

Lynnhaven River NOW and VBCPS Win National Award

[Lynnhaven River NOW's](#) Growing Wetlands in the Classroom Program won a National "I Make a Difference Award" for "Outstanding Green and Sustainable Practices in the area of Land, Water and Air" from [Project Green Schools](#). This program gives teachers and students the opportunity to grow wetland plants in their classrooms and schoolyards, and then transplant them in a local wetland or stormwater area. A grant from Dollar Tree covers all of the equipment and plant costs, as well as the mandatory training.



The salt-tolerant and freshwater wetland plants are grown by a single class or club or shared by a grade level or even the whole school. The plants become teaching tools for STEM lessons, interdisciplinary units, or as a project for green clubs. In April and May, the students have the opportunity to plant out their plants and help restore critical habitats. Some of the plantings can be easily seen along Lake Trashmore, between the picnic shelters and the Edwin Drive parking lot and along the paths at Pleasure House Point.

Although, given to LRNow, this award is really for all Virginia Beach schools that have participated in this program for the past 14 years. When the program first started in 2006-2007, only marsh grasses were raised and planted to help with the restoration of shorelines. Today, a variety of plants are grown and used for wetland restoration, pollinator gardens, dune and meadow restoration, floating wetland islands, and rain gardens school grounds.

The program has involved over 2200 students, teachers and volunteers, giving them the opportunity to give back to their community by:

- planting more than 6,600 plants
- adding 14,000 square feet of vegetated wetland
- planting more than 80 pollinator gardens on school grounds
- restoring 1,100 square feet of upland meadow
- planting and installing 10 floating wetland islands in school stormwater ponds
- removing over 5,000 square feet of invasive plants
- restoring dunes at Back Bay NWR and
- removing hundreds of pounds of trash from our local wetlands and parks

Volunteers from all walks of life come together each year to help with the plantings and to work with the students while they are waiting their turn to plant. Through these interactions, adults have talked to students about their careers, helped them to understand the importance of the wetlands, and instilled a sense of stewardship in the students.

Congratulations to all the Partners in Education and the community volunteers that made this award possible. Together we can make a big difference in the community and in the lives of the students.