



Citizens  
for a Better  
Eastern Shore

# CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

# SHORELINE

*A Journal of Natural Resources, Public Affairs and  
Culture on the Eastern Shore of Virginia*

TM

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Number 2

## Community Unity Day 2024 Volunteers Prove We Are Stronger Together

By Donna Bozza



Enthusiastic artists, siblings Perry, Reid, and Graham Wilcox, decorated lunch bags to cheer seniors.



Sister Power: three local sororities provided plenty of it! Sylvia Stanley, Betty Sims-Bell, Marie Billie, Kim Johnson, Veronica Byrd, Subrina Owens-Parker, Deborah Giddens Griffin

Warm hearts served warm soup to 500+ Northampton County seniors during this year’s Community Unity Day Celebration held on January 15, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. “S.O.U.P.” – Serving Our Unified People – brought together a diverse coalition to honor King’s legacy of service to community, and to let seniors know their contribution to the fabric of Shore life is still appreciated.

Community Unity has been a decades-long partnership between the Northampton Branch of the NAACP and CBES. Stepping up to the plate in more recent years have been WESR Shore Daily News and the Eastern Shore Area Agency on Aging/Community Action Agency.

In the past, this celebration was in the form of a Community Unity Breakfast at Northampton High School. When COVID struck, the celebration moved to a radio program and then was modified to add another

community-building component – providing seniors with a hot meal. Just as importantly, the food distribution event lifts seniors up during what can be a lonely time after the holiday season.

On the morning of MLK Day, an hour-long salute was produced and broadcast by WESR/Shore Daily News. The program included messages from a variety of community-minded individuals and businesses, as well as quotations from Dr. King’s prolific writing and speeches. Musical inspiration came from archived songs by the Mt. Calvary Male Choir and Broadwater Academy students, plus the MLK Day standard, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

The S.O.U.P. event host, Giddens Do Drop Inn in Birdsnest, buzzed with the activity of about 30 volunteers, who cooked, served, and packed hearty soups, as children decorated lunch bags with cheerful

drawings and stickers with inspirational King quotes. The boxes of food were then picked up or delivered around the county to churches and residential units, making their way to grateful recipients.

A variety of partners included Pender & Coward Attorneys at Law, who proved once again they are a full “service” law firm. They not

*See Community, Cont’d on p. 3*

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# Workforce Housing Shortage ...

## ... The Problem Is Clear, the Solutions Elusive

By Mary Miller

Once again, the lack of enough workforce housing has come around for more discussion. Many rural counties in Virginia, especially ones with tourism/second home/retirement economies, are still looking for a quick fix. Increasing density, creating overlays, expediting permits – nothing seems to be working to attract workforce-housing development.

Can a developer or builder be expected to provide below-market rate housing units? Can a local government reasonably expect a non-profit or philanthropic group to show up and solve the community's middle-income housing shortage? Does a local government have the authority to increase housing density in various Districts in violation of its own zoning code? The answer to all of the above is probably "no." And those are the questions, and the answer, Northampton County's Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors are faced with. If there were good solutions – a government program, a pathway to guarantee and enforce middle-income rental prices – other Virginia counties would be using them.

### Are There Any Immediate Solutions?

Yes. The Planning Commission is grappling with the possibility of adapting existing commercial buildings to residential units, and providing an affordable dwelling unit density bonus of 10% – in Districts where such multi-family uses are "precluded by maximum density limits for a zoning district." An example would be a closed grocery store in an Agriculture/Rural Business District, where the residential density is 1 unit per 20 acres. If the building was converted into 3 apartments, 1 would be required to be "affordable."

Another possibility, included in the Zoning Ordinance (which seems to be overlooked at recent meetings and work-session discussions), is the permitted conversion of properties to apartments in Commercial and Existing Business Districts. Some rural counties, as well as urban areas, are determining that older commercial buildings such as malls, motels, and other outmoded venues can be valuable assets for conversion to much-needed rental units. Since both of these zoning districts in Northampton County permit apartments, and they both have NO underlying residential density requirements, the sites are limited only by health, building, parking, and safety regulations. The former Kiptopeke Inn is an example of conversion from commercial to residential use. Since these would be privately financed conversions, however, there would be no requirement to make rental units affordable to the local workforce.

There are 2 things missing from both of these solutions. First, builders and developers willing to invest in the solutions. The lack of interest by the building industry in creating housing below the local market rate is shared by rural counties across Virginia and across the country. Second, a mechanism to force private landlords to



guarantee affordable rents to the county's workforce.

### What About Long-term Solutions?

At least 1 regional county decided to try a pro-active, comprehensive approach to the problem. Instead of passive actions like density bonuses and fast-track applications that were not luring developers, James City County admitted that the problem was mainly financial, and that the county had to be involved in the solution. County financial contribution would ensure some control over rental prices.

Although James City County is much larger than either of the Shore counties and the demographics vary, the similarities are what contribute to both areas' workforce-housing shortage. The common denominators include a tourism/second home/retirement economy; the growth of high-market-rate housing; a desire to maintain rural and cultural assets; and the inability of mid-level workers to afford housing near their jobs.

A Workforce Housing Task Force was appointed by the James City County Board of Supervisors. It included citizens, realtors, builders, tourism and other business representatives, and county and regional officials. It received technical assistance from county planning professionals, transportation and education representatives, and community and neighborhood development organizations. A professional consulting team assisted the Task Force.

The resulting Report outlined a 13-month process; among many other recommendations, the following might be adapted to Shore counties:

See **Housing**, Cont'd on p. 3

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## Community, Cont'd from p. 1

only provided much-needed financial assistance, but also brought their spirited team from Virginia Beach to supply hands-on help.

The success of S.O.U.P. owes much to Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Beta Alpha Pi Zeta Chapter; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Pi Epsilon Omega Chapter; and Accomack Northampton Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., all providing an enthusiastic example of service to the community.



## Housing, Cont'd from p. 2

- Create a county Workforce Housing Task Force similar to above – provide technical and consultant help, and task it with analyzing the county's needs, providing reasonable goals and the means to achieve them
- Develop an inventory of county and other publicly owned land, and assess the suitability for workforce housing at those locations
- Promote existing – and adopt new – property tax abatement programs
- Adopt a property tax exemption and/or abatement for residential properties that guarantees units will be affordable, by using deed restriction or other legal means
- Create a Housing Trust Fund, with a dedicated source of funding to support workforce housing initiatives and to leverage state and federal resources. Funding sources might include diversion and/or expansion of existing taxes and fees; reallocation of a portion of the revenue from Deeds of Conveyance and/or Recordation Taxes; an increase in residential property taxes by 1 cent (\$.01); allocation of a portion of sales tax to the Housing Trust Fund; the adoption of a short-term rental/AirBnB tax; and the development of partnerships with foundations that support housing initiatives.
- Establish and implement a policy for the preservation and/or redevelopment of Mobile Home Parks
- Explore adding cottage homes to the housing stock in Mobile Home Parks, including identifying zoning and other regulatory changes that would be needed

## Conclusion

Arbitrarily increasing density and hoping for lower-cost housing has not worked in other counties. Northampton's district densities are specifically supported by its Comprehensive Plan, and Plan amendments would direct zoning density changes. Long-term planning for workforce housing will take creative thinking, determined decision-making, and dedication to county participation in providing housing opportunities for the workers the county needs for its economic well-being. Establishing a Workforce Housing Task Force would only be the first step – agreeing to implement housing goals would be the next. Northampton County leaders would need to make the goals a reality. 🐦

We also thank Cooper Hurley Injury Lawyers for all their support, and gracious donors Ann Hallerman, Nancy Kinzinger, Lisa Kong, and Meriwether Payne. Local businesses like Rayfield's Pharmacy pitched in, too. Eastern Shore Coastal Roasting Company kept volunteers fueled with delicious coffee, as well as joining in the fun.

Many seniors benefited from this year's Community Unity Celebration. But all who gathered that cold morning also shared the warmth and purpose of King's words:

*"When I am commanded to love, I am commanded to restore community, to resist injustice, and to meet the needs of my brothers."* 🐦



*For the 6th year, our friends at Pender & Coward provided funds and a fun team of volunteers. CBES Donna Bozza, Bryan Peebles, Northampton NAACP Jane Cabarrus, Mancha Stanton, and Cozette Holland.*



*Volunteers for S.O.U.P., the MLK Day effort to distribute soup and other food to seniors, kept rolling into the Do Drop Inn in Weirwood all morning.*



*Volunteers at Mt. Sinai Gospel Tabernacle Church delivered 70 soup servings to seniors in the Fairview area. Dianne Davis and Assistant Pastor Marilyn Williams.*



## Many Thanks to CBES 2023\* Donors

*In February, a month that celebrates love, we acknowledge those who shared their love of our Shore home through Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore.*

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" – Helen Keller*

*In this our 36th year, it is you, our new and decades long members, who honor CBES ongoing efforts to help INFORM – ENGAGE – EMPOWER our community. It's only by working together that we can continue to strive for a better Eastern Shore for all.*

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**\*Please Note: Donations dated after December 31, 2023 will be included in 2024 Giving.**

*See Donors, Cont'd on page 4*

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***Please note: If part of your donation was applied to a CBES membership, IRS rules prevent inclusion of that amount in your tax-deductible donation total.***

## Outreach and Education Programs Inspire the Next Generation of Conservationists

Submitted by Hali Plourde-Rogers, Director, VES Land Trust

To conserve the farms, forests, and wetlands on the Eastern Shore of Virginia forever – which is admittedly a very long time – we need to not only permanently preserve the land but also nurture the next generation of conservationists and land stewards. Outreach and education programs create opportunities for inspiration and motivation. One child, delighted by dispersing cattail seeds or thrilled at finding a tiny frog the size of an adult's thumbnail, may be a future farmer, forester, biologist, or advocate. We may be able to set the stage, but the future is in the hands of those who follow us.

With these lofty goals – of permanent land protection and inspiring budding conservationists – VES Land Trust offers nature-based experiences for Elementary and Middle School students. These outdoor experiences also enhance learning in the classroom. For students in the second grade, VES Land Trust hosts a half-day field trip at The Nature Conservancy's Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve Birding and Wildlife Trail. This nature walk takes students through high marsh, upland forest, low marsh, early successional habitat, and man-made ponds. Students observe the differences in these habitats, learning about what plants and animals are found in each.

For Middle School students, VES Land Trust has partnered with Mrs. Sarah Brown Clark, Visual Arts Instructor at Nandua Middle School for the last 3 years. Mrs. Clark teaches photography and plein air painting, in connection with VES Land Trust's "Picture and Paint the Shore" art shows. At the culmination of the lesson, students are invited to submit photographs and paintings celebrating the

natural environment of the Eastern Shore to the Paint and Picture the Shore art show.

Future iterations of these programs could include bringing students to privately owned conserved lands

*See Outreach, Cont'd on page 7*



*Jordyn Daley, eighth-grader at Nandua Middle School, and her award-winning painting "Pale Woods," at Paint the Shore, November 2023. Jordyn won the Student People's Choice Award.*



*Arianna Donohoe, eighth-grader at Nandua Middle School, and her award-winning painting "Rocky Rainbow," at Paint the Shore, November 2023. Arianna won the Student Artist's Choice Award.*



*Melanie Bennet, eighth-grader at Nandua Middle School, and her award-winning photo at Picture the Shore, November 2022. Melanie won the Student People's Choice Award.*

## Outreach, cont'd from p. 6

protected by VES Land Trust-held conservation easements. VES Land Trust works with private landowners to preserve their property, and is always looking for new and creative ways to facilitate guided public access. This might look like a photography field trip for Middle and High School art students, or even a second-grade nature walk. One easement donor, Grayson Chesser, already hosts a troop of Boy Scouts annually at his farm for a weekend of camping and fishing.



The Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust is always in need of volunteers to support its outreach and educational programs. For more information on how you can participate in this community outreach, contact VES Land Trust by email at [director@veslt.org](mailto:director@veslt.org). 



*A second-grader from Occohannock Elementary School collects specimens during a nature walk on the The Nature Conservancy's Birding and Wildlife Trail, October 2023.*



*Second-graders from Occohannock Elementary School participate in an activity, led by volunteer Jim Roessler, that introduces them to a variety of bones, shells, feathers, and seeds found on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, October 2023.*



*Second Graders from Pungoteague Elementary, guided by Zoë Colatarci, Conservation Education Assistant with the Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve, observe a pond in the woods along The Nature Conservancy's Birding and Wildlife Trail.*

## Primary Election 2024

The Republican and Democratic presidential primaries will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

- Candidates for the Republican primary are –
  - ✓ Chris Christie
  - ✓ Ryan L. Binkley
  - ✓ Vivek Ramaswamy
  - ✓ Donald J. Trump
  - ✓ Ron D. DeSantis
  - ✓ Nikki R. Haley
- Candidates for the Democratic primary are –
  - ✓ Marianne Williamson
  - ✓ Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
  - ✓ Dean Benson Phillips

No excuse is needed for voters who choose to vote by mail or vote early in person. Key dates to remember:

- Friday, January 19, to Saturday, March 2 – in-person early voting at Registrar's office (including Saturday, February 24)
- Monday, February 12 – deadline to register
- Friday, February 23 – deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot

For more information, and details on polling locations, visit the Registrars' websites for Accomack County (<https://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/registrar>; 757-787-2935) and Northampton County ([https://www.co.northampton.va.us/government/departments\\_elected\\_offices/voter\\_registration\\_and\\_elections](https://www.co.northampton.va.us/government/departments_elected_offices/voter_registration_and_elections); 757-678-0480).

Remember, all elections matter, and every vote counts – including yours!



## RECYCLING CORNER

By Sue Mastyl

### Local Thrift Stores and Consignment

One of the best ways to reduce/reuse/recycle is to donate to and shop at our local thrift stores and consignment shops (some thrift stores also have brand-new products for sale; some antique stores may also accept items for consignment).

Here are the shops that we are aware of on the Shore; call or check Facebook for hours of operation. Nonprofit beneficiaries are listed in parentheses.

#### Consignment Shops

- **The Dogwood Branch** – upscale jewelry, home goods, small furniture items (Shore History), 4 North Street, Onancock, 757-789-5368
- **Seaside Consignment** – clothing and accessories, 25 Market Street, Onancock, 757-524-0050

#### Thrift Stores

- **Secondhand Sunshine Thrift Store** – 4405 Deep Hole Road, Chincoteague, 443-359-1186
- **The Opportunity Shop Thrift Store and Outreach Ministry** (United Women in Faith, Christ United Methodist Church) – 6254 Church Street, Chincoteague, 757-336-6394
- **CUMC Fellowship House** – thrift, collectibles, and antiques (Christ United Methodist Church), 6263 Church Street, Chincoteague, 757-336-6394
- **Penny Pincher Thrift Store** – 13110 Lankford Highway, Hallwood, 757-824-4418
- **Dunne Avenue Vintage and Thrift** – furniture, clothing, household items, 18471 Dunne Avenue, Parksley, 757-894-3268
- **Grandma's Attic Thrift Store** – 22377 Lankford Highway, Accomac, nann60@yahoo.com
- **Dos Santos Thrift Store** – furniture, clothing, household items (Dos Santos Food Pantry), 25377 Lankford Highway, Suite B, Onley, 757-710-4991
- **Light House Ministries Thrift and Furniture Stores** – clothing, household goods (Lighthouse Ministries), 25523 East Main Street, Onley, 757-787-8445
- **Light House Ministries Furniture Store** – furniture, household goods (Lighthouse Ministries), Four Corners Plaza, Onley, 757-302-0569
- **Born Again Thrift Store** (Shore Christian Academy) – 36310 Lankford Highway, Belle Haven, 757-710-3163
- **ESVA Habitat ReStore** – furniture, building supplies, household goods (Habitat for Humanity), 3271 Main Street, Exmore, 757-442-4687

## Chocolate Cobbler



There is often a science component in food. Theobromine is a naturally occurring compound similar to caffeine. The best source of this compound is dark chocolate. Theobromine is reputed to do everything - from lowering blood pressure and bad cholesterol, to improving cognitive function and tooth health, to suppressing coughs.

So, what have we learned today? Eat more dark chocolate! And this traditional southern chocolate cobbler may be one of the best ways to get an adequate intake of theobromine. The prep here seems somewhat haphazard, as cake-making goes. It's more of a pudding-cake. Don't worry – just follow the directions. Happy Valentine's Day!

- 1 stick of butter
- 1 ½ cups white sugar
- 1 ½ cups *self-rising* flour
- 1 cup milk
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1 cup brown sugar
- ½ cup cocoa powder
- 2 cups hot water

Preheat oven to 350°. While oven is heating, melt butter in a 9" x 13" baking pan. Mix together white sugar, flour, milk, and vanilla – then pour over melted butter. Mix brown sugar with cocoa powder and spread evenly on top of the batter. Slowly pour hot water over the top of everything. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until the top springs back when lightly touched. Serve warm – maybe with whipped cream or ice cream – if you need more sugar!

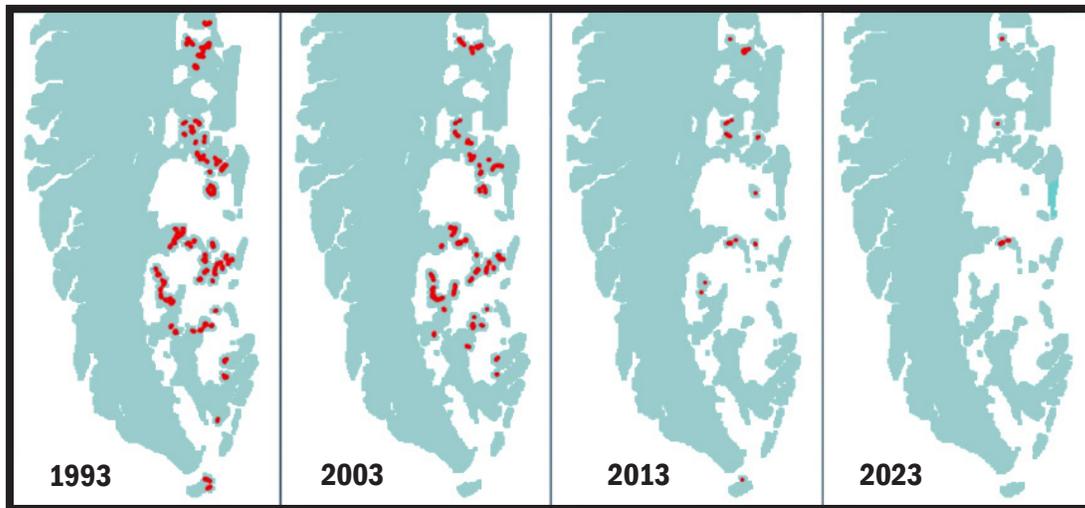
Mary Miller – The Kitchen Hive

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- **Anointed & Appointed Hands Thrift Shop** – clothing, accessories, furnishings (Anointed Hands Ministry), 3324 Main Street, Exmore, 757-607-6717
- **Margaret's Thrift Shop** – clothing, household accessories, 16353 Lankford Highway, Eastville, 757-331-3092

# Laughing Gulls in Dramatic Decline

By Sue Mastyl



Survey locations of laughing gull colonies along the Virginia barrier islands, showing a decline of more than 90% in just 30 years. Center for Conservation Biology.

A new survey from the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) of laughing gull nesting colonies in the seaside marshes of Virginia's barrier islands shows a decline of more than 90% in the last 30 years. "As far back as we have records, laughing gulls have been the most numerous colonially nesting waterbird in Virginia," noted Dr. Bryan Watts, Director of CCB.

Historically, the nesting colonies were so dense that residents would collect the eggs, hence the names of Gull Marsh, Egging Marsh, and Big Easter. Now, rising sea

levels and more frequent inundation from high tides and storms have reduced the nesting sites to the "very highest spots in the higher marshes." And the current trend indicates that "over time [the gulls] will be excluded from their traditional nesting grounds."

In addition to the highly visible laughing gulls, other species (including seaside sparrows, saltmarsh sparrows, willets, American black ducks, and clapper rails) are facing similar pressures from sea-level rise. 

## ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ Perdue's Groundwater Permit Reduced

By Sue Mastyl

At its October meeting, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee reviewed the draft groundwater withdrawal permit for the Perdue Farms plant. The plant has been in operation since 1971. The current permit, issued in August 2012, allowed up to 700 million gallons a year (MGY) and 78 million gallons a month. The current permit expired in July 2022; the renewal application requested the same amount, but a technical analysis showed that this amount did not meet the 80% drawdown criterion, specifically for the middle Yorktown-Eastover aquifer. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) therefore modified the permit application, allowing 700 MGY in the first 2 years, with gradual step-downs to 650 MGY by years 11 to 15 (permits must be renewed every 15 years).

This is the first time that this criterion has been met in the Eastern Shore of Virginia Groundwater Management Area, requiring a reduction in the requested withdrawal amount. The 80% drawdown criterion was established to prevent the water level in a confined aquifer from dropping below the top of the aquifer, and is calculated as "80% of

the distance between the land surface and the top of the aquifer."

Historically, the actual withdrawals by Perdue have exceeded the 650 MGY level frequently from 1996 onward. In order to stay within the permitted levels, Perdue will need to submit an Alternative Source Analysis and Development Plan within 1 year, including site-specific investigations of other aquifers.

As part of their environmental stewardship policy, in 2018 Perdue Farms announced "aggressive and transparent 5-year goals ... to reduce water usage intensity by 25%" across all operations. By 2022, water usage was only reduced by 6.6%, partly due to increased usage for sanitation during COVID.

The Committee noted that one other area on the Shore is close to this situation, with only 3 feet above the 80% drawdown criterion – the Tyson plant, whose permit was renewed in December 2022 for 589 MGY.



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**GREAT NEWS!**  
**2024**  
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**Bike Tour**

**Saturday, October 26**  
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City \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 yr. Regular Membership (includes ShoreLine) \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership (includes ShoreLine) \$500

\_\_\_\_\_ Optional add'l tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Gift subscription to ShoreLine for a friend: \$25

Please provide recipient's name, address, and email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer for our community-building opportunities:

Bike Tour \_\_\_\_\_ Community Unity Day \_\_\_\_\_

Oyster Roast \_\_\_\_\_ Clean the Bay Day \_\_\_\_\_

ShoreLine reporter \_\_\_\_\_ Hospitality \_\_\_\_\_

Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate Forums \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative \_\_\_\_\_ Where needed \_\_\_\_\_

Send to CBES, PO Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347  
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