



HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL  
STORMWATER EDUCATION INITIATIVES

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MID-YEAR REPORT

**Fiscal Year 2009**  
**July 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008**

# HR STORM

## HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL STORMWATER EDUCATION INITIATIVES

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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HR STORM, the stormwater education program of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), is a coalition of local government staff members who come together to share ideas and pool resources for various educational programs tailored to stormwater management. HR STORM is a subcommittee of the Regional Stormwater Management Committee (RSMC). This committee's focus is to develop and implement successful educational programs promoting stormwater management and pollution prevention throughout the Hampton Roads region. Some of the most recent educational efforts have encouraged watershed-friendly landscaping, proper pet waste management, maintenance of retention ponds (best management practices), and proper disposal methods for household chemicals and lawn and auto maintenance products.

HR STORM educates mainly through its media campaign, because focus group studies have indicated that the media is the most effective way to reach the highly transient Hampton Roads population. Radio, cable, and local television advertisements are the main media sources. Secondary sources are local publications and web advertisements on the media station websites. Using a mix of targeted television, radio, and print advertising, as well as updated website materials, HR STORM continues to provide the region with quality stormwater information.

In an effort to reach pet owners directly, HR STORM began mailing "Scoop the Poop" inserts in animal license renewal bills. Approximately 35,000 Hampton Roads pet owners received the insert. Another 35,000 inserts have been ordered because of high demand.

Other efforts to educate the public about pollution prevention include an automated InfoLine (58-STORM), an informative website, and participation at area events. The website, [www.hrstorm.org](http://www.hrstorm.org), continues to be updated with information for both those inside the water quality industry and general users. Through various local events, HR STORM members were able to interact with the public and distribute educational materials on stormwater pollution prevention techniques.

HR STORM continues to be a regional partner in joint environmental education programming with members of HR CLEAN, HR FOG (Hampton Roads Fats, Oils, and Grease) and HR WET (Hampton Roads Water Efficiency Team), also referred to as HR Green. Prior to HR FOG's creation, the group was known as HR<sup>3</sup>. HR CLEAN is the regional committee dedicated to litter reduction and recycling. HR WET promotes water conservation throughout Hampton Roads. The HR FOG regional committee works to prevent sanitary sewer overflows and backups caused by fats, oils, and grease improperly entering the sanitary sewer system through drains and grease traps.

Through participation in the HR Green Mini-Grant program, the committee reaches its goal of educating and raising awareness of pollution prevention and the importance of water quality among the youth of Hampton Roads. HR Green awarded a combined \$1,441 to schools and youth groups working on projects related to the missions and goals of HR CLEAN, HR STORM and HR WET. Through participation in the mini-grant program, over 1700 Hampton Roads youth will be reached. Of that amount, HR STORM awarded \$291.

The one-page tip and information sheet developed by HR<sup>3</sup> was published in the WVEC Channel-13 *2008 Hurricane Watch*. Seventy-thousand guides were distributed to the public at local Dollar Tree stores, through representatives of HR<sup>3</sup>, and through WVEC Channel-13. WVEC sent out an email blast to 65,000 email addresses encouraging Hampton Roads residents to download the guide. The *2008 Hurricane Watch* was also available on WVEC.com, HRCLEAN.org, HRSTORM.org and www.HRWET.org.

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### FAST POINTS

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- **Over 35,000 “Scoop the Poop” inserts were mailed with animal license renewal bills. The insert was also distributed at Treasurer’s Offices, included in local newsletters, and distributed in pet adoption kits.**
- *2008 Hurricane Watch*, produced by WVEC, included a one-page HR<sup>3</sup> ad. WVEC produced 70,000 hard copies and distributed 65,000 permission based emails encouraging residents to read it.
- **The remaining *Newspapers In Education* print pieces were distributed. HR STORM is working with the other HR Green committees to consider a reprint for fall 2009.**
- **Nearly \$300 was awarded in mini-grants to fund watershed restoration and soil erosion prevention.**
- **Television, cable, and radio contracts were obtained.**

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### MEDIA

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The HRPDC, on behalf of HR STORM, continues to contract with Cox Media for cable advertising. With this provider, HR STORM ads will appear on channels with high viewership such as the Weather Channel, ESPN2, and national news carriers like CNBC and MSNBC, as well as niche channels such as Home and Garden Television (HGTV). WVEC Channel-13 will air the HR STORM spots during peak viewing times of shows such as *The View*, *Oprah* and *Jeopardy*.

New contracts were developed with Metro Traffic. Tips and spots aired during different drive times, reminding citizens about the need for proper auto maintenance and disposal of auto related chemicals, as well as of leaves and lawn maintenance, pet waste disposal and more.

**FY 2009 Media Breakdown:**

<b>MEDIA</b>	<b>CONTRACT</b>
WVEC Channel – 13	\$ 20,000
COX Media	\$ 10,000
The CW Channel – 27	\$ 5,000
Metro Networks	\$ 20,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>

Through the various stations in Hampton Roads airing Metro Traffic announcements, HR STORM sponsored spots gaining the attention of the listening audience. The HR STORM messages continue to be aired during peak drive times, reminding citizens about the need for waste minimization and beautification. The stations of Metro Networks in FY 2009 were as follows:

- |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| WAFX – FM | WNOR – FM | WXEZ – FM |
| WGH – FM  | WNVZ – FM | WXMM – FM |
| WGH – AM  | WPTE – FM | WXTG – FM |
| WHRO – FM | WVBW – FM | WXTG – AM |
| WHRV – FM | WVKL – FM |           |
| WJOI – AM | WWDE – FM |           |

Using a mix of targeted television, radio, and print advertising, as well as updated website materials, HR STORM continues to provide the region with quality stormwater information. The goal for this campaign is to reach 72% of the Hampton Roads 25-54 population with a frequency of three.

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**WEBSITE: [WWW.HRSTORM.ORG](http://WWW.HRSTORM.ORG)**

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The HR STORM website is enhanced and updated frequently with information received from members and gathered by staff. From the website, users are able to download the BMP Maintenance Guide, apply for an HR<sup>3</sup> Mini-Grant, email local representatives, and learn about stormwater issues. The HRPDC uses the program Webtrends to track the activities of the website as well as users' actions. The web statistics below reflect data from the first half of FY 2009.

- ❖ Number of Visits – 4,412
- ❖ Average Visits Per Day – 24

- ❖ Direct Traffic – 98%
- ❖ Visitors from USA – 89%

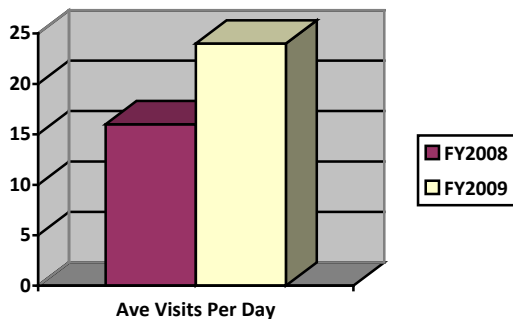
**Most frequently visited pages:**

1. HR STORM [home page](#) – 2,980
2. Best Management Practices (BMP) [Guide](#) - 698
3. Pet Waste Information [Scoop the Poop](#) - 558
4. [Landscaping for Your Waterways](#) Information - 440
5. [Sweeter Soil](#) recipe for edible “soil” - 437

**Most frequently downloaded pages:**

1. Recipes for a Healthy Hampton Roads (1,213)
2. BMP Guide (963)
3. *We All Live on the Water* NIE (818)
4. Hurricane Watch (291)
5. Annual Report (276)
6. Family Activity Guide (274)

The **number of visits** represents the number of times the site was visited by individual users. If an individual visited six times in the fiscal year, and clicked on ten pages each time, the number of visits counted would be six. Visits by non-humans (spiders, web crawlers, bots, etc.) were removed from the total number of visits. The number of **visits** and the **average visits per day** increased significantly over the same time period in FY2008.



The **direct traffic** represents traffic to the website in which the visitor typed the domain name directly into their browser, or the visitor bookmarked the site. The percentage of direct traffic increased during the last half of 2008, from 83% in 2007 to 98% in 2008. The committee will work to improve search engine optimization (SEO) to increase traffic from web searches. Better search engine optimization will increase the likelihood that Hampton Roads residents seeking information on stormwater will find the HR STORM website.

Many of the documents received a spike in downloads near the time a link to the document was posted on Twitter, demonstrating that Twitter users are interested in receiving information from HR STORM and will download additional information.

The website will be undergoing a major transformation to better serve the public seeking information provided by HR STORM in Fiscal Year 2009. The Committee will continue

utilizing Web 2.0 social media sites like YouTube and Twitter to draw more traffic to the site. The Committee will also evaluate key terms used in the site to improve search engine optimization and help more users find the HR STORM site.

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## Social Networking

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In July 2008, HR STORM began using social networking tools to reach a wider range of Hampton Roads residents year-round. To supplement the existing media campaign, the HR Green committees began posting items to sites such as Delicious, Digg, Twitter, and YouTube.

### YouTube

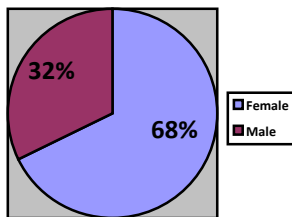
HR STORM posted video to YouTube at [www.YouTube.com/HRGreenVA](http://www.YouTube.com/HRGreenVA) and [www.YouTube.com/HRPDC](http://www.YouTube.com/HRPDC). HR STORM's public service announcements draw traffic from YouTube searches, embedded video players on other sites, and other sources. From July 1, 2008 to December 31, 2008, HR STORM videos on YouTube were viewed nearly 900 times.

### Demographics:

Gender:

Female – 68%

Male – 32%



Age:

13-17 – 15%

18-24 – 11%

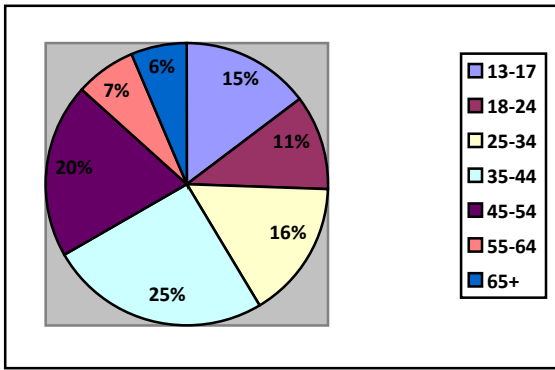
25-34 – 16%

35-44 – 25%

45-54 – 20%

55-64 – 7%

64+ – 6%



The demographic of those who view the HRGreenVA and HRPDC channels are spread throughout the age ranges. The videos are most popular with women and those in the 35-54 age range. YouTube is a free service that allows the committees to provide a visual message to those in Hampton Roads, year-round.

### Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging site that allows users to post short messages to followers. Messages can be sent or received using the Internet, the computer desktop, or a cell phone. Individual users choose which micro-bloggers to “follow”, so those receiving the “tweets” have requested to receive messages. HR Green set up an account at [www.twitter.com/HRGreen](http://www.twitter.com/HRGreen) or @HRGreen. Regular messages updating followers about programs, tips, events, and website content are distributed to users. Twitter users are technology savvy, so they regularly follow links in Twitter posts directly to HRPDC sites. Since August 2008, @HRGreen has gained 185 followers. Many of the followers are from the Hampton Roads area. Other local government Twitter accounts also follow @HRGreen, including: @CityofVaBeach (City of Virginia Beach Media and Communications Group), @CVB (City of Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau) and @NorfolkKNB (Keep Norfolk Beautiful). Twitter users have contacted @HRGreen through the medium to find information on mini-grant programs and to encourage the group to keep up the good work.

From @Finndandi (Virginia Beach): Love this site. Great concept! I am sending you to my daughter’s high school as a referral... [referring to mini-grant tweet]

Through Twitter, HRGreen’s nearly 200 followers receive approximately five messages a week – messages they requested to receive, unlike advertisements on television or in newspaper ads. @HRGreen has sent out 107 trackable messages resulting in 1533 click-throughs from Twitter to a site link provided. Each post receives an average of 14 click-throughs, directly increasing site traffic to the HR Green websites and the YouTube account. Of those, 320 click-throughs went to HR STORM content and 225 went to HR Green content.

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## INFOLINE: (757) 58-STORM

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The HR STORM InfoLine, which directs callers to local contact numbers, received fewer calls than the previous year, but overall, the call rate has remained steady. The telephone number is publicized through television and radio spots, as well as displayed on promotional items such as the pet note pads and magnets, key tags, auto funnels, exhibits and banners. The number was also published via Twitter/HRGreen before several major storm events.

1ST HALF FISCAL YEAR	CALLS
08	92
09 (Jul-Nov)	63

Based on numbers received from the local telephone host, the popularity of the InfoLine continues to fluctuate. Committee members have begun discussing the possibility of making 58-STORM a dual-purpose line providing information on both flooding and illicit discharge reporting.

The option to talk with a live operator for assistance and information remains available but has not been utilized. HR STORM members have decided to maintain the InfoLine because of its low cost.

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## TOPICAL CAMPAIGNS

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Education of local citizens on the need for clean waterways remains a goal of HR STORM. The committee is able to achieve this through a variety of educational programs on topics such as proper disposal of automotive wastes, pet waste, and the maintenance of BMPs.

### “Scoop the Poop” Animal License Bill Inserts

In an effort to curb illicit discharge of pet waste, HR STORM members contacted pet owners directly through each locality’s animal license renewal bill. Members contacted the Treasurer’s Offices to obtain support for the project. Insert measurements from each locality were evaluated to create one insert that would fit in each locality’s bill. The bill insert featured the “Scoop the Poop” slogan and Jasper the Dog in keeping with the pet waste campaign. HR STORM printed and distributed 36,000 inserts. As the campaign gained momentum, more municipalities wished to participate, so a second order for 35,000 inserts was placed. The inserts are made available at Treasurer’s Offices and through SPCA adoption packages. The committee plans to revise the insert for the fall 2009 and distribute it through the animal license bills again.



### Storm Drain Markers Group Purchase

HR STORM considered purchasing storm drain markers for the region; however, several of the localities already have storm drain marking programs in place. Staff worked with member localities to obtain a cheaper, group rate for the markers.

### **Chesapeake Club**

The Chesapeake Club is a nutrient reduction campaign and ties into the stormwater permit requirements through its educational and outreach components. The slogan: “Save the Crabs—then Eat ‘Em” was coined to help people realize crabs in the Chesapeake Bay are dying due to pollutants. The campaign started in the Washington, D.C. area in 2004 and was expanded to the Richmond and Hampton Roads regions during the spring of 2007. Through a partnership agreement between HRPDC, on behalf of HR STORM, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation



(DCR) the campaign made its way to the citizens of Hampton Roads. DCR continued the program through grant funding which covered all media costs associated with running the campaign including television, pre- and post-surveys, and other ads. The campaign runs in March and April.

This year, DCR will have limited funding for the campaign. DCR will be placing four newspaper ads in the Hampton Roads region. HR STORM has spent time considering ways to implement the campaign in FY2009 without significant financial resources from DCR. The committee is considering running television ads on local municipal cable stations. They are also considering a limited commercial run on local television. HR STORM is keeping the message in front of residents by linking the Chesapeake Club ads to the HR Green YouTube site. HR STORM is working with DCR staff to bring the campaign back in the spring of 2010 through grant financing.

### **Promotional and Exhibit Materials**

HRPDC staff and local representatives distribute promotional items for various events and meetings. A number of trainings and regional meetings occurred where material from HR STORM was made available. The HRPDC regularly distributes items to groups for events they hold (such as: The Hampton Roads Alliance for Environmental Education, Dollar Tree, Bank of America, Master Gardeners, 4H, and military bases). The following is a listing of the items distributed by the HRPDC staff. Additional HR STORM promotional items distributed through the HR WET trailer are not included.

HR STORM ITEMS DISTRIBUTED July 1 through December 31		
ITEM	FY 2008	FY 2009
BMP Guide	20	2
Coasters	0	100
FAB	1,200	1,253
Funnels	0	1,900
Hurricane Guides	0	580
Key Chains	20	1,906
Mini-Grant Bucks	0	430
NIE - HR Watersheds	65	0
NIE - We All Live on the Water	0	493
Ponchos	200	796
Poop Fairy Bill Insert*	0	36,020
Poop Fairy Poster	70	315
Poop Fairy Poster - Laminated	0	254
Recipe Booklets	260	1,515
Scoop the Poop Magnets	0	1,950
Scoop the Poop Notepads	3	1,621
TOTAL	1,838	49,135
*Inserted in most Hampton Roads animal license renewal bills.		

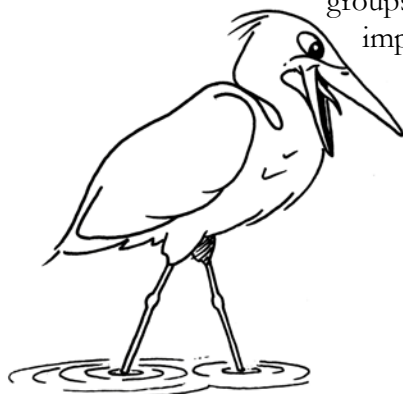
HR STORM also has two freestanding banners and four tablecloths displaying the logo, web address and messages of HR STORM that were purchased to better equip members when exhibiting. The banners display information and tips to prevent stormwater pollution. One references proper pet waste disposal and the other general pollution prevention facts. The tablecloths display two campaigns. One displays the “Poop Fairy” and messages of that campaign and the other displays all of HR STORM’s contact information including the web address. Two of each are readily available to all members at each HRPDC office (southside and peninsula). Members continue to keep the banners on display in rotating public places from locality to locality.

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### HR GREEN PARTNERSHIPS

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HR STORM continues to be an active partner with HR CLEAN, HR FOG and HR WET, the three additional environmental education committees of the HRPDC. Combined, these four form what is referred to as HR Green. By combining messages, the groups are able to save resources by pooling funding for a larger media impact.

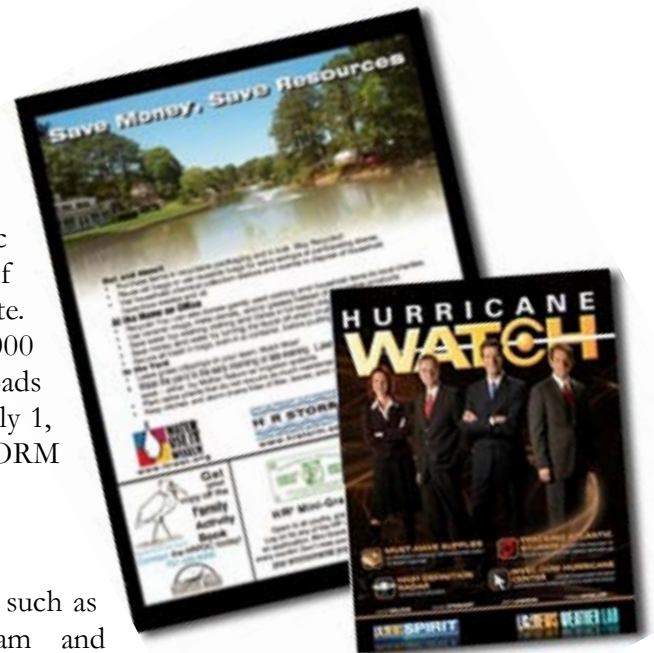


#### **Newspapers in Education (NIE)**

NIE is a nationally recognized educational program that brings the newspaper into the classroom. The local newspapers work with various Hampton Roads school systems in the distribution of a tabloid-style newsprint document. While many pre-developed pieces are available to the schools, HR Green sought this opportunity to educate the region's 3rd graders on a local level. The HR Green piece entitled *We All Live on the Water* was distributed in the spring of 2008 to all public school 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes. The committees used this initiative to incorporate the watershed and water quality SOL requirements developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) along with region specific information. A teacher guide was also developed and distributed. The FY 2008 tab, *We All Live on the Water*, was partially funded through a grant by the Chesapeake Bay License Plate Fund and matched with local government contributions and HRPDC staff time. HR Green continued to distribute overruns of the tab until they were depleted. Since July 1, 2008, 3,000 copies were downloaded from HR Green websites. HR STORM and HR WET would like to reprint the piece and redistribute it in August 2009. HR FOG and HR CLEAN are considering participating in the project.

### Print Ads

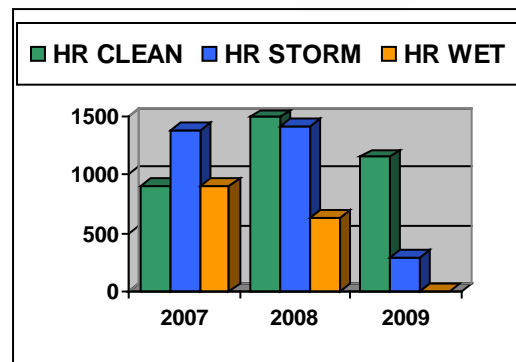
A one-page tip sheet, which combines the messages of the committees, is used in a variety of regional publications such as the WVEC Channel-13 "Hurricane Watch," which was distributed to the public at local Dollar Tree stores, through representatives of HR Green, and through the WVEC Channel-13 website. WVEC distributed 70,000 copies and sent out 65,000 permission-based emails throughout Hampton Roads encouraging residents to download the guide. Since July 1, 2008, 291 copies were downloaded from the HR STORM website. HR FOG did not participate in this initiative.



### Mini-Grants

Every year HR3 also offers the region joint programs such as funding through the popular mini-grant program and educational print pieces. With the HR<sup>3</sup> Mini-Grant Program, schools and youth groups are eligible to receive up to \$500 toward environmental projects that meet the goals of HR CLEAN, HR STORM, and HR WET.

In the second half of 2008, HR<sup>3</sup> awarded a combined \$1,441 to six different school groups working on projects related to the missions and goals of HR CLEAN, HR STORM and HR WET. Through participation in the HR<sup>3</sup> Mini-Grant program, over 1,700 Hampton Roads youth will be reached. HR STORM awarded \$291 to Chesapeake Public Schools. The project will allow six- and seven-year-olds to grow spartina in the classroom and then plant it in the Elizabeth River Watershed to help stop



erosion along the shoreline.

**HRAEE (Hampton Roads Alliance for Environmental Education)**

Members continue to participate in HRAEE events and networking opportunities. The 2008 HRAEE conference was held at the Virginia Aquarium during the month of September. The Mini-Grant Project of the Year Awards were distributed at the luncheon ceremony. The **2008 Mini-Grant Project of the Year** was awarded to Thalia Elementary School 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. Boy Scout, Tim Costello, built steps to the stream to allow the students safe access. The project helped him earn the ranking of Eagle Scout along with three of his friends. The Eagles were the cover story on the June 1, 2008 edition of the *Beacon*. An outdoor teaching area was also built.



The **Honorable Mention** was awarded to Jane H. Bryan Elementary School for the First Grade Butterfly Garden Project. HR CLEAN funded this beautification project. Ms. 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!”

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## CONCLUSION

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In conclusion, HR STORM remains focused on the education of all local citizens, including homeowners and businesses, regarding the importance of clean waterways and responsibilities associated with stormwater pollution prevention. Through multifaceted education programs such as the various fact sheets, the NIE in local schools, Chesapeake Club campaign, education about disposal practices available for lawn and automotive maintenance products, proper disposal practices and local codes associated with pet waste, and awareness of residential BMP maintenance, HR STORM will prevail in getting the critical information to the citizens of Hampton Roads. From the homefront to the waterfront, HR STORM is letting everyone know clean waterways begin with each of us.