000	\$3,600.00
Saturday, April 6, 20924	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Please don't feed the geese; here's the poop	27 column inches	219,079	\$13,155.00
Saturday, April 6, 20924	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Please don't feed the geese; here's the poop	27 column inches	95,728	\$1,620.00
Saturday, April 27, 2024	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Waterway-friendly wash	75 column inches	219,079	\$36,540.00

Date	Media Outlet	Topic	Length	Circ/Imp	PR Value
Saturday, April 27, 2024	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Waterway-friendly wash	75 column inches	95,728	\$4,500.00
Saturday May 4, 2024	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Raise a glass of H2O during Drinking Water Week	20.5 column inches	219,079	\$9,993.00
Saturday May 4, 2024	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Raise a glass of H2O during Drinking Water Week	20.5 column inches	95,728	\$1,230.00
Saturday, May 18, 2024	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	Give your next outdoor party a light footprint	26 column inches	219,079	\$12,675.00
Saturday, May 18, 2024	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	Give your next outdoor party a light footprint	26 column inches	95,728	\$1,560.00
Saturday, June 1, 2024	The Virginian-Pilot - askHRgreen guest column	What not to flush and why it matters	117.50 column inches	219,079	\$57,281.25
Saturday, June 1, 2024	The Daily Press - askHRgreen guest column	What not to flush and why it matters	117.50 column inches	95,728	\$7,050.00
Wednesday, June 12, 2024	WHRO Public Media	Hampton Roads leaders will ramp up recycling education with new EPA grant	50 seconds; 312 words	10,000	\$750.00
Wednesday, June 12, 2024	Suffolk News-Herald	EPA awards \$1.9 million dollar grant to enhance recycling program in Hampton Roads	420 words	10,431	\$2,250.00
Saturday, June 15, 2024	WAVY-TV website	https://www.wavy.com/news/virginia/federal-grant-to-help-organization-boost-awareness-on-recycling-in-virginia/	160 words	15,000	\$2,250.00
Saturday, June 15, 2024	Philanthropy News Digest	Federal grant to help organization boost awareness on recycling in Virginia	165 words	10,000	\$1,500.00
Wednesday, June 19, 2024	Waste 360	Hampton Roads VA program receives nearly \$2 million to boost recycling education initiative	Mention	90,000	\$750.00
Wednesday, June 19, 2024	Williamsburg-Yorktown Daily	EPA awards askHRgreen.org \$1.9 million to help Hampton Roads residents "Start Smart, Recycle Right"	690 words	30,000	\$1,800.00
Thursday, August 01, 2024	Coastal Virginia Magazine	Put rain to work	1.75 pages	156,000	\$7,500.00
				3,584,787	\$282,590.25

Total circulation or audience	3,584,787
Total articles and interviews	45
Total PR budget	\$15,590
Total publicity value	\$282,590
Return on Investment (ROI)	18:1



The Virginian-Pilot
Published by 2024 | 10th year, no. 21

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OVERVIEW
This year, the Virginia Peninsula's Christmas season is a little different. As the holiday season approaches, many residents are looking for ways to reduce their environmental footprint. The Virginian-Pilot is proud to present a special guide to help you celebrate the season sustainably.

Holiday recycling: Tips for a sustainable season
Tina, wrapping paper has uses for after Christmas. By Tina, News Staff

As the gift-giving season approaches, many residents are looking for ways to reduce their environmental footprint. The Virginian-Pilot is proud to present a special guide to help you celebrate the season sustainably.

ENVIRONMENT
The Virginian-Pilot is proud to present a special guide to help you celebrate the season sustainably.

COMMUNITY
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LOCAL
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Three women are sitting on a couch in a studio setting, discussing recycling tips. They are surrounded by various recycling materials like cardboard boxes, plastic bottles, and paper. A screen in the background displays the 'Coast LIVE' logo.



home+living
Small yards? Just a patio? Anyone can compost. With our tips, follow a few easy principles and you'll be on your way to composting.

Garden PATROL
No more plastic mulch. Composting is a natural way to improve your soil and reduce waste. It's also a great way to save money on fertilizer. Here are some tips to get you started.

Keep a close eye on your plants to help prevent damage from pests and disease.

Combined Media Results

PAID ADVERTISING WEEKS	52 consecutive
TOTAL IMPRESSIONS	24,972,493
TOTAL CLICKS/ACTIONS/ENGAGEMENTS	56,989
TOTAL PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN BUDGET	\$214,665
TOTAL EXPOSURE VALUE	\$632,597
RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)	2.95:1

Follow along @askHRgreen



3,096 followers
reach of 1.4 million
6,100 page visits



709 followers
reach of 444,300
861 profile visits



6,937 Newsletter
Subscribers

Appendix A



Summary for FY24 Environmental Education Mini Grants

Total Projects Funded in FY24:

FY24 Mini Grant Budget: \$5,000 (Reserves: \$12,046.33)

Total Grant Funds Awarded: \$6,843

Name of Project	Number of Students	School/Facility	City/County	Awarded
Recycled Tire Pollinator Planters	65	Asbury Elementary - Green Team	Hampton	\$300.00
Monofilament Recycling Bins	15	Boy Scouts of America	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Butterfly Garden	29	Hampton Roads Academy	Newport News	\$415.00
Reusable Writing Surfaces	290	Bethel Elementary	Gloucester	\$500.00
Composting to Reduce Waste in Schools	55	Windsor Oaks Elementary	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Educational Composting Program	140	Virginia Beach Friends	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Composting	204	Sunnybrook Day School	Virginia Beach	\$245.00
Compost Education Program	80	Norfolk Academy	Norfolk	\$433.00
Green Shelf	550	Hermitage Elementary	Virginia Beach	\$500.00
Monarch Butterfly Waystation	17	Princess Anne Middle School	Virginia Beach	\$450.00
Pathways into the Native Plant Habitat	650	Bethel Manor Elementary	Hampton	\$500.00
Pollinator Habitat	50	Williamsburg Community Growers	Lightfoot	\$500.00
Beautify Woodside*	20	Woodside High School	Newport News	\$500.00
Children's Garden*	150,000	Virginia Living Museum	Newport News	\$500.00
Pond Pals	55	Christopher Academy	Portsmouth	\$500.00

Projects continued from FY23

Name of Project	Number of Students	School/Facility	City/County	Awarded
Native Plant and Pollinator-Friendly Garden	660	Great Bridge Primary School	Chesapeake	\$500.00
Recycling in the Classroom*	1766	Bethel High School	Hampton	\$500.00

Project	Recycled Tire Pollinator Planters
Recipient	Asbury Elementary Green Team
Locality	Hampton
Award	\$300.00

Project Description: Second grade students will strategically place recycled tires in open areas. Classes will take part in planting a mixture of pollinator seeds and plants. The students will also continue to care for the growth and maintenance of the planters. Students will learn of the importance of pollinators and the benefits from providing them habitats. Second graders will continue to monitor and care for these gardens and in return providing the students with a rewarding feeling, responsibility and the importance behind the project.

Project Outcome: This was a multi-step project. The students did research on the outdoor air systems runoff prior to giving their tires permanent placement. This helped make the project successful. Cardboard barrier was inserted for the red worm to decompose, which they also researched. The students then filled their planters with soil and inserted perennials. Classes have the responsibility of caring for these plants and ensuring their growth is a success. Finally each student inserted a mammoth sunflower seed into the planters. They recently did an activity where they learned how sunflowers naturally extract certain pollutants from the soil by their roots. Some examples are zinc and copper. SOL's that were supported are Science 4.8 (Virginia's Watershed) 4.3 (Living Systems/Plant Processes), Math 5.8 (Measurement/perimeter and area)

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? All of the 5th grade students enjoyed every aspect of this project. The hands on activities were exciting and kept them engaged. Students worked as a team to make this successful. They were happy to see their teachers involved as well.

How could a similar project be improved? This project could have been improved by completing more research on the native plants that the students used for their tires. This would've helped them become more acclimated on how to care for them properly.

Project	Monofilament Recycling Bins
Recipient	Boy Scouts of America
Locality	Virginia Beach
Award	\$415.00

Project Description: In the Chesapeake Bay, there are over 348 species of fish and over 140 species of birds. There are also over 850,000 freshwater and saltwater anglers in Virginia alone. These fishermen often leave lines and other equipment in the water that decompose very slowly because of its material. This is known as derelict fishing. The abandoned lines cause wildlife to die needlessly, makes our communities less clean, and harms our economy because we have less animals to fish. It also causes destruction of our habitat and is a hazard to navigation. My project is building 20 monofilament recycling bins out of PVC pipes. I will then give the bins to my two beneficiaries, Lynnhaven River Now and the City of Virginia Beach. The two beneficiaries will then find adopters to place them where needed (public and private fishing piers, marinas, etc.) and perform upkeep and maintenance on them. Old line will be shipped

to Berkley Pure Fishing Co. in Iowa. Berkeley melts the line down into raw plastic pellets that will be made into other plastic products including tackle boxes, spools for line, fish habitats and toys.

Project Outcome: The project was a success. Before starting the project, scouts learned about the harmful effects that monofilament has on the environment. They were taught about how improper monofilament disposal harms wildlife, hurts the environment, and even affects us as humans. About twenty volunteers showed up for this project, and they all learned how to build monofilament recycling bins, why this project is necessary, and how it will help in the future. Now, there are twenty different public fishing piers that can be maintained with these bins. Lynnhaven River Now, who was the original recipient of the bins and will be responsible for dispersing them, is happy that the bins can now help keep the environment clean and support wildlife.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The scouts enjoyed learning about the environment and being a part of the solution to the problems it faces. They enjoyed learning how to make monofilament bins that would benefit the community, and they gained experience working in teams as they communicated with one another. The volunteers also learned how to adjust to different methods as challenges arose.

How could a similar project be improved? The project was a success and worked exactly as it was planned, but if I were to repeat the project, I might see if I can find ways to reach even more people.



Project	Butterfly Garden
Recipient	Hampton Roads Academy
Locality	Newport News
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: This project will be led and fully completed by high school students from Hampton Roads Academy. They will be building a butterfly garden for the elementary students to provide a more interactive learning experience during specific units. The garden will include flowers that are beneficial for butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. The students will build the garden bed, decorations, and plant the flowers. The decorations will include educational elements; for example, the stepping stones to the garden will display the stages of metamorphosis. All of the decorations will be made of environmentally friendly or recycled materials; for example, hummingbird feeders made out of recycled water bottles.

Project Outcome: The project was an interactive activity that successfully encouraged volunteering and environmental awareness within the HRA community. The students involved seem to grasp a better understanding of the importance of plants to pollinators and the importance of pollinators to the ecosystem.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The students seem to most enjoy the mini projects that went along with the larger goal of the project. For example, the school's YVC club made small hummingbird feeders from recycled materials to go along with the garden bed.

How could a similar project be improved? Better coordination different viewpoints would have prevented some obstacles faced throughout the project. Gathering more enthusiasm from the students at HRA would have also provided a more willing group of volunteers for the project.





Project	Reusable Writing Surfaces
Recipient	Bethel Elementary School
Locality	Gloucester
Award	\$500.00

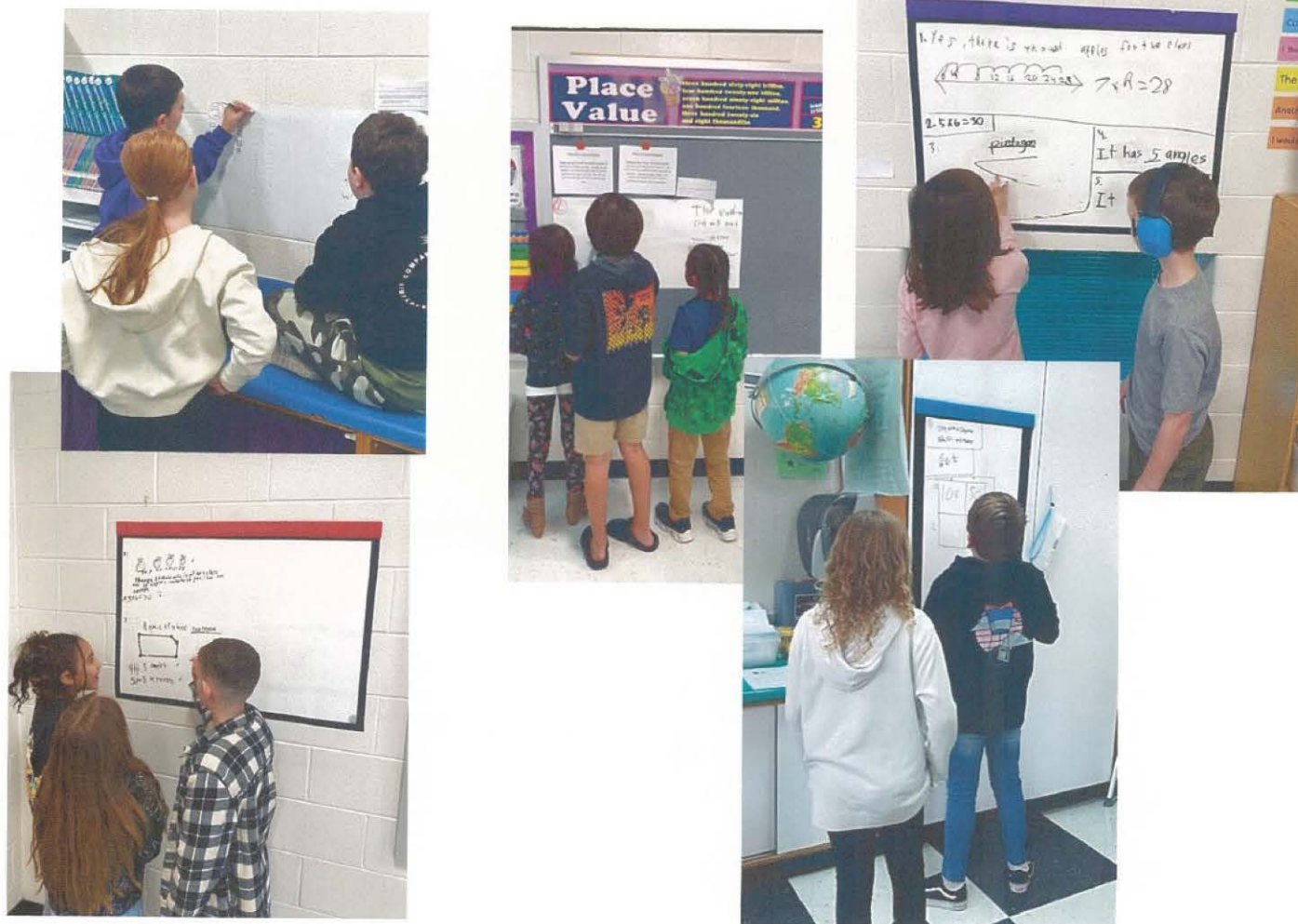
Project Description: Bethel Elementary students in grades 3, 4, and 5 will reduce the amount of paper copies used during their daily math instruction. This will be achieved through the use of "vertical non-permanent surfaces" (Liljedahl, 2021)

Project Outcome: The vertical writing surfaces are a huge success! Teachers report increased student engagement and decreased negative behaviors. They are used daily to cover all Virginia Standards of Learning, and are particularly useful in meeting the states requirements, "The student will use problem solving, mathematical communication, mathematical reasoning, connections, and representations to ... " (this precedes every math SOL) Teachers are also excited about not having to make as many paper copies for their students. They feel good about the effect this has on the environment as well.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? Students love being up and moving about the classroom. They enjoy the collaboration with peers and sharing different ways to look at mathematical concepts. They find it so much more engaging than worksheets!

How could a similar project be improved? We need to consider how to implement this with possible larger class sizes. This just means we need to be creative in our use of space. We also need to order more small dry-erase markers! Thank you so much for supporting our project. It has caught the attention of reading teachers in out buildings, who are not interested in how to make this work in their language arts classes.

Third, fourth, and fifth graders use their vertical writing surfaces to problem solve.



Project	Composting to Reduce Waste in Schools
Recipient	Windsor Oaks Elementary
Locality	Virginia Beach
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: Our school is very excited to work with Dhristi Composting to help reduce the waste in the classroom and cafeteria. We will be using the compost in our garden that the district is building in order to grow food to be used in the cafeteria. We want to teach the students how to reduce food waste and how to grow food that will be used in the food that they eat for lunch.

Project Outcome: The project is still in progress. It is still in the beginning stages of just 5th grade collecting the correct food to put in the composting box. We hope to include the rest of the school in the new school year. A high school student from Princess Anne helped the students create a banner to show the students which foods they could compost. The student also came to the school a couple times a week

to help the students in the beginning to know what to do. I also had Dhristi Composting come and talk with the students to help them better understand the process.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The students were excited to collect the food and see how things are progressing in the composting box. I created a schedule so that the students could all take turns collecting the food on the cafeteria. A high school student from Princess Anne helped the students create a banner to show the students which foods they could compost.

How could a similar project be improved? We are going to improve by including the entire school at the start of the new year. I will have students show the students what to do and then have students in the class collect the composting while in the cafeteria.



<i>Project</i>	Educational Composting Program
<i>Recipient</i>	Virginia Beach Friends
<i>Locality</i>	Virginia Beach
<i>Award</i>	\$500.00

Project Description: Integrating a composting system would not only enhance our environmental sustainability efforts but also serve as an invaluable educational tool for our students. Composting offers a hands-on approach to understanding the cycle of nature, the importance of waste management, and the transformative power of organic materials. By implementing a composting program within the garden, students will have the opportunity to engage in experiential learning, connecting classroom knowledge to real-world applications. I am enthusiastic about the positive impact this composting program could have on our school community and beyond. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and explore ways to implement this exciting project. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Project Outcome: This was a huge success, the kids got to see how valuable compost is in the garden and also how to make the compost. We have set up compost bins around the school, so that the kids can do their part in contributing as well.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The kids enjoyed the harvesting and eating the most. They got a chance to try harvesting from the raised beds that didn't have compost in them, and complete a comparison of what the food tasted like in each bed and made a conclusion about why.

How could a similar project be improved? The kids at VBFS have learned that throwing away food instead of putting it into a compost bin is awful for the environment and for the landfill. They have learned that compost is not only good for the fruits and vegetables we grow but also for the bugs and microbes in the soil.



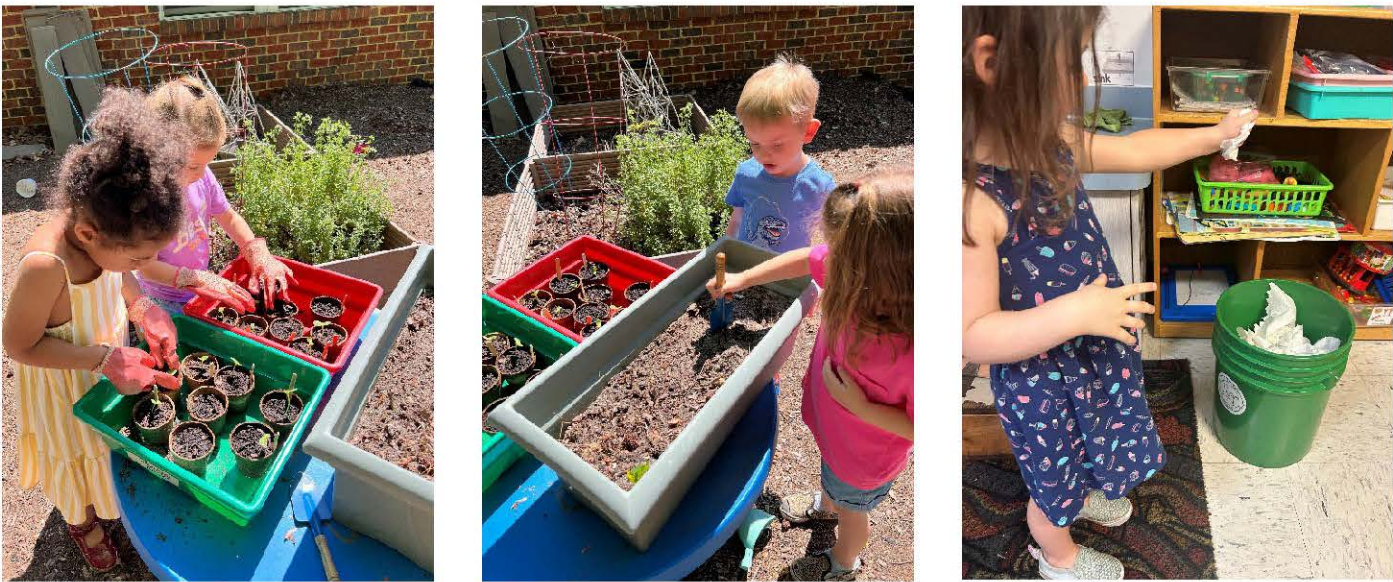
Project	Composting
Recipient	Sunnybrook Day School
Locality	Virginia Beach
Award	\$245.00

Project Description: We will be introducing all students to composting practices in their classrooms as part of a school wide Green Team environmental program. Due to the volume of daily food waste generated in the school and the limited availability of proper space for an on-site composting bin we will be utilizing a professional composting company, Tidewater Compost LLC. The application is for funding to purchase collection containers and materials.

Project Outcome: The composting project was a huge success. The students became very knowledgeable about what items could be turned into compost instead of going to the landfills to rot. By the end of the project children no longer needed guidance about what materials go into the compost bin and which were to be thrown away. Many families provided feedback that their child requested they start composting at home, as well. Our overall environmental impact totaled 885 pounds of trash diverted, which offsets 877 driven miles, 39 gallons of gas and 391 pounds of coals burned.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The students enjoyed learning about what items could be composted, how compost is made, and the benefits of creating compost. Our children were always excited to put items, such as food scraps and paper towels, into the special green bin instead of the trash can.

How could a similar project be improved? We loved our composting project and found that the two biggest obstacles for our school was 1) the cost of the service and 2) the collection bin size. To have the project fit within our allotted activity budget we were limited to a 64gallon curbside toter, which we filled half way through the week. We were able to justify the cost of the service for the 3-4 month period we had it as a learning experience, but a year round cost of over \$1000 annual to maintain the program is unfeasible.



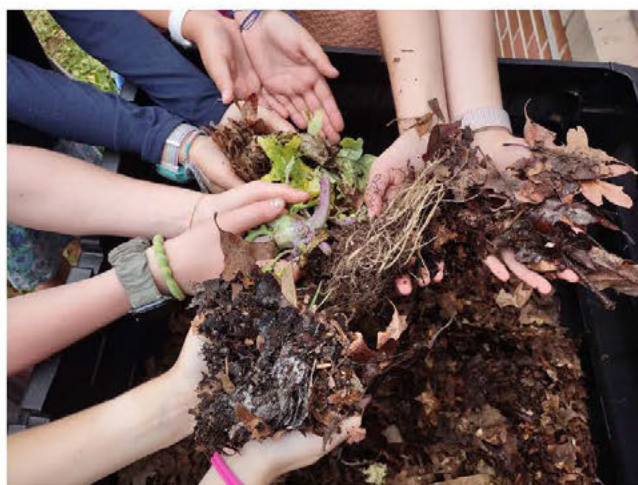
Project	Compost Education Program
Recipient	Norfolk Academy
Locality	Norfolk
Award	\$433.00

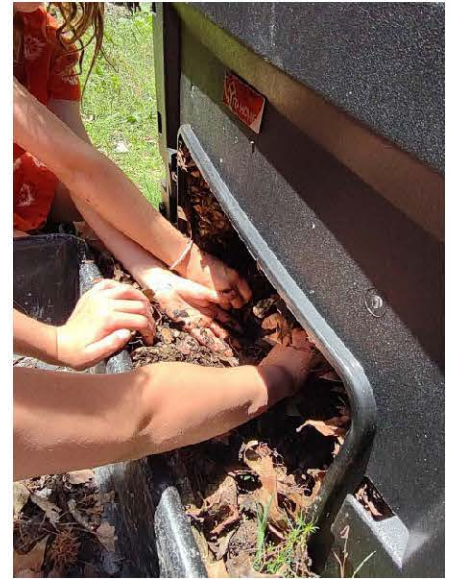
Project Description: The material requested in this proposal will allow us to continue our Compost Education Project with our 4th grade students. We will use two composting systems purchased on Amazon to demonstrate how composting works, how students could do it at home and get into the biology that drives composting. We compare how both systems work and use the finished humus in our organic gardens.

Project Outcome: We purchased two backyard compost bins and associated materials with the funds provided by this grant. 4111 grade students learned about the composting process as we filled both bins with browns and greens (proper cafeteria waste), observed the process and compared the finished product from the two different bins after 10 weeks of composting to decide which style of bin was better. We incorporate many concepts in this applied project including bacteria, fungi, soil food webs, decomposition, nutrient recycling, aerobic vs. anaerobic decomposition, temperature's effect on decomposition rates, landfills and methane production and plant needs. We will use the finished humus on our pollinator garden and organic vegetable garden. orfolk Academy composts food waste during our family style cafeteria lunches. It is beneficial for students to learn about the composting process so they understand why we compost in the cafeteria.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The 4th grade students enjoyed spinning the 'Spin Bin' and feeling the heat in our other composting unit when it was cooking. They also enjoyed rooting around the composted material. The compost needs several more weeks for some of the 'browns' to decompose. I plan to keep this batch over the summer in hopes of taking it to fully finished compost humus that I can show next years 4th grade students as we begin our composting unit when we return in August.

How could a similar project be improved? We hypothesized that the SpinBin would compost faster than the YITAI IOME bin because we could spin/ tumble the SpinBin to keep it more aerated, while we had to dig around the Yitahome with a pitchfork to mix it. Mixing with the pitchfork seemed less effective as we couldn't get down to the bottom of the pile. Hypothesis rejected! The Yi tahome produced a more finished / decomposed product at the end of 10 weeks than the SpinBin. We believe this is because the Yitahome is larger and was able to cook hotter, longer and thus speed up decomposition. I obtained the two composting bins in early spring which didn't give us quite enough time to make a finished batch of humus before school let out. I will begin the unit in late August next school year. I typically begin this project in August at the beginning of our school year.





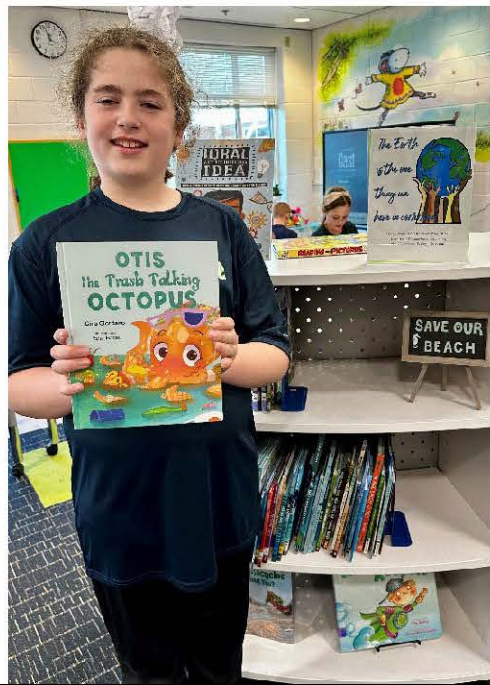
Project	Green Shelf
Recipient	Hermitage Elementary
Locality	Virginia Beach
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: We have purchased "Green" books for our school library. Books with environmental messages focusing on the coastal environment. Books about beach cleanups, ways to recycle, ocean pollution, and how children can make a difference

Project Outcome: We were able to purchase over 30 new books to add to our Green Shelf in our school library. Our students regularly check out books from this shelf full of books with environmental messages. Books are geared for students in Kindergarten ~ 5th grade. We specifically chose books that work with our curriculum. One example is books pertaining to ocean pollution. Our 4th graders do a unit on the garbage patches that are popping up in our oceans.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The students are checking out our green shelf books and challenging classmates to read the same books. They are creating mini books clubs! The students in the lower grades love the "picture" books that they can read. These books are diverse and the children love seeing other children just like them making a difference. Our Ecology Club members sign up to read to classes through out the year, but especially during reading month.

How could a similar project be improved? It's a pretty good project. I am not sure how it can be improved. We have students in the upper grades reading these books to lower grades. We advertise the books on our morning news show. The children do book review videos. And our green shelf is centered where everyone sees it when they walk into our library. It is a huge success.



Project	Monarch Butterfly Waystation
Recipient	Princess Anne Middle School
Locality	Virginia Beach
Award	\$450.00

Project Description: The project will consist of meeting the requirements to become a registered Monarch Watch Monarch Waystation. The major piece left is to plant a good number of the 2 species of native milkweed (*Asclepius incarnata* and *A. tuberosa*). We have a nice raised bed and several surrounding small ponds to plant near. Soil requirements for these species are minimal, and planting sites have been

approved by the Butterfly Society of Virginia. Students have been able to clean up and weed the bed areas with borrowed tools, but it would be nice to have the necessary tools on hand for future upkeep.

Project Outcome: Very successful! Students learned the importance of native plants for caterpillars and that there are citizen science opportunities for observing monarchs from the first arrivals in the spring to migrators in the fall.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? Interestingly enough many students enjoyed being able to just dig a hole and plant a plant. Even the weeding and bed preparation was fun to them!

How could a similar project be improved? Down the line, maintenance is key. I think the addition of a wheelbarrow for mulch moving will be handy.



Project	Pathways into the Native Plant Habitat
Recipient	Bethel Manor Elementary

Locality	Hampton
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: BMES has had a thriving native plant habitat in our enclosed courtyard for 10 years. The pathways are typically mulched once a year and must be weeded regularly as the native plants spread and encroach on the walkways. When the interior pathways are open and inviting, teachers are more likely to schedule visits to the site. However, those who rely on wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches still struggle to navigate. This year, a York High School student tackled Phase 1 of a transformative pathway improvement project to make the habitat accessible to all while also reducing the overall future maintenance of the pathways. A three-foot-wide pathway of pavers was installed within the habitat area during a single workday. With Phase 2, we plan to add similar pathways connecting existing concrete sidewalks to the Phase 1 (and a proposed Phase 2 spur) interior pathways.

Project Outcome: WOW! Near the end of their second day working on connector pathways to the native plant habitat, Juniors and Seniors from Grafton High School's Leadership Class were approached by a class of 2nd Graders who had been engaged in math activities at the opposite end of the school courtyard. This particular visit to the habitat wasn't scheduled or requested but occurred spontaneously as the class passed by on their way back inside. Several students indicated interest in the habitat to the older students, who smiled, stepped aside, and waved them in. As the younger students entered the habitat, their heads kept turning in different directions, as if it were all new. The teacher asked her young students what they had to say to the high school students for building the pathway, and so many gleeful "Thank You's!" erupted from the class. It was truly magical.

While our school's pollinator habitat was established over a decade ago, it is set back in a quiet corner of the courtyard, disconnected from established sidewalks. Its interior mulched pathways were continually being overtaken by enthusiastic native plants. Despite attracting ducks, lizards, rabbits (in a fully enclosed courtyard!), hummingbirds, hawks, butterflies, and plenty of pollinators, the habitat was no longer attracting much attention from students or teachers. These new pathways have re-ignited interest. As was seen before its pathways were even completed, the habitat now seems more purposeful, approachable, and is most certainly more accessible to all. As a bonus, these new pathways are low maintenance and thus more sustainable. Adding trail signage along these new pathways is our next goal as we anticipate heightened interest in immersive field experiences once students return to school next fall.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? The GHS students were extremely hardworking during both of their workdays at BMES. They were scheduled to work for just two hours per session, but they stayed nearly twice that long on the first day. About half made quick work of their planned list of tasks while the others took initiative to tackle additional projects in the courtyard. Unplanned projects included unearthing two stumps that had long been tagged for removal, filling several trash bags with invasive honeysuckle vines that had been smothering a native viburnum, and excavating a second pathway that was to be a future summer project.

Though they drove in personal cars to these workdays, not a single student left early either day as they truly seemed to enjoy making a difference (which they did!). The majority were Seniors in their final week of high school, and yet they chose to work on this project at our school. We are so grateful for their efforts! As this work was scheduled at the end of the school year, most of our elementary students did not have opportunity to explore the new pathways. But if the few who did are any indication, these pathways are sure to rekindle interest in outdoor education from students and teachers alike.

How could a similar project be improved? Most everything went quite smoothly. Since it was near the end of the school year, we got lucky with the weather both days. If we did this again, we might try to schedule the workdays a week earlier to allow time for makeup workdays in case of inclement weather. Also, the first workday coincided with the school's Field Day. That made parking quite a challenge for the high school students involved with the courtyard project. That might not be a problem for other schools with larger parking lots. In addition, we appreciate that the community volunteers from 4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach supplied bottled water for the student volunteers, as only about half of the high school students brought their own water bottles. Having a school set of workgloves and maintenance tools stored onsite in an accessible weatherproof shed would be helpful. The tools and equipment used for this project were lent to us each day by our community volunteers from 4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach. All in all, this was a wonderful collaborative effort among the 20+ GHS students and their teacher and community volunteers from 4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach, with grant funds from askHRgreen.org.



Project	Pollinator Habitat Education Project
Recipient	Williamsburg Community Growers
Locality	Lightfoot
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: The Williamsburg Community Growers is seeking funding to support a milkweed and native plants planting activity for the Williamsburg Community as a part of our Farm Day 2024 event. This project will involve the planting and maintenance of milkweed to create a safe and sustainable habitat for the local pollinator population, specifically for monarch butterflies. By initiating this project during the Farm Day 2024 event, we are able to gather and include a large number of people, including our high school volunteer service learners, to partake in this educational project.

Project Outcome: We had a good crew of volunteers to help plant the 72 butterfly milkweed plugs at our Farm Day 2024 event. We also had a community gardener donate another 100 plugs! The area is colocated with our large Pollinator education kiosk and is now fenced in (deer pressure). We also have a new Monarch Watch official waystation sign.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? Butterflies intrigue people-one of the delightful "bugs" along with lady bugs and dragon flies. This is good! At our Farm Day 2024, we also had a local expert present from the Butterfly Society and he had an education display and was available to answer questions.

How could a similar project be improved? The weeds have already started to overtake the milkweek plugs so we have had to identify teams of volunteers to keep up with that. We hope that when they get of a substantial size, that we can remove the temporary fencing.



Project	Beautify Woodside
Recipient	Woodside High School
Locality	Newport News
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: The Beautifying Woodside project implements native Virginian plants in a garden outside of the school. This initiative provides a welcoming atmosphere outside the school and educates the youth on the planting project 100% student-led.

Project Outcome:

What did the students enjoy the most about this project?

How could a similar project be improved?

Will be carried over to FY25

Project	Children's Garden
Recipient	Virginia Living Museum
Locality	Newport News
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: In its various gardens, the Virginia Living Museum displays an extensive collection of native plants to provide wildlife habitat and support pollinators, educate about 250,000 guests each year about Virginia's plant species, and beautify the environment to create a welcoming experience for the community.

While they focus on spring and fall annual plant sales, the museum's Horticulture staff rely on volunteers to help maintain a variety of native plant gardens on the Museum's 23-acre grounds. The Children's Garden, which provides an interactive outdoor play space for preschool-age children, has become overgrown and has not been actively maintained in recent years.

The museum's "Green Teen Conservation Leaders" - a group of high-school-age volunteers - have developed an interest in horticulture and want to learn more about native plants and gardening through collaboration with the Museum's Horticulture staff. They plan to spearhead a group project, beginning in the summer of 2024 through the 2024-2025 school year, to revitalize the Children's Garden area by planting sensory-friendly plants and developing a rainwater collection area with rain barrels to facilitate the garden's long-term maintenance.

The Children's Garden, originally planted in 2013, was intended as an area for children to discover nature and native plants through sight, touch, and smell. In addition to plants, it includes a Nature Playground where kids can pretend to get trapped in a spider web, hop on mushroom shapes and whisper through

talking tubes, and explore a play Hobbit House. Kids can use a watering can to give flowers a drink or just sit on a bench and watch for hummingbirds, bees, or bugs.

To renew and re-plant the garden, the Green Teens will spend the first half of the year learning about native plants under the guidance of the Museum’s horticulture staff, researching which plant species would bet fit in the garden to appeal to children’s senses while attracting pollinators like birds, butterflies, and caterpillars. They will also learn about rain gardens and design a rainwater collection area adjacent to the Children’s Garden (e.g. using rain barrels or another method of collection). In the fall, they will work with staff to remove overgrown plants, re-potting existing plants to be used elsewhere, and preparing the soil for spring planting. In the early spring of 2025, the Green Teens will complete the actual planting and will develop or install the rain collection area. Later in the spring, the teens will install new signage and continue to maintain the garden as it opens for children to enjoy.

Project Outcome:

What did the students enjoy the most about this project?

How could a similar project be improved?

Will be carried over to FY25

<i>Project</i>	Educational Composting Program
<i>Recipient</i>	Virginia Beach Friends
<i>Locality</i>	Virginia Beach
<i>Award</i>	\$500.00

Project Description: Integrating a composting system would not only enhance our environmental sustainability efforts but also serve as an invaluable educational tool for our students.

Composting offers a hands-on approach to understanding the cycle of nature, the importance of waste management, and the transformative power of organic materials. By implementing a composting program within the garden, students will have the opportunity to engage in experiential learning, connecting classroom knowledge to real-world applications.

I am enthusiastic about the positive impact this composting program could have on our school community and beyond. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and explore ways to implement this exciting project. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Project Outcome:

What did the students enjoy the most about this project?

How could a similar project be improved?

Project	Pond Pals
Recipient	Christopher Academy
Locality	Portsmouth
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: The kindergarten and second grade students are working together on a service project at our school to rework our current pond. We want to change what we currently have to a prefabricated pond so that we are able to better use our space. We have one rain barrel currently but we need to add an additional rain barrel so that we can use that to fill the pond. The plan is to add native plants around the pond, get a prefabricated container to put in, add the rain barrel and then create a hose system that will help move the water from the rain barrels to the pond. Currently we are filling buckets with water from the rain barrel and taking it to the pond. The pond has fish and we had a solar panel so that we could use that for our water bubbler but the solar panel no longer works so we need a new one.

Project Outcome: This project was a success. The students enjoyed working together to add sand and soil under the pond liner. They used their hands to level out the soil. We planted native plants around the pond and test the pond water with our pond testing kit.

What did the students enjoy the most about this project? They enjoyed spreading the soil, carrying sand bags, remaking the pond look more beautiful, and spreading the sand. The students have mentioned that they are excited to see what kind of animal life will make a home there.

How could a similar project be improved? A similar project could be improved by starting it earlier in the school year to have more time to work on it.



Project	Native Plant and Pollinator-Friendly Garden
Recipient	Great Bridge Primary School
Locality	Chesapeake
Award	\$500.00

Project Description: Chesapeake is one of the fastest-growing cities in the Hampton Roads region of southeastern Virginia. Protecting our native habitats, plants, and species will become increasingly important in the years to come. Our project is to provide native plants to pollinators such as bees and butterflies while providing hands-on learning opportunities for our students. Creating outdoor learning spaces using native plants will not only educate our students but will teach them responsibility in caring for local habitats and the environment. Startup materials will be purchased locally and long-term maintenance will be provided by various student groups.

Great Bridge Primary School opened its doors to a brand new school in 2019. The building was built specifically to encourage outdoor learning activities and STEM/STEAM integrated lessons. Post-COVID, our teachers and students are now able to begin the journey of adding outdoor learning labs including native plant and pollinator gardens to our campus.

Students will research and identify native plants using various educational tools including Chromebooks and PebbleGo databases, and, discover what native plants will be pollinators for our local bees, butterflies, and birds. Using the results of their research, students will engage in the design, planning, and planting of a native plant garden. Chromebooks (Google Sheets) will be used in designing and planning the size (width and length) of the garden. Particular attention will be given to those native plants to attract the Monarch Butterfly, a local but endangered favorite.

Students will create and produce Google Slide Presentations to educate others on the importance of maintaining native plants and fostering successive generations of endangered species.

When planting season begins, students will determine the area and perimeter of the raised garden bed. Students will measure and weigh as we add composted materials to our beds and use composted materials to plant and grow native plants. During this process, students will be observing, tracking, and measuring our plants. Compost is an excellent additive for increasing organic matter in our soil.

Project Outcome:

What did the students enjoy the most about this project?

How could a similar project be improved?

Project	Recycling in the Classroom
Recipient	Bethel High School
Locality	Hampton
Award	500.00

Project Description: Our school does not currently have a school-based recycling program. We would like to add bins to the classrooms that are eager to recycle. The SPED students are recycling plastic film (TREX) currently and would like to add curbside collection to the list. We have 18 SPED students total between two functional classes that will participate in this program. Teachers have already submitted their input to order recycle bins for their classrooms. So far, 32 teachers have responded and are willing to take part in this pilot program

Project Outcome:

What did the students enjoy the most about this project?

How could a similar project be improved?

Will be carried over to FY25
