

INSIDE BUSINESS | RIVER STAR HALL OF FAME

The Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame recognizes one business each year that best exemplifies the spirit of the River Star business program. Results of “Doin’ right by the river” can be cumulative.

HRSD shines brightest among 2016 stars

THE BATHROOM DOOR at Paradise Creek Nature Park will ask visitors an intriguing question this fall.

“Over the last 100 years, what single change reduced bacteria-related pollution the most in the Elizabeth River?”

The answer inside: “Voters in 1940 created HRSD to keep human poo out of the river. Before that, your poo went straight to the river ... 25 million gallons of raw sewage dumped in local waters each day.”

HRSD – Hampton Roads Sanitation District – remains the largest discharger to the Elizabeth River but earns the spot in the Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame for 2016 for the wastewater treatment service’s unflagging focus on finding innovative new ways to reduce water pollution.

The education messages planned for the park’s composting toilets at Elizabeth River Project’s Fred W. Beazley River Academy, under construction this winter, will describe just the tip of the iceberg.

HRSD is engaged with area cities in massive upgrades of its aging pipes and treatment plants, in part to meet regulatory requirements but so often moving beyond the minimum to pursue new territory. When Elizabeth River Project asked, HRSD replaced a major pipe across the Lafayette. HRSD partnered with Elizabeth River Project to launch a citizen stewardship program that’s started a movement – River Star Homes, now copied throughout the region with Bay Star Homes. The wastewater agency added a massive green roof at its VIP plant on the Elizabeth, then built its new Virginia Beach headquarters to exemplify green practices.

Elizabeth River Project Executive Director Marjorie Mayfield Jackson says her favorite example of HRSD as environmental pioneer, though, involves the stories told by Danny Barker, HRSD environmental scientist, of hiking through dense briars along Wayne



HRSD’s technical services division gathers at its monitoring vessel, often deployed to help resolve river problems.

Creek, a finger of the Lafayette. “Danny said they went places no human had ever been,” says Jackson.

The HRSD team was on the hunt for the source of inexplicably high levels of bacteria to help Elizabeth River Project achieve a community-wide plan for the Lafayette. Barker’s team investigated not only the river banks, but in the lab, perfecting state-of-the-art “source tracking.” When a human source was identified, the city of Norfolk joined the search and found a leaking underwater sewer main. Within three months, Wayne Creek tested normal.

“HRSD is always there when the river has a need,” says Jackson, noting key monitoring performed for multiple studies, expansion of free pump out for boater sewage, and engineering of molds for citizen-scale oyster reefs.

Coming up on the second toilet door at the park: “What will toilets look like in the next 100 years?” HRSD will have the answer.

Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame

2011 Inaugural Winner – BAE Systems Norfolk Ship Repair

2012 Winner – Port of Virginia

2013 Winner – Kinder Morgan/Elizabeth River Terminals

2014 Winner – Old Dominion University

2015 Winner – Wheelabrator Portsmouth

2016 Winner – HRSD

“HRSD is always there when the river has a need.”

MARJORIE MAYFIELD JACKSON,
Elizabeth River Project

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panded Household Hazardous Waste collection by more than 83,481 pounds through increased public events and education.

** St. Paul’s Episcopal Church

– The church expanded a farm market on its grounds to provide vouchers to low-income residents, helping promote local produce. Buying local reduces trucking emissions. The average grocery store food item travels 1,800 miles from farm to table.

***** U.S. Coast Guard – Base Portsmouth** – This support base replaced 30 high-pressure sodium lights with LEDs and completed phase 3 of a habitat improvement effort, where a former lay-down area along the shoreline was restored and planted with native trees.

**** Virginia Beach Environment & Sustainability Office** – This city department revitalized the historic Kempsville area, creating a 3-acre park that features a stormwater pond, extensive landscaping, walkways and a pavilion.

***** Virginia Zoo** – The zoo’s shore on the Lafayette River now features a 1-acre oyster reef constructed in partnership with Elizabeth River Project and Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

***** Volvo Penta of the Americas** – The company in Chesapeake added a “cool roof” with reflective capabilities to absorb less sunlight and heat, which reduces energy consumption and bills. This and other energy efforts reduced energy usage by 60,792 kilowatts.

*** Vulcan Norfolk Sales Yard** – The aggregate yard purchased a front-end loader that is up to 30 percent more fuel-efficient than traditional equipment. The showcase yard in Norfolk also added more stormwater controls.

*** Vulcan Westminster Stone & Recycling** – Vulcan’s yard on the shores of the Eastern Branch added a large stormwater pond with a forebay to capture more pollutants and make maintenance easier than for more traditional stormwater ponds. This yard also purchased a fuel-efficient loader.