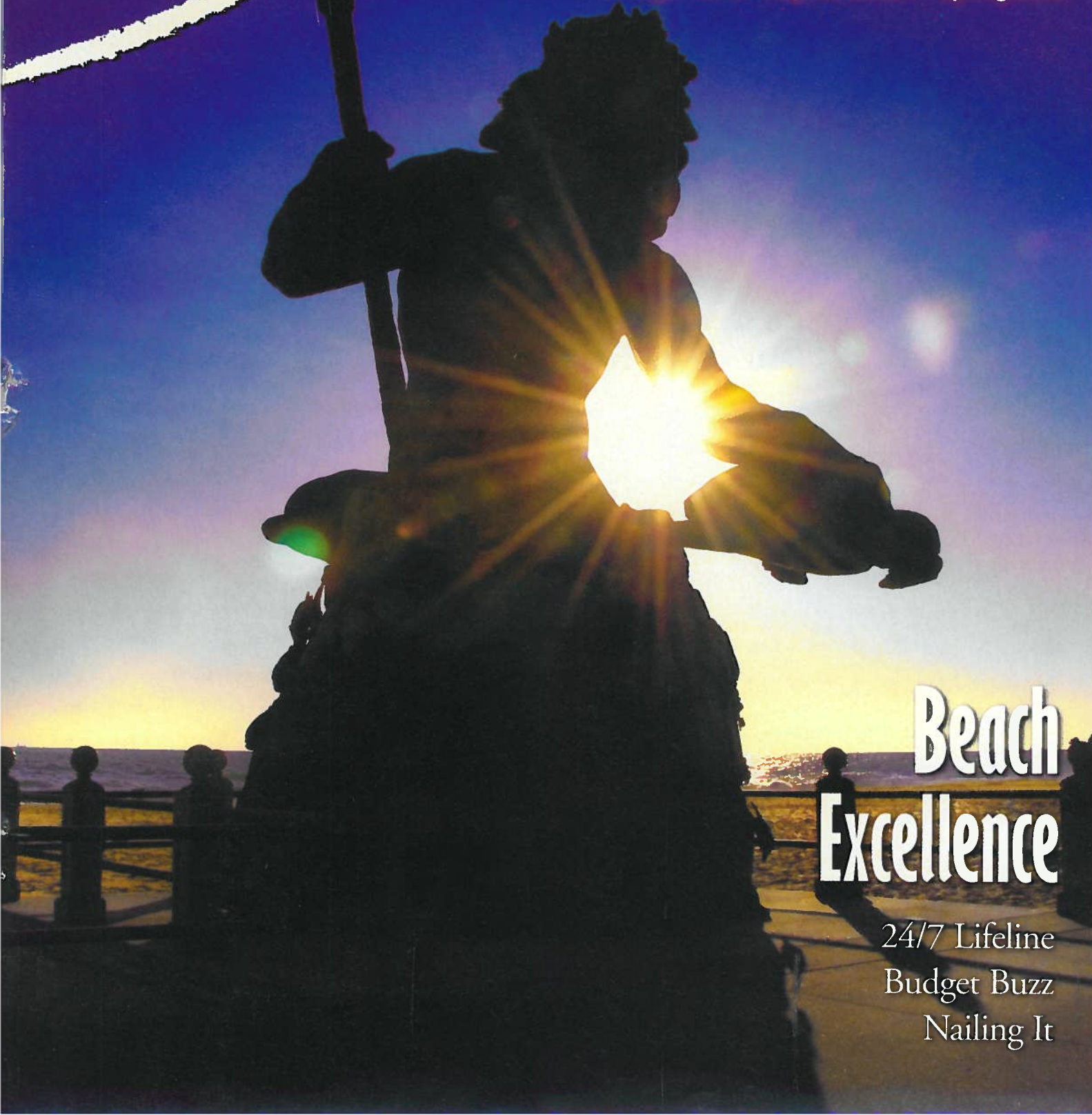


Beach

The Magazine of Virginia Beach Spring 2008



Beach Excellence

24/7 Lifeline
Budget Buzz
Nailing It

Oysters Rock!

Preserving the Lynnhaven

By Lisë Chandler White

The Lynnhaven River, once a prime oyster harvesting area known worldwide for the legendary “Lynnhaven Fancy” oyster, is making a comeback. Great news came in November when the Commonwealth of Virginia reopened more than 1,000 acres of Lynnhaven River oyster beds that had been closed for decades due to excessive bacteria – proof that efforts to improve water quality are making an impact.

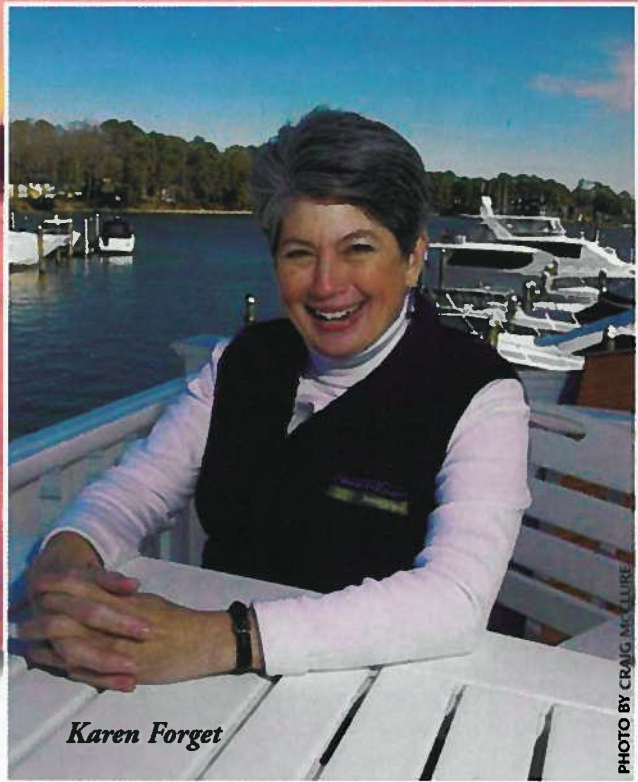
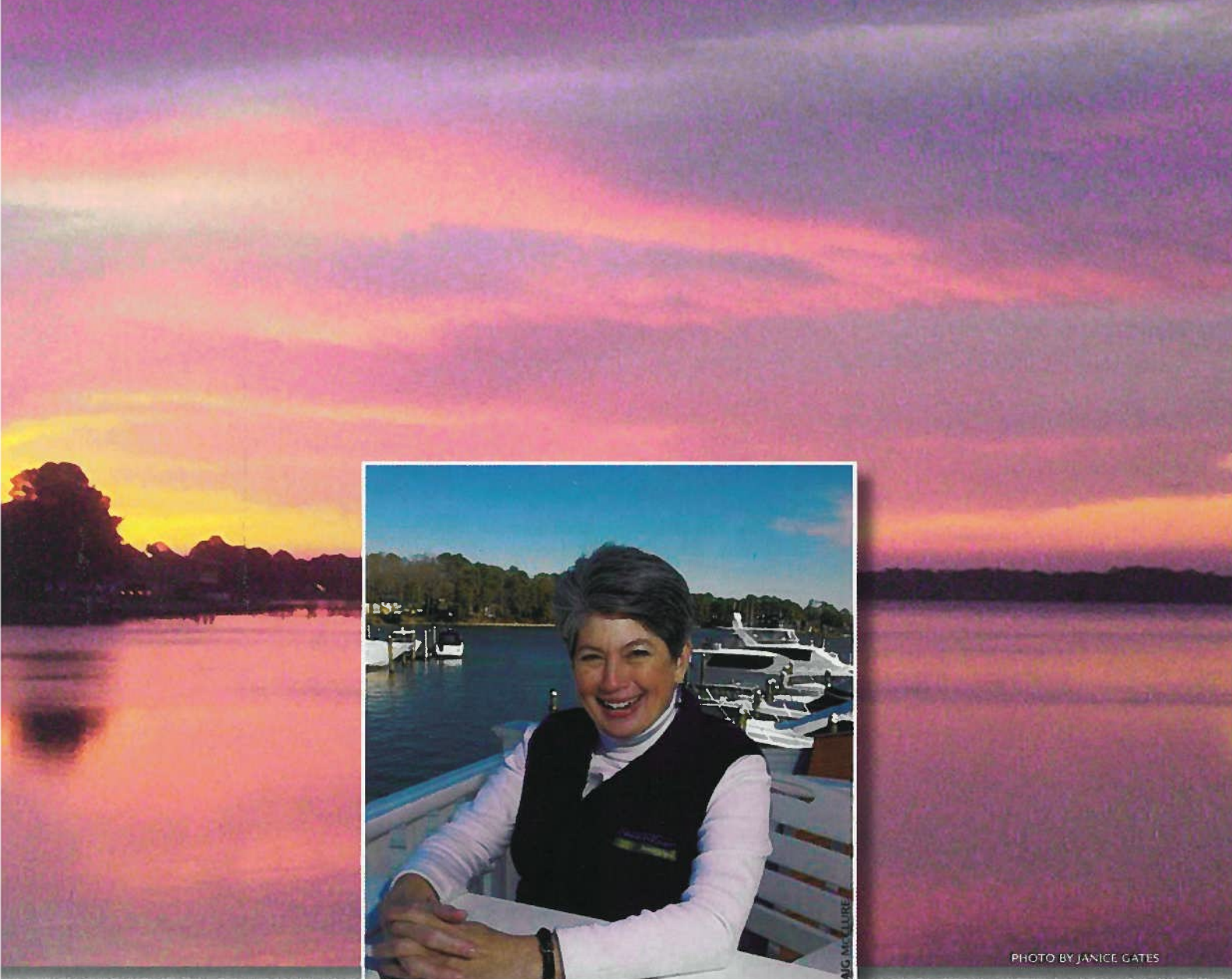
“When you’re cleaning up after your dogs or reducing the use of fertilizer or planting buffer gardens or rain gardens or pumping out

your boat’s holding tank, you know you’re doing the right thing,” says Karen Forget, executive director of Lynnhaven River NOW. “But until you have some kind of empirical measure that it’s really having some effect, you just don’t know. It’s very exciting to have proof that we’re having an effect.”

One effort behind the turnaround is the “no discharge zone” for boaters – a United States Environmental Protection Agency designation requested by the City of Virginia Beach and the Commonwealth that went into effect last spring.

During last year’s three-month leisure season, more than 1,000 gallons of sewage were pumped out of holding tanks from 54 boats through the city’s Boater Education and Pump Out Program. Many more loads were pumped out at marinas or were legally discharged outside of the Lynnhaven as a result of public awareness of the new No Discharge Zone.

The City Council’s long-term vision calls for a quality estuary system and waterways, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has applauded the city’s innovative plan



Karen Forget

PHOTO BY CRAIG MCCLURE

PHOTO BY JANICE GATES

to improve water quality in the Lynnhaven River Watershed as a model for communities across the state.

Other actions leading to improved water quality include extensive sewer system extensions and repairs, street sweeping, construction of oyster reefs, a wet pond adjacent to Americus Avenue, wetlands along Cape Henry Drive and riparian buffer vegetation restoration projects along thousands of feet of shoreline.

The construction of an additional oyster reef was completed in February by Lynnhaven River NOW through a grant from Fish

America Foundation in cooperation with the city and state. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed about 30 acres of oyster reefs last autumn.

Beach citizens and multiple partners also get credit for contributing to the remarkable improvement by cleaning up after their pets, for environmentally sound planting and fertilizer use, for adhering to the no discharge zone, and for refraining from feeding wildlife.

Despite news of a comeback, Forget cautions Beach residents not to rest easy quite yet.

“We still have a long way to go and we must be even more vigilant,” Forget advises. “Although we’re making progress, we must each continue to protect our waterways – to hold on to this success and to increase the improvement.”

To learn more call Steve McLaughlin at 385-4131 or Lynnhaven River NOW at 962-5398, or visit www.VBgov.com or www.LynnhavenRiverNow.org.