



## News Release

### Hampton Roads Planning District Commission FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **HR3 Awards Mini-Grant Project of the Year to Hampton Roads Elementary School**

Chesapeake, VA – September 11, 2008—Every year, the education committees of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) award mini-grants to qualifying projects. For the first time, these committees (HR CLEAN, HR STORM, and HR WET) have selected a **Mini-Grant Project of the Year** and an **Honorable Mention**. The awards recognize projects based on community involvement, creativity, impact on students, and other factors.

The teachers who coordinated will be recognized and awarded plaques for their schools at the 2008 Hampton Roads Association of Environmental Educators (HRAEE) Annual Conference at the Virginia Aquarium on September 11.

**The 2008 Mini-Grant Project of the Year** was awarded to Thalia Elementary School in Virginia Beach for the Fifth Grade Oyster Gardeners Project. Patricia Sare coordinated the project and applied for the mini-grant. The project was funded by HR STORM. The students were able to raise and plant nearly 1,400 oysters in the Lynnhaven River. The project also enabled Boy Scout, Tim Collins, to complete his requirements to become an Eagle Scout by building a pathway to the creek where the oysters were raised.

**The Honorable Mention** was awarded to Jane H. Bryan Elementary School in Hampton for the First Grade Butterfly Garden Project. HR CLEAN funded this beautification project. Christine LaPointe coordinated the project and applied for the mini-grant. She said of her first grade students, "The children loved being able to dig in the dirt. Many of them had never done that before or even seen a worm! .They could not believe there were worms in the dirt!"

The Mini-Grant Program and the Project of the Year Awards are funded through the HRPDC by the 16 Hampton Roads localities. These programs assist in meeting local goals and state requirements and are coordinated through three regional environmental education committees: the Hampton Roads Water Efficiency Team (HR WET), the Regional Stormwater Management Public Information and Education Subcommittee (HR STORM), and HR CLEAN (the region's committee on waste management, litter prevention and beautification).

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The mini-grants are generally funded in amounts up to \$500, although the committees finance larger projects through cooperative funding. Schools, youth groups, scouting groups, and other youth organizations may apply for a mini-grant at any of the committee websites: [www.hrclean.org](http://www.hrclean.org), [www.hrstorm.org](http://www.hrstorm.org), or [www.hrwet.org](http://www.hrwet.org).

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### Included Photos

Photo 1: Thalia Elementary students prepare oyster spat for “planting” in the Lynnhaven River.

Photo 2: Thalia Elementary students show a fish some love during a oyster gardening project.

Photo 3: The mini-grant project funded by HR STORM enabled Thalia Elementary to build an outdoor learning center.