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MAGAZINE

boulevard | May 2025

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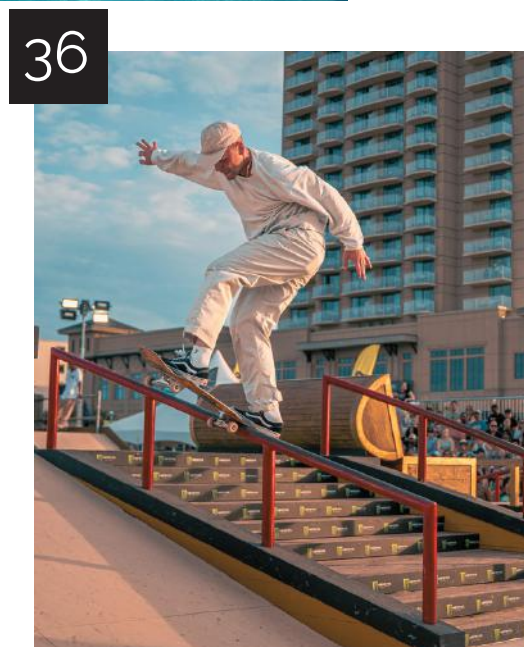
For over 30 years, The Noblemen have been a cornerstone of support in Hampton Roads, consistently stepping up for underprivileged and special needs children.

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Publisher's Note

Summertime, and the livin' is easy.

Publisher's Letter

Dear Readers,

As we turn the page on another exciting season in Hampton Roads, I want to take a moment—on behalf of our entire team—to thank you for being part of our growing community of 95,000 households that receive the magazine by email. Whether you read us in coffee shops along Colley Avenue, flip through us while waiting at the ferry in Surry, or read us cover-to-cover from your waterfront porch in Yorktown, you are the reason this magazine exists.

Hampton Roads is a region unlike any other—where centuries of American history meet the creative energy of a new generation. It's where arts and culture are not just preserved but constantly reinvented. From the bold murals transforming Norfolk's streets, to the music festivals lighting up Virginia Beach, to the tech startups and green industries reimagining our economy—this region is thriving. And we're honored to tell its story.

Each issue, we aim to celebrate the people who make this place extraordinary: artists, chefs, entrepreneurs, educators, veterans, and visionaries. Their work shapes the identity of our cities and counties, and their passion drives our collective future forward.

We believe a vibrant community starts with strong connections—and this magazine is one of them. Our goal is not just to inform, but to inspire. To make you pause, smile, think, and maybe even take action. Support a local theater. Dine at that new spot in Phoebus. Visit the art exhibit you saw on our cover. Or simply take pride in the creative pulse that beats across Hampton Roads. And at the heart of it all is Boulevard Magazine.



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We created Boulevard with a simple but powerful mission: to be the essential source for things to do in Hampton Roads—whether you've lived here your whole life or you're just visiting for the weekend. Our name reflects the spirit of the region: a "boulevard" is where paths converge, stories cross, and cultures mix. It's a meeting place, a connector—and that's what we aim to be.

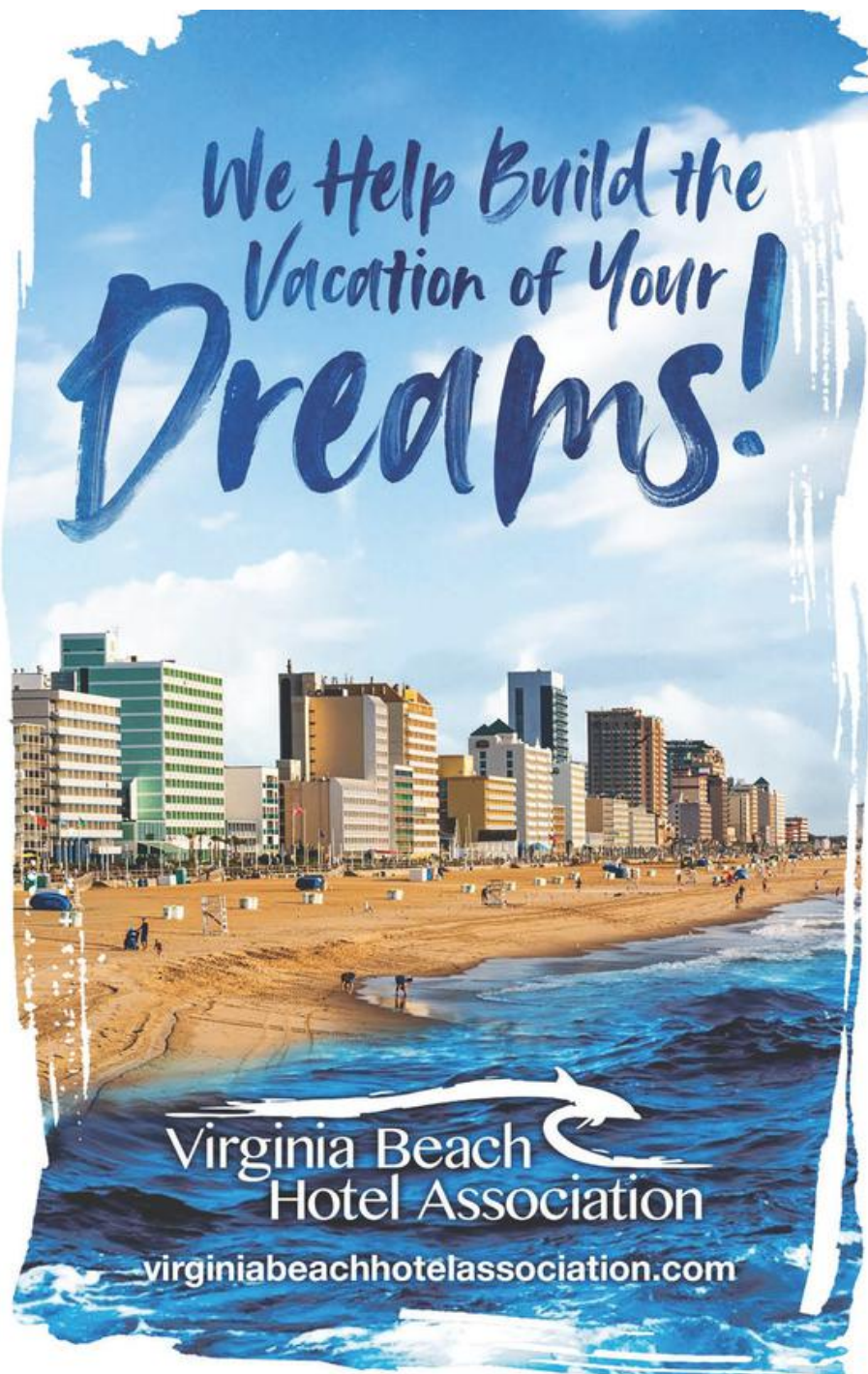
In addition to our beautifully curated print publication, Boulevard lives dynamically online. Through our website and social media platforms, we bring you the best of the region in real-time—from last-minute weekend events and restaurant openings to pop-up markets and hidden gems you'll want to bookmark.

We're proud to be a trusted source for our followers on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, where we highlight everything from behind-the-scenes tours of new venues to quick guides for date nights, staycations, and family-friendly fun. Every post, story, and reel is designed to help you experience Hampton Roads like never before.

We also listen—closely. Our readers and followers shape the stories we tell. When you tag us in your favorite sunset shot from the Oceanfront, or DM us about a mural going up in Portsmouth, or share your favorite local band on a Friday night—we're right there with you, helping amplify what makes this region so vibrant.

And while our reach is growing, our commitment remains deeply local. Our editorial team lives here, shops here, raises families here. We're invested in the communities we cover—not from a distance, but shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors. So whether you're flipping through our latest issue, scrolling our curated weekend picks, or attending one of the local events we sponsor or feature, we hope you feel a sense of pride in your place. Boulevard isn't just about what to do—it's about where we live, who we are, and how we grow together. As always, we welcome your ideas, your stories, and your voice. This is your magazine as much as it is ours, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

Thank you for reading—and for believing in the power of local.



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World Ballet Company World Premiere Tour

The Great Gatsby Ballet

By: Gulya Hartwick



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The Great Gatsby Ballet

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We are happy to present the Great Gatsby Ballet in Norfolk, a new show that just premiered in California in February. It is coming to the stage of the Chrysler Hall on May 3rd and is set to perform in over 100 cities across the United States this year.

It is a Broadway-style ballet, which is a unique mix of genres, that allow the audience to truly immerse in the story. We integrated live singing, acrobatics, projection and the beauty and grace of classical dance. An original score was created for the show.

This music is so very special that it still sings in your head when you go to sleep, and then stays with you when you wake up in the morning. Anna Drubich accepted the challenge by switching to a new genre, from film to theatre and dance.

I am sure that the audience will notice movie blockbuster sound effects in the score. A full symphony orchestration was created specifically for this production.



My co-producer and partner Sasha Gorskaya wrote the libretto. It was our goal to stay as close to the original as possible. Both film adaptations and the musical, and documentaries and written descriptions of Fitzgerald's life itself were our inspirations. We have planned to create this production since 2018.

I think everyone should definitely see it. It is a very unique experience. World Ballet Company's dancers will not only blow you away with the technique, but also keep you on the edge of the seat for the whole show with their amazing acting skills.

When we saw the run through for the first time - we barely recognized some of our dancers. Ilya Zhivoy, the mastermind behind the dazzling choreography of the Great Gatsby managed to tell the story in such a brilliant manner, that one doesn't need Fitzgerald words to understand the plot.



We created the World Ballet Company because we want to make ballet more accessible, to take it from the exclusive niche it was put in hundreds of years ago to the star of the mainstream art forms.

You don't have to fly for hours to see the world-class ballet, we come to you. And now we perform in more cities than touring Broadway. According to our audience surveys, more than 60 % of our Patrons are seeing a ballet for the first time, which is incredible.





Ballet is beautiful. It is easy to understand.
All you need to do is to feel. And read the libretto :)
So, invite your special someone, dress up and
enjoy the show!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Gulya Hartwick, originally from Riga, transitioned from a background in piano and psychology to a successful career in journalism and TV production before following her passion for the performing arts. Since 2013, she has been channeling her creative energy into making the arts more accessible, co-founding the World Ballet Company with a mission. Gulya is driven by a strong belief that the exquisite beauty of ballet should be mainstream, a cultural treasure available to all, enriching lives globally.



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A tropical beach scene at sunset. A hammock is strung between two trees, with a person lying in it. The ocean is visible in the background under a golden sky.

BLVD

JET SETTER

Balinese Bliss



Balinese Bliss

Bali's been at the top of my bucket list, and when my friend Shoumi Jeyarajah invited me to a last-minute open slot for a yoga retreat,

I was sold. Singapore Airlines is my go-to for smooth travel 17 hours to Singapore, then a quick 2.5-hour hop to Bali. Customs was a breeze, thanks to a Singapore Transit Visa and Bali Visa on Arrival arranged ahead of time. Bali and I are practically in a long-distance relationship. I've been twice and already have another retreat booked for fall. Some places have a way of pulling you back, and Bali has my heart. A big reason I keep returning is Audrey Sutton Mills' retreats. She's not just a yoga instructor; she curates transformative experiences blending yoga, self-reflection, and realignment. Experiencing this in paradise is a blessing. Both trips were in April, tropical, humid, but totally manageable with a fresh coconut or cocktail in hand.

Lessons in Bali Travel: Arrive Early & Upgrade Often

The first time I came, I made the rookie mistake of arriving the day the retreat started, and jet lag won. Lesson learned. Round two, I did it right. Three days early, I checked into The Ritz-Carlton, Nusa Dua, and eased into Bali in pure luxury.

This time, my bestie Briana Malloney and Audrey joined. Our two-bedroom suite with lagoon access was heaven, midnight swims included. Warm air, still water, jet lag washed away.

The suite was perfection, spacious, elegant, and opening straight to the lagoon. If there is a better way to settle into Bali, I have not found it.

The retreat itinerary stayed similar with a few changes. Eat Pray Love vibes, but better. The energy, the people, the magic, this place feels like home. And sharing it with kindred spirits? That is the real gift.



Day 1- Coral Beach and Aerial Yoga in full swing

Audrey and I kicked off the morning with breakfast on a beachside daybed. Normally, I'd go for a mimosa (vacation rules), but with Aerial Yoga on the agenda, we opted for green smoothies. Solid choice.

Fueled up, we took a salty dip in the ocean before channeling our inner acrobats. With no one else signed up, we had a private session to flip, fly, and swing like circus performers. Incredible workout, zero regrets. For dinner, we wandered to The Apurva Kempinski Bali, where the rooftop bar served up ocean views and a dreamlike garden setting. Joining us were Hana Medina and honeymooners Zach Lake & Leah Preble, kicking off married life in style.

Sipping cocktails, soaking in Bali's mesmerizing energy, I felt it, that same pull from my first trip. Another unforgettable journey had just begun. Suksma! (Balinese for thank you)

Day 2 – Uluwatu Temple

We caught an early beach sunrise, then indulged in an epic breakfast buffet. Bubur Ayam Bali stole the show, chicken rice porridge with crispy shallots, boiled eggs, and just the right sambal kick.

After breakfast, we swapped into swimsuits and explored the stunning Ritz-Carlton grounds, sneaking in a few yoga poses because Bali, before basking in some beachside bliss.

By midday, we were off to the Uluwatu Temple. Ocean views, cultural wonders, and a beach club finale, this day was Bali magic in the making.

Bali's temples have an energy you can feel, a sacred presence that lingers in the air. We wrapped ourselves in traditional sarongs, covering our knees and shoulders as a mark of respect. Quick tip: Pay the tour guides. They are experts in monkey diplomacy and will save your sunglasses and dignity.



The Edge Beach Club – Where the Pool Meets the Sky

Perched 500 feet above the ocean in Uluwatu, The Edge Beach Club is part luxury lounge, part optical illusion. Its glass-bottom infinity pools make you feel like you're floating above the waves, while the panoramic views and expertly crafted cocktails blur the line between reality and paradise. Champagne and gourmet bites made for the perfect late lunch because when in Bali, every meal deserves a little sparkle. With dinner plans already set, we kept it light (and bubbly), lingering just long enough to catch Bali's golden-hour masterpiece. Some views demand an extra sip.



Beneath the Waves, Beyond the Ordinary

At Koral, dinner is an experience, a true meditation in indulgence. We dined beneath Bali's first aquarium restaurant, surrounded by fish swirling like living mandalas. The tasting menu flowed like vinyasa, each course a seamless transition from land to sea, earth to sky. The wine pairings were pure pranayama (breath control) each pour deepening the experience, balancing body, mind, and spirit. With laughter and champagne bubbling up, we savored the moment, toasting to life's simple joys. Namaste and pass the next course.



Day 3 – The Kayon Resort and Yoga Retreat

Nestled above the tranquil Petanu River, The Kayon Resort is a haven where luxury meets jungle tranquility. Designed to blend effortlessly with nature, it's a peaceful retreat where time slows, stress fades, and the only task is simply being. As I enter my villa, a private pool cascades into panoramic waterfall and jungle views. The river hums a calming lullaby, and the air is thick with serenity. It's heaven on earth. Stone walls whisper ancient tales through intricate carvings, each sculpture a tribute to Bali's artistic spirit. The entrance is a work of art, with vibrant hues, etched wood, and sacred symbols woven into every curve. Here, tradition is alive, with pathways turned into galleries and doorways into poetry.





Sat-Chit-Ananda: A Sacred Yoga Retreat with Audrey Sutton-Mills

The journey begins with check-in, followed by a moment to rest before Audrey's soulful yoga session on the rooftop pavilion. Our retreat's theme: Sat-Chit-Ananda, a Sanskrit expression of truth, consciousness, and bliss, calls us to embrace the fullness of existence.

As the sun sets, dinner awaits, just as spectacular as the year before. Around the table, we share introductions, peeling back layers of intention. Why are we here? What do we seek?

For me, it's balance, purpose, and clarity on how to make an impact. Life, with all its challenges, doesn't aim to break us but to shape us. Each trial is a lesson, each lesson a steppingstone, guiding us closer to the best version of ourselves.

Day 4 – Monkey Business & Emerald Rice Dreams

Sunrise yoga and Soul School with Audrey, proof that intention sparks transformation.

We came from different backgrounds, yet here we were, moving, breathing, growing. Some were seasoned yogis, others are beginners, one just aiming to improve his golf game. My first retreat, an all-women's group, had a different energy but was just as powerful.

Different paths, same purpose: expansion. And me? I'm simply grateful to be here.

Monkey Forest Ubud

I missed this excursion on my first retreat, so this time I was all in, monkeys and mischief included. Tip: Pay the tour guides upfront for the best local storytelling. Tours are about \$50 per group (in Rupiah), and entrance fee is separate.

We split up with our group and met up an hour later, all belongings intact. Follow the rules, these monkeys are adorable but expert pickpockets. One tourist learned the hard way when a monkey climbed on her, she reached to pet it, and chaos followed. Lesson: Respect the rules, respect the monkeys, and remember, we're in their jungle. Next, Tegalalang's emerald rice terraces. Bali's natural runway where nature flaunts her sculpted layers. Rent a flowy dress, hop on a swing, and let the magic unfold. Lunch at D'Atlas Warung, perched above the paddies, offered rustic charm and incredible food.

Day 5 - Sacred Water Blessing & Sound Bath Serenity

Dawn at Gunung Kawi Sebatu, my second visit, yet its magic never fades. Lush jungle, sacred springs, and ancient shrines whisper Bali's timeless soul. With Putri's guidance, we donned sarongs, made our offerings, then swapped out our water temple attire to step next door for a monk's blessing, a quiet moment of reflection.

As mentioned earlier, Balinese temples require covered knees and shoulders as a sign of respect, and women on their cycle are asked to refrain from entering, honoring traditions of spiritual balance. After prayer, a touch of rice on the forehead seals the blessing, a humble, grateful, and connected start to the day. A little sprinkle of magic to carry with you!



Pyramids of Chi

Tucked in Ubud's jungle, the Pyramids of Chi are a portal to deep relaxation. Gongs, traditional drums, sound bowls and a plethora of instruments send sound waves through your soul, blurring the line between science and spiritual realms. One moment, you're floating in a dream; the next, you're buzzing with energy. Even our friend chasing a better golf swing left transformed. You never know until you try. Yin yoga resets us before diving into Ubud's lively streets. The market's a maze, but the real gems? Local boutiques. For the best exchange rate, use larger centers, cash is key for bargaining.

A Magical Affair

Dinner at Merlins was anything but ordinary. Choose your meal or let the food choose you, either way, you're in for an enchanting experience. This hideaway weaves medieval mystique where spellbook menus, potion-like cocktails, and flickering candlelight set the scene. Whimsical yet sophisticated, it feels like stepping into a fairytale where every dish is a little bit of wizardry and a whole lot of culinary magic. Next time, I'm showing up in a cape.



Day 6 – Sacred Caves & Blooming Bliss

After breakfast, we set off for Goa Gajah, where ancient mystique takes center stage. Carved stone, sacred pools, and hidden chambers make it part temple, part time capsule, wrapped in mystery. Temple attire required, but for the caves, just cover your knees. Sarongs are available at the entrance. The heat was intense, so we wandered, we marveled, and we time traveled.

Kaveri Spa at The Udaya Resorts and Spa

Five hours of bliss at Kaveri Spa, Bali's go-to for luxury and legendary flower baths. From heavenly massages to soul-soothing rituals, stress didn't stand a chance. The grand finale? A petal-filled soak fit for royalty. If Bali had a love language, this would be it. And the price? A steal. Girl math for the win. Pro tip: Book months in advance. Totally worth it.



Release Ceremony & Balinese Dinner Show

I made it back just in time for our release ceremony at The Kayon Resort's waterfall. It was originally planned for the day before, but Bali had other ideas, cue the tropical downpour. So, we waited, because surrender is part of the practice too. Audrey prepared the offerings as we each set our intentions, ready to let go of what no longer served us. Alan Watts once said, "The root of all human suffering is clinging or grasping. You can't cling to your breath without losing it. You have to let go." I've been sitting with this, reflecting on the art of surrender. How often do we grip onto plans, titles, people, and beliefs, thinking control will bring us peace? In reality, its fear disguised as certainty, resistance disguised as strength. Freedom isn't found in holding on, it's in letting go. When we release, we make space for something greater. When we surrender, we flow.

At The Kayon, a feast of Balinese cuisine awaited, paired with hypnotic dancers and a mesmerizing fire dance. When invited to join, I couldn't resist, well, maybe not the fire ring! If Bali's on your list, add this to it.

Day 7 – Retreat Finale

My last retreat day was pure bliss, vinyasa yoga, spa time, and poolside lounging. Dinner was a feast, with staff who knew our names and favorite orders. They even brought extra champagne (mostly for me). With Bali belly a real risk, bubbly was the obvious choice.

The last several days – Goodbye for Now, Hello to the next Adventure

After the retreat, I checked into the W Hotel Villa again, drawn to its unbeatable location, right on the sand, close to the airport, and steps from Bali's best shopping, restaurants, and nightlife. But in 2023, a few of us, Shoumi, Michelle, Shrada, Amanda and I, swapped resort life for an Airbnb on Nusa Penida.

The plan? Explore the island's famous beaches. The reality? One look at our villa's infinity pool spilling into endless forest and ocean views, we unanimously decided that doing absolutely nothing was the real dream. After hauling luggage in the tropical heat and braving the ferry, we had earned it. Pro tip: Pack light when hopping between resorts and public transport. Your future, sweat-drenched self will thank you.



Our Airbnb came with the works, a personal butler, private chef, and a driver at our beck and call. And because Bali knows how to spoil you, we booked in-house massages for a ridiculous \$40 USD for two hours. Infinity pool dips, tropical breezes, and luxury for the price of brunch? Yes, please.

Back on the mainland, the W Bali Seminyak is my ultimate post-retreat recharge. Whether I am sipping cocktails at WOOBAR, floating in the multi-tiered infinity pool, or indulging in a midnight massage at the AWAY Spa (yes, they are open all night), the W just gets it. Private villas with plunge pools? Check. Epic sunsets? Always. A place where I can seamlessly shift from Zen mode to party mode? Say less.

Side note: Sunday brunch at FIRE is a must. Come hungry, wear stretchy pants, and let the endless feast and flowing cocktails do the rest.

Last but not least: On our last retreat, we explored dreamy beaches, snorkeled with tropical fish, and soaked up the views on a private catamaran cruise to Nusa Penida. A full-day escape with sun, turquoise waters, and a lavish lunch on board. Put this on your to-do list.



The Takeaway:

The cure you seek dwells within the fear you flee. Do not shrink from the fire; it was made to cleanse you. Life begins where your walls crumble, where the soul leaps unguarded into the unknown.

Bali is more than a destination; it's a mirror, reflecting the parts of you that are waiting to be seen. In the stillness of meditation, the wild rush of the ocean, the sacred waters of a temple blessing, and the laughter shared over sunset cocktails, something shifts. You realize that transformation doesn't happen in the moments of certainty but in the spaces where you let go. So, dive. Into the waves, into adventure, into your deepest self. Surrender to the rhythm of life, trust in the unfolding, and love without restraint. If you must fall, let it be into the arms of wonder.



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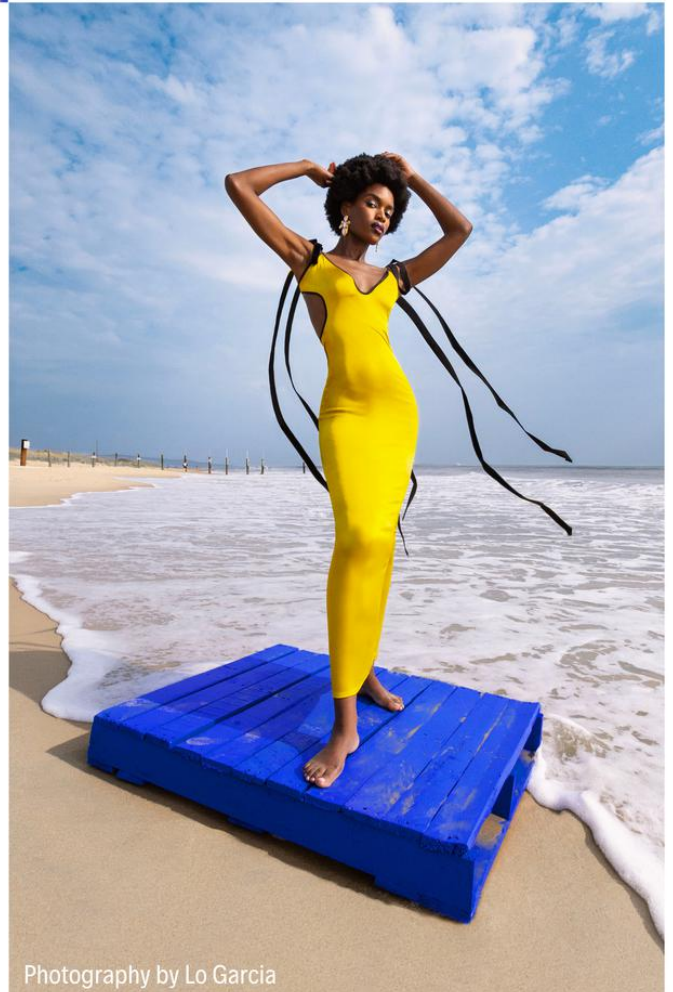
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A Decade of Creativity: What's New in Norfolk's NEON District

In the heart of Norfolk, a creative revolution has quietly unfolded over the last ten years. The NEON District — short for New Energy of Norfolk — has become a magnetic hub for public art, small business, and culture. As it celebrates the 10th anniversary of its official launch, the district continues to evolve as a dynamic home for artists, entrepreneurs, performers, and residents alike.

Defined by its colorful murals, edgy creativity, and grassroots spirit, the NEON District offers a fresh lens on Norfolk's identity. Whether you're strolling past bold murals, catching a live performance at Push Comedy Theater, or wandering through d'Art Center galleries, the District invites visitors to explore a neighborhood where community and creativity collide.





Big Moves and Major Investments

The NEON's transformation over the last decade is powered by both grassroots energy and significant capital investment. Among the most exciting recent developments is the newly expanded Perry Glass Studio, on the campus of the Chrysler Museum of Art. With a grand opening in spring 2025, the \$55 million reimagining of the space cements Norfolk's position as an international leader in glass art.



The expansion, led by local firm Work Program Architects, added 24,000 square feet, including a 200-seat amphitheater-style hot shop, specialized glassworking studios, classrooms, and a flexible event space. Importantly for a flood-prone neighborhood, the site incorporates many strategies supporting coastal resilience, including a large rain garden planted with salt-tolerant native species at the studio entrance. With full programming now underway, the Glass Studio is not only a home for artists and students of all calibers, but a major cultural draw for the city

Adding to the neighborhood's growing residential density is Fusion at NEON, which opened in fall 2024. This \$40 million development brought 237 market-rate apartments to the district, with over 300 new residents. Fusion's arrival reflects a shift in the neighborhood from a stand-alone arts district to an active, full-time community.



Arts & Culture in Action



The NEON District has long been a proving ground for creative talent — and a big recent investment speaks directly to the power of performance. The Hurrah Players' new TV & Film Academy opened in late 2024, bringing all of the beloved theater troupe's programs under one roof. A \$1.5 million investment, the new campus includes acting and dance studios, production labs, and ample rehearsal space, cementing NEON as a destination for aspiring performers

Another bright spot each year is the NEON Festival, bringing in more than 8,000 visitors over two art-filled nights. Highlights always include immersive art experiences, pop-up performances, live music, and fresh murals revealed to the public for the first time. The 2025 festival promises even more excitement, including returning artists from the festival's early years and new public art commissions to commemorate the 10-year milestone.





Besides the festival, a hallmark of the NEON District is the wide-ranging and homegrown street art collection. With each mural painted and installation unveiled, NEON's collection of public art has grown to become one of the largest on the east coast. In ten years of the program, the neighborhood's artist-led committee has curated more than 175 works for art, with 108 that are permanently on view. It's a gallery without walls — free, always open, and ever-evolving.

Local Gems: Small Businesses That Shine

While big projects have helped shape the district over the years, NEON's true spirit comes from its independent small businesses. A staple in the 757 skateboarding community, Cardinal Skate Shop has served the region for two decades and has called NEON home for the past six years. With the only indoor skatepark in Norfolk, it's a destination for youth culture where every is welcome.

New to the district this year is Eleanor's, a worker-owned queer feminist bookstore and library that relocated to NEON this spring. It brings a community space that fits seamlessly into NEON's open-minded and welcoming vibe. Visitors can browse books, attend readings, or simply connect with a thoughtful, engaged community. The Neon House, a gorgeous event venue operated by longtime local caterers Chef By Design, has also expanded in the district, growing its footprint to three spaces. Available for weddings, receptions, and celebrations, the spot is especially popular with couples looking for creative backdrop for wedding photos. All of the neighborhood businesses, from the legacy retailers to the start-up spots, contribute to a shared culture that values the grit, charm and independence rooted in NEON.





Everyday Experiences in the District

Beyond the galleries and grand openings, NEON offers everyday magic for locals and visitors alike. You can't start at a better spot to start off a tour than the Plot, a public square that hosts everything from open-air markets to fitness classes, mural tours, and live performances. In 2024 alone, more than 9,000 people visited The Plot — often discovering NEON for the first time during a weekend stroll or stopping by their favorite sneaker store.

From the start, the district's walkability has stayed as one of its greatest assets. With murals around every corner, surprising storefronts, and plenty of space to linger, it's a place where exploration is part of the experience. For the rising numbers of cruise and weekend travelers to Norfolk, NEON offers something unexpected and inspiring that's easily reachable from the cruise terminal, Downtown's core or the neighboring areas of Ghent and Freemason.





What's Next for NEON

With ten years under its belt, the NEON continues to evolve, and the next wave of investment is already underway. One major project in progress is a city-led effort to overhaul the Granby Street corridor between Brambleton Avenue and Virginia Beach Boulevard. The long-term payoff will be significant: upgraded utilities, new sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, a tree canopy, and landscaping designed for resilience and beautification. The improvements will not only support existing businesses and residents but also help attract future investment and visitation.

Meanwhile, the 10th anniversary of the NEON Festival is set for October 16 and 17, 2025 with plans in motion to build on the momentum of the last decade. Expect ten art projects for ten years, hundreds of participants, a larger footprint for celebrating and thousands of dollars in grant funding for local event producers and art curators. It's going to be a banger.

Plan Your Visit

As NEON marks its 10th year, the message is clear: this is no longer a startup arts district. It's a thriving neighborhood, pulsing with personality, vision, and heart. Whether you're an art lover, entrepreneur, performer, or curious visitor, there's never been a better time to see what NEON is all about. Come for the murals. Stay for the energy. Be part of what's next.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel McCall
Vice President
Downtown Norfolk Council

Rachel McCall serves as Vice President for the Downtown Norfolk Council, leading the organization's operational and strategic initiatives. In her various roles with the Downtown Norfolk Council, Rachel has advanced new businesses and public art for Norfolk's first arts district, the NEON District, supported downtown's Vibrant Spaces business catalyst program, and advocated for a pedestrian and bike-friendly urban environment. Prior to arriving at the Downtown Norfolk Council in 2014, Rachel worked in book publishing and retail purchasing. Rachel is a founding board member of the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation and serves as chair of the foundation's Events Committee. A graduate of the International Downtown Association's Emerging Leader Fellowship with a Leadership in Place Management certification, and a contributing author to A History Lover's Guide to Norfolk, Rachel is passionate about the intersection of cities, history and art. Born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia, Rachel received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art History from the College of William & Mary.



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what's biting?

May 2025



By: Billy Sugg

Once again, the summer months are rapidly approaching and warmer weather has got anglers springing into action to get their boats and gear ready for fishing. Freshwater has been excellent so far this spring when the weather allowed days on the water. Lots of big catfish, crappie, bass and white perch action has topped the list for anglers targeting both numbers and size of quality catches. Salt water action was nonstop all winter with a vast variety to choose from. Now it's time to get back out there under that warm sun and spend some quality time with family and friends.

Deep dropper action again was steady this winter with lots of large Seabass, tautog, flounder, blue line, golden tile and snowy grouper filling the boxes. Fiddler crabs, blue crab, and cut bait on the bottom is still producing lots of action. As coastal waters continue to warm, look for many species to move up onto nearshore wreckage, windmills and towers. Offshore sport fishing has produced outstanding catches of giant bluefin tuna, which have ventured so close to the Shore that kayakers and pier fisherman have actually hooked and landed some along with many of the boats in Virginia and North Carolina's fleets. Look for this fishery to become more productive, with yellow and black fin tuna joining the mix as the species moves northward along the coast. Pulling diving plugs, subsurface and topwater artificials or meat such as ballyhoo, mullet, squid, or small Spanish mackerel can get you noticed by tuna of all species, as well as any billfish or mako shark in the area.



what's biting?

Many anglers are reporting inshore action has picked up for many species, including large striped bass, who wintered off the coast or in the north channel of the Eastern shore. These stripers are now making their way up the rivers to spawn and are readily available to anglers who choose to fish along their migration routes. Be sure you know the current regulations on striped bass as most of these large spawning females are protected and must be released. These large breeders are carrying our future so please do everything you can to handle them safely to minimize mortality issues. Take the time to revive them if you are releasing them. Puppy drum as well as large reds are here and only increasing in numbers. Rudee Inlet, as well as most of the other inlets and rivers along the bay coast are producing large numbers of reds of various sizes as well as stripers, speckled trout, bluefish, and even a few grey trout. Big migration schools of bull reds are now available for site casting in open waters. Look for the bluefish to make their presence known along the beaches and throughout the bay in force. A little tip when trying to decide what to use for catching bluefish. Any artificial bait you have, even if it has never caught any other species, is still probably a good blue fish bait.

Although sometimes they are only good once. Lol. By adding a small black wire leader with a snap on one end and swivel on the other, you can save many of your lures from falling victim to those gnarly bluefish teeth. If you are pulling small trolling spoons like Clark or Huntington Drones, you may find yourself catching blues and Spanish Mackerel together. Tide rips and color lines can be very productive but sometimes just trolling parallel to the beach watching for jumping Spanish or baitfish pods is all you need to do. In line sinkers will keep the spoons running deep or shallow depending on size. Albacore may join the fun as they love spoons, but pulling larger spoons, feather jigs or tuna plastics are more practical. Flounder action is on the rise in most shallow seaside creeks. Back bay, Rudee Inlet,

Back River, York River and Wachapreague on the Eastern shore have been producing. Look for this action to increase as more and more fatties fill the shallows.



Standard high, low bottom rigs with long shank 1/0 or 2/0 hooks and strips of squid with live minnows is your best bet for drifting and finding fish of various sizes although Fluke killer rigs with cut bait work well. By June and early July Fluke Killer style rigs with strips of cut bait can help you weed out larger fish. Jigging bucktails with Gulp tails near structure is an excellent way to catch flounder all season. Oyster beds, sandbars, and structure, which breaks down the current and provides ambush sites for feeding flounder are great locations to target. All throughout the bay and its tributaries, Spot, croaker, round head, Pompano, porgy and pan size trout can be found by drifting small hooks on bottom rigs tipped with blood worm, clam, fish bites, earthworms, squid, shrimp or other cut bait.

what's biting?

Be sure to note what depth and water temperature you are catching fish so you can replicate a successful drift. Pay attention to channel markers, crab pot buoys, and other land marks which will help you fill the box. Generally in May, any large, grey or speckled trout, bluefish, or stripers, which are present in the bay can be located by casting or trolling along the rocks and pillars of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge tunnel. Jigging spoons work well for finding fish on a slack or slow moving tide when you can maintain contact with the bottom, and this method will sometimes produce large croaker and round head as well. Casting bucktails with twisters, artificial lures or free lining live bait is an excellent way to catch quality fish during the day or night, and will often produce red drum, black drum and cobia.



For those anglers wishing to target drum and Cobia, cut bait on the bottom while anchoring or site casting can be very productive. Remember Cobia love live eels on top or on bottom, and you can't go wrong with blue crab. Claims are an excellent bait for black drum. The cabbage patch of Cape Charles, Nautilus Shoals and Smith Island Shoals are all great locations to try, and Cobia can be found on many of the buoys and pilings in the area as well as roaming near the surface individually or in pods. Look for spadefish and sheep head to be available along coastal structure with the sheep head being scattered throughout the bay and rivers where crustacean covered pilings will provide easy meals, especially in slower running current. You will need to get up close and personal with the pilings if you wish to do the same with the fish. Jigheads tipped with corn, frozen peas, earthworms, sand fleas, blue crab chunks or fiddler crabs should get you noticed.

A common trick is to scrape barnacles from around the top of the piling and let them fall to the bottom to attract fish. Do this on the down current side or your offering will be swept away. A good depth finder with side scan could be very helpful when searching for productive areas. Don't be surprised if you catch your personal best black drum doing this as well. A rarely discussed fishery which has become more popular in the mouth of the Rappahanock River is the Triple Tail. Not normally a main focus of the masses in Virginia waters, these fish are often found under floating debris or channel markers and can be caught using shrimp under a cork or a well placed trout jig. Speaking of rarely discussed fisheries, Tarpon will be here by early June and spread out over the vast eastern shore barrier islands and in the shallows up into Maryland. Bait soakers, fly rod'ers and artificial flingers who know where and when to look for these magnificent beasts of beauty will brave the ever changing natural dangers of the backwaters in search of these tropical treasures. Channels change yearly with hurricane activity because of "live sand" which can create an island or erase one just as easily. Flats form or disappear. Oyster rock, sand bars and inland washed wreck debris can be very hazardous to navigate.



If you don't know where to go and how to get there, best to hire a guide. There are several to choose from. If you do go, respect the fishery as the development of it is also the ruination of it. They are only here because man hasn't been able to develop the areas they frequent.

what's biting?

They are very easily spooked and will leave an area that has too much pressure from boaters. This isn't home for them, just a vacation spot, so tread lightly. Oh, and take insect repellent. One of the locals once told me he uses straight kerosene to keep the biting flies, gnats and mosquitoes off of him. He said anything less was like BBQ sauce. Ha Ha!



Freshwater action is settling into the summer patterns as the spawn is mostly over. Best bites with most species will be early and late when the sun is less grueling, with carp and gar being the exception. Largemouth, Smallmouth, Striped bass and catfish will be active feeders depending on the conditions. Cloudy days can be extremely productive. Topwater during low light is fun and exciting, but slow rolling diving lures or plastic worms will provide more active during the day. This can produce strikes from pike and walleye too. Look for crappie to move between depths to stay comfortable, suspended near drop offs and cover. All the sunfish species should be spawning or recently finished in close to shore or on flats and readily available on artificial jigs, topwater lures or dough ball's, worms and crickets dangled under a cork. The best way I know to get a kid hooked on fishing is catching panfish in the shallows and watching that cork go down. Give it a try and take a kid fishing. Speaking of shallows, Virginia mountain rivers and streams are great places to pursue brown, brook and rainbow trout which can also be found in stocked lakes and ponds throughout the state. Light casting gear using small spinners, spoons, live worms, corn or marshmallows are perfect for these skinny water miradors. But fly rod action is phenomenal for this fishery.

If you love seeing the strike, and the challenge of enticing it, this is for you. I was recently speaking with our friends at Orvis on First Colonial Rd. in Virginia Beach and was blown away at all the options to choose from when selecting a presentation for fly fishing. Ray Bley, the store manager and local instructor, walked me through tackle selection and also how to create your own flies. They have everything you need to get started or to supply the avid "fly guy". Great family run business as his wife is quite the angler as well.



what's biting?

The featured fish this issue is the Atlantic croaker. These hard pulling, bait riddling bulldogs of the bottom feeders are actually in the drum family. They provide great action and, like the spot, they have been one of the first saltwater fish most anglers learn to catch, regardless of their age, because they keep the angler busy. They bite readily if they are in the area and can almost be a nuisance if you are trying to fish for other species. The importance of this fish is not just because they are fun to catch and excellent table fair, but because they are a primary source of forage food for most big game species in our area. Learning how to catch them can open doors of opportunity to catching many trophy species all along the coast. I once caught a 13" croaker on a jigging spoon and it was swallowed by a 41" striped bass as I was cranking it up. Instant food chain. Croaker can be found from Massachusetts to the Gulf of America.



They are named after the croaking sound they make by drumming on their air bladders. They spawn in offshore waters in July through February with the peak in August to October. The eggs drop to the bottom where they hatch and travel inshore to shallow estuaries where the salinity levels are low. They grow in these waters and feed on basically everything they can find, but primarily crustaceans, mollusks, worms, smaller fish or decaying flesh. They grow rapidly but stay in the shallows for the first summer. They spend their first winter in the tidal rivers and school with the adults when they arrive in the spring, moving into the shallows to forage. As the shallows warm in the summer, the croaker move to deeper channels, eventually moving to the mouth of the bay, usually near August. The young will then travel offshore with the adults. While they are usually under 2 pounds, with the proper food sources, environmental conditions and pressure from commercial and recreational fishing, they can grow considerably as they have an average life span of 7-8 years. The world record croaker was 8 lbs. 11 ounces and was caught in Virginia by Portsmouth resident, Norman T. Jenkins at New Point Comfort light in about 30 ft of water on August 17th, 2007. One of the best baits for them is squid that has been cut into pennant shaped strips. Hook it through the wide end so it can wave in the current and then drop it to the bottom on a Chesapeake Bay bottom rig using 231XH -2X in size #2 long shanked Eagle Claw hooks and just enough sinker to hold bottom. When drifting, avoid pyramid sinkers and opt for bank or teardrop style. Reserve pyramid sinkers for beach and pier areas. Try this recipe: Fillet and skin your fish, then soak in saltwater for several hours. Use your favorite batter mixture to cover the fillet. Place in deep fryer of peanut oil or butter flavored Crisco set at 375 degrees for several minutes on each side until golden brown and meat is white and flaky inside. As a child, I added ketchup to mine, and my father drizzled white vinegar on his. These fish are delicious and can be enhanced with condiments or eaten without. Let me know what you like to put on yours. Served with fries and hush puppies makes for a wonderful meal. Tight lines, friends

what's biting?

During May, June and July you'll typically reel in these catches:

MAY

Offshore

Yellowfin tuna, bluefin tuna, snowy grouper, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, flounder

Chesapeake Bay

Black drum, red drum, tautog, flounder, bluefish

Lynnhaven River

Spot, croaker, flounder, puppy drum, speckled trout, bluefish

JUNE

Offshore

Dolphin fish, golden tilefish, flounder, amberjack, trigger fish, wahoo

Chesapeake Bay

Black drum, red drum, sheepshead, spadefish, cobia, Spanish mackerel, flounder

Lynnhaven River

Spot, croaker, flounder, bluefish, speckled trout, puppy drum, roundheads, skates

July

Offshore

Yellowfin tuna, bigeye tuna, blue marlin, white marlin, snowy grouper, wahoo, dolphin fish, sailfish, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish

Chesapeake Bay

Cobia, red drum, sheepshead, spadefish, flounder, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel

Lynnhaven River

Spot, croaker, speckled trout, puppy drum, flounder, bluefish, roundhead, skates



What have you reeled in?

We would like to publish your photos, information, prize catches and catches of note in our What's Biting segment. Send us your favorite amateur photos with a description and the photographer's name.

Born and raised in Portsmouth, Virginia, son of Judy and legendary local fisherman and avid hunter, Captain Billy Sugg Sr., Bill Jr. was taught from an early age to love the great outdoors. He began working on his parent's boat at a very young age and began mating professionally when he was approximately 12, catching most saltwater and freshwater species along the East coast and teaching fishing classes with his father. As a young adult he worked in the marine industry selling boating equipment until 1995 when he joined the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office, serving for over 28 years in law enforcement, retiring in January 2024 as a Major. Bill now continues to serve part time as a school resource officer, while sharing his knowledge and love for fishing with anglers of all ages. He is married to his high school crush, Christine, residing in Suffolk, Va. and they have 4 children together.

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JACKALOPE

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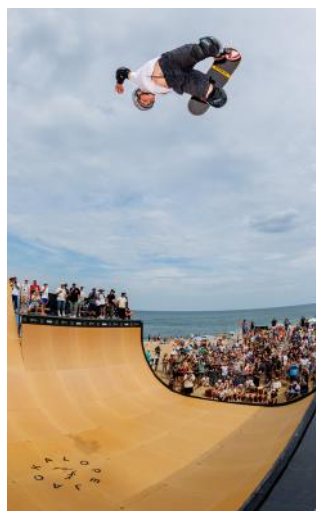
And it's bringing everything we love about extreme sports, creativity, and that unbeatable community energy. Whether you've been with us from the start or you're just discovering the vibe, this year's festival is set to be unforgettable. And the best part? It's completely free.

We're taking over the iconic Virginia Beach oceanfront (same spot as usual) for three days of wild energy, wild talent, and non-stop fun. No tickets, no gates—just pull up, dive in, and enjoy the show.

Expect to see some of the most talented skateboarders out there—including Pedro Barros, Angelo Caro, Christiana Means, Beaver Fleming, and more—alongside Moto X and BMX riders going full send, and skimboarders throwing down right on the shoreline. But JACKALOPE isn't just about sports—it's a full-on celebration of Virginia Beach. Think local shops, pop-up brands, food trucks, and live music, all coming together in a massive vendor village where you can discover something new and support the community.



Now picture this: You're in front of our custom skatepark and JACKALOPE Vert ramp, ocean at your back, watching world-class athletes battle for the cash prize. Look up—BASE jumpers are launching from the Hilton, and highliners are walking a wire strung from the Hilton to the Hampton Inn.



Still want more? We've got freestyle jet skiing on the water, Moto X and BMX demos on the sand, plus roller skating, adaptive skateboarding, and exclusive experiences that bring the energy up another level. Who said JACKALOPE couldn't get any more breathtaking?

To top it all off, this year, we're tapping into something special—Blackbeard. Quick history check: Back in 1718, the notorious pirate made his base near Ocracoke Island, just south of Virginia Beach. After defying a royal pardon, Governor Spotswood sent Lieutenant Robert Maynard to take him down. What followed was a fierce battle at sea, ending with Blackbeard's legendary death. His ghost still haunts the Virginia Beach coastline, and we're bringing that rich history to life with the adrenaline of today's action sports.

Peep the poster.



Blackbeard's back from the depths. He's stolen Neptune's trident, he's toasting the devil with his infamous goblet, and now the ocean is coming for him. It's a whole saga, and it's setting the tone for this year's madness.

But what really makes JACKALOPE Virginia Beach hit different? The vibe. There's something in the air here—call it the sea breeze, the crowd energy, or the 757 pride—but every year, this city brings something electric. You feel it in the crowd, in the athletes, in every cheer and every trick landed. The second the festival kicks off, the energy hits. The 757 shows up hard, and you can tell the second the festival starts. And it's also about getting involved. Whether you're a pro athlete or a seasoned shredder, the open competitions and experiences like the Shredder Sessions mean you can jump in and be part of it in your own way. And the athletes feel it too. We get messages every year from them saying there's nothing quite like the VB crowd. This city breathes skate, and JACKALOPE is proud to be part of that.



"Thanks to everyone that came out and supported skateboarding in Virginia Beach. The riders inspired so many and you can see from the groms to the parents Virginia Beach is a skateboarding town. Thanks @jackalopefest merci pour tout." - TideWater Skateshop

Remember Chad Caruso—the one who skated across America and ended his two-month trip right here in Virginia Beach? The one the mayor honored by declaring May 19 "Chad Caruso Day"? Well, he's coming back. This time, he's bringing his film Across America, a raw, honest look at the challenges he faced, the people he met, and the wild journey from coast to coast. It's powerful, it's personal, and it's a must-watch. Wanna talk about resilience? Chad's the definition of it.

If you can't make it this year, don't worry, we've got you. We'll be running a live webcast, so you can still be part of it all, wherever you are. Just head to jackalope.co.



OUR MISSION

Did you know JACKALOPE started in Montreal, Canada? Back in 2012, our founder Micah Desforges and a few friends were dreaming up something different. Hoodie and caps on, mood board on a wooden plank and just a big idea to create an international festival that didn't take itself too seriously. Almost 15 years later, JACKALOPE's landed in Canada, the U.S., and Australia. But no matter where we go, our mission stays the same:

JACKALOPE is where the streets meet the stage. A home for misfits, dreamers, and underdogs to rise. We shine a light on action sports by creating spaces where communities come together, fuel their passion, and chase the impossible. This is where hidden talent becomes legend, and every moment sparks a movement. #WhereLegendsAreBorn



Staying true to that mission, we decided to level up something we were already doing: giving real opportunities to real talent. Over the past few years, we've handed out Golden Tickets here and there (expenses-paid trips to compete at JACKALOPE events across our locations). But this year? We.Went.Bigger. We opened up the chance to the entire scene, with one goal in mind: find the most underrated skaters out there. The ones grinding without connections or opportunities—just raw skill and pure passion. No fancy edits. No gimmicks. Just next-level skating.

We launched the Golden Ticket initiative in early April for about a month, and four athletes—1 man and 1 woman in both street and vert—will earn their place in the spotlight. We're flying them out to all three of our 2025 festivals, giving them the platform they deserve and boosting their story on our socials. Because legends aren't born in boardrooms. They're born right here, on the pavement, at the park, and at JACKALOPE.

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The Future is Home:

10

Interior Design
Trends Defining 2025

By Berry Brunk

As we step deeper into the 2020s, our homes continue to evolve in ways that reflect not just ourselves aesthetic preferences, but also our values, lifestyles, and need for well-being. In 2025, the lines between form and function blur more seamlessly than ever before. Whether you're a minimalist craving warmth, a tech enthusiast longing for soulful spaces, or simply looking to refresh your home, these 10 interior design trends are shaping the homes of tomorrow—and they're as beautiful as they are intentional.



The Future is Home:

10 Interior Design Trends Defining 2025

By Berry Brunk

1. Warm Minimalism: The New Serenity

Minimalism isn't going anywhere, but in 2025 it's getting a warm and cozy upgrade. Stark whites and greys are making way for softer palettes—think sandy taupes, clay pinks, and rich caramels. The goal? A calmer, more nurturing minimalism. Clean lines remain, but they're paired with tactile textures like boucle, linen, and soft wood grains. It's about simplicity that



2. Smart Homes, Soft Aesthetics

Technology is more integrated than ever, but now it's discreet. In 2025, smart home design favors invisibility—think voice-activated lighting hidden behind crown molding or AI-powered climate systems embedded within art pieces. Touchless faucets, ambient circadian lighting, and energy-efficient everything are seamlessly built into the home's fabric, creating intuitive environments that anticipate your needs while maintaining visual tranquility.



3. Sustainable and Circular Design
Sustainability is no longer a buzzword—it's a baseline. Consumers are increasingly drawn to circular design, which means choosing materials and products designed to be reused, recycled, or ethically sourced. Reclaimed woods, bio-based resins, recycled metals, and natural plasters are trending. Interior designers are championing furniture with long life cycles, pieces made locally, or vintage finds with stories to tell. Green is the new neutral—both in color and ethos.

4. Biophilic Immersion

2025 is the year nature fully moves indoors. Biophilic design is stepping beyond potted plants and becoming immersive. Living walls, built-in planters, and indoor water features are being integrated into kitchens, bathrooms, and even bedrooms. Natural light maximization—through larger windows, skylights, and reflective surfaces—is a top priority. The goal is to reconnect with nature at every level, enhancing mental clarity and emotional well-being.



5. The Rise of the “Home Hub”

With flexible work, school, and leisure still part of daily life, homes are becoming modular “hubs” that adapt to shifting needs. Multipurpose rooms are being smartly zoned with dividers, flexible furniture, and built-in storage. Expect to see more retractable desks, hidden gym equipment, and Murphy beds disguised as statement wall panels. Every square foot counts—and design is stepping up to make the most of it.



6. Statement Stone

Marble and natural stone are going bold in 2025. No longer confined to kitchen counters, you'll see dramatic veining and richly colored stone (like green jade, pink onyx, and travertine) used for everything from bathtubs to fireplaces to headboards. Designers are embracing the unique imperfections of stone as art forms in themselves. Bonus: they're timeless, sustainable, and incredibly durable.



7. Artisanal and Local Craftsmanship

After years of mass-produced sameness, homeowners are craving authenticity. Enter the artisan renaissance. Custom ceramics, handwoven textiles, forged metalwork, and locally crafted furniture are key players in 2025 interiors. These pieces bring a human touch and sense of place into homes, and often support regional economies and traditional craft methods. The mantra: fewer, better, and more meaningful objects.

8. Color Drenching

2025 is waving goodbye to accent walls. Instead, we're seeing the rise of color drenching—painting walls, ceilings, trim, and even furniture in a single saturated hue. Whether it's a moody olive, dusty rose, or deep ocean blue, this technique creates an enveloping, almost cocoon-like feeling. It's bold but surprisingly calming when done with the right tones, and perfect for creating distinct moods in different parts of the home.

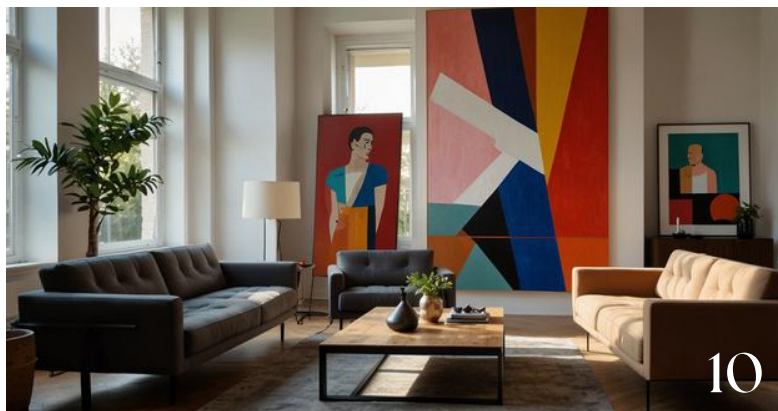


09



9. Soft Curves and Organic Forms

Say goodbye to harsh edges. Curved sofas, arched doorways, wavy mirrors, and pill-shaped coffee tables are defining the silhouettes of 2025. These organic shapes mimic natural forms, making spaces feel more relaxed and inviting. Whether it's a sculptural lighting piece or a rounded kitchen island, this trend is all about embracing the imperfect and flowing beauty of the natural world.



10

10. Personalization Over Perfection

Perhaps the most defining trend of 2025 is the move away from curated perfection. Interiors are becoming more expressive and personal. Maximalism and minimalism can coexist in the same home—what matters is that your space tells your story. Think photo walls with mismatched frames, eclectic libraries, travel mementos, and DIY projects that proudly show their maker's hand. It's not about having the perfect home, but the perfectly you home.

Final Thoughts: Living Intentionally

What ties these trends together is a shared desire to live more intentionally. The home of 2025 isn't just about looking good—it's about feeling good, doing good, and reflecting who you are. It's a space that supports your wellness, respects the planet, and adapts to your life's evolving needs.

As you explore ways to update your space, remember that design trends are less about rules and more about inspiration. Use them as a palette—not a prescription—and create a home that not only looks beautiful, but feels like home in every sense of the word.

Mini Trends to Watch:

- Color of the Year: Burnt Saffron
- and Earthy Greens
- Texture of the Year: Plaster walls with a matte finish
- Material of the Moment: Cork—used in everything from walls to flooring
- Furniture Must-Have: Modular sofas you can rearrange endlessly
- Unexpected Accent: Shag rugs are back—and in bold pattern

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Smart, Stylish Ways to Revive Your Space Without a Full Renovation

Breathe New Life Into Your Home

You don't need a full-scale renovation to give your home a fresh start. Small, thoughtful updates can go a long way—making your space feel more current, more inviting, and most importantly, more you. Think of it as a mini makeover with maximum impact. Whether you're introducing texture, color, or personality, it's all about curating moments that elevate your everyday surroundings.

If you're working with a designer, choose someone who listens—someone who understands your style and collaborates without overshadowing your vision. After all, expertise matters, but your home should be a reflection of you, not just their aesthetic. Ready to begin? Let's find the pieces and changes that will refresh your space—beautifully and intentionally.

Start from the Ground Up

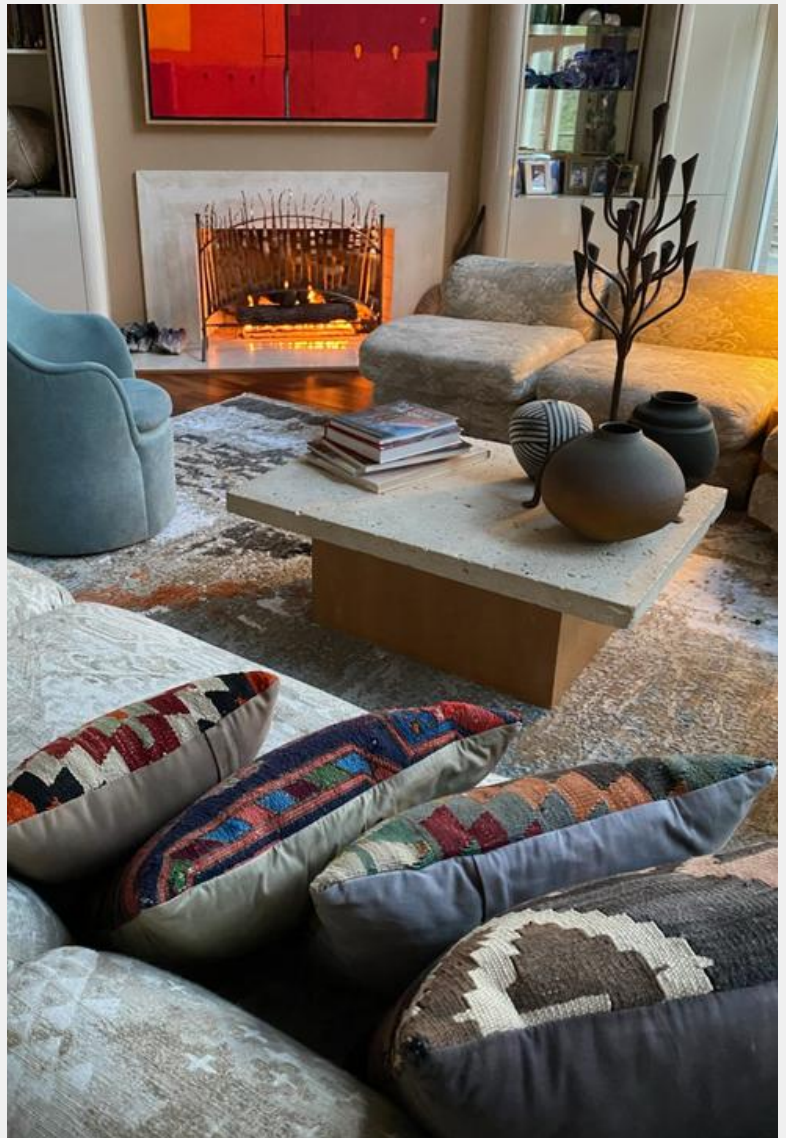
If you're dreaming of a complete room revamp, resist the urge to start with paint. Instead, fall in love with a rug. It sets the tone—anchoring the room with texture, pattern, and personality. From there, build up. Select fabrics that speak to you, and mix prints and patterns that evoke a sense of continuity or playful contrast. Once you have a base, then it's time to layer in your wall color.

Don't aim for matchy-matchy. Aim for meaningful cohesion. A space feels elevated when it feels curated—like a story being told through objects and textures. Even a traditionally "serious" office can feel whimsical with the right touches: think shagreen boxes or a melting Dali clock on a bookcase. A little fun goes a long way.

Layer in Texture & Personality

Textiles like throw pillows and layered rugs are your best friends when it comes to low-commitment, high-impact updates. They're quick, flexible ways to shift the mood and palette of a room. Once your foundational pieces are in place, start weaving in newer elements with vintage or heirloom items you already love.

Light fixtures are another secret weapon. Swapping dated pendants or bedside lamps for sculptural or modern ones can instantly change the energy of a space. Think of lighting as jewelry for your home—it catches the eye and sets the mood.



Wallpaper Is Having a Moment

Wallpaper isn't just back—it's having a glow-up. From bold murals to moody powder room makeovers, peel-and-stick options make it easier than ever to take the plunge. Nervous? Start small. Back a set of bookcases or line cabinet interiors. And if you're feeling bold, look up: ceiling murals with crown moldings and saturated walls can turn any room into a showstopper.

No more playing it safe. Think of wallpaper as personality made visible.



Design That Reflects You

Great design isn't just about what's trendy—it's about what's true to you. By incorporating meaningful elements and making smart, deliberate decisions, you create a space that evolves with you and tells your story.

So take a breath, start small, and remember: you've got this. Your dream home might just be a few beautiful choices away.



Writer's Bio:

Helena D'Agostino

As a design professional for over 40 years, Helena has created beautiful homes for her clients. By listening carefully and understanding the client's individual lifestyle, Helena narrows down the unlimited possibilities and makes the entire process simple. Helena believes that it should be an expression of who you are, where you have traveled, and the things you love.

Helena was born in Helsinki, Finland. She has the ability to go from traditional to continental to contemporary. Whether it's your walls, windows or the complete room, it will be the perfect fit. You can find Helena D'Agostino at Willis Furniture in Virginia Beach. She has been there for 17 years.

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United We Stand: Why Regional Tourism Matters in Hampton Roads

By Berry Brunk

It's no secret that Virginia Beach is the undisputed tourism heavyweight of Hampton Roads. With its iconic oceanfront, sprawling boardwalk, world-class resorts, and events like the Something in the Water festival, Virginia Beach consistently draws millions of visitors each year. But here's a truth that often gets lost in the surf and sand: those travelers don't stop at the oceanfront—and they shouldn't. Because tourism, when seen through a regional lens, is far more than a one-city affair. It's a rising tide that lifts all boats.

As the publisher of a lifestyle magazine that spans all seven cities of Hampton Roads—Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach—I see firsthand how interconnected our economies, cultures, and identities truly are. While each city has its own brand and unique story to tell, the strength of our region lies in cooperation. And tourism is where that spirit of collaboration has its highest potential. Let's break down why.

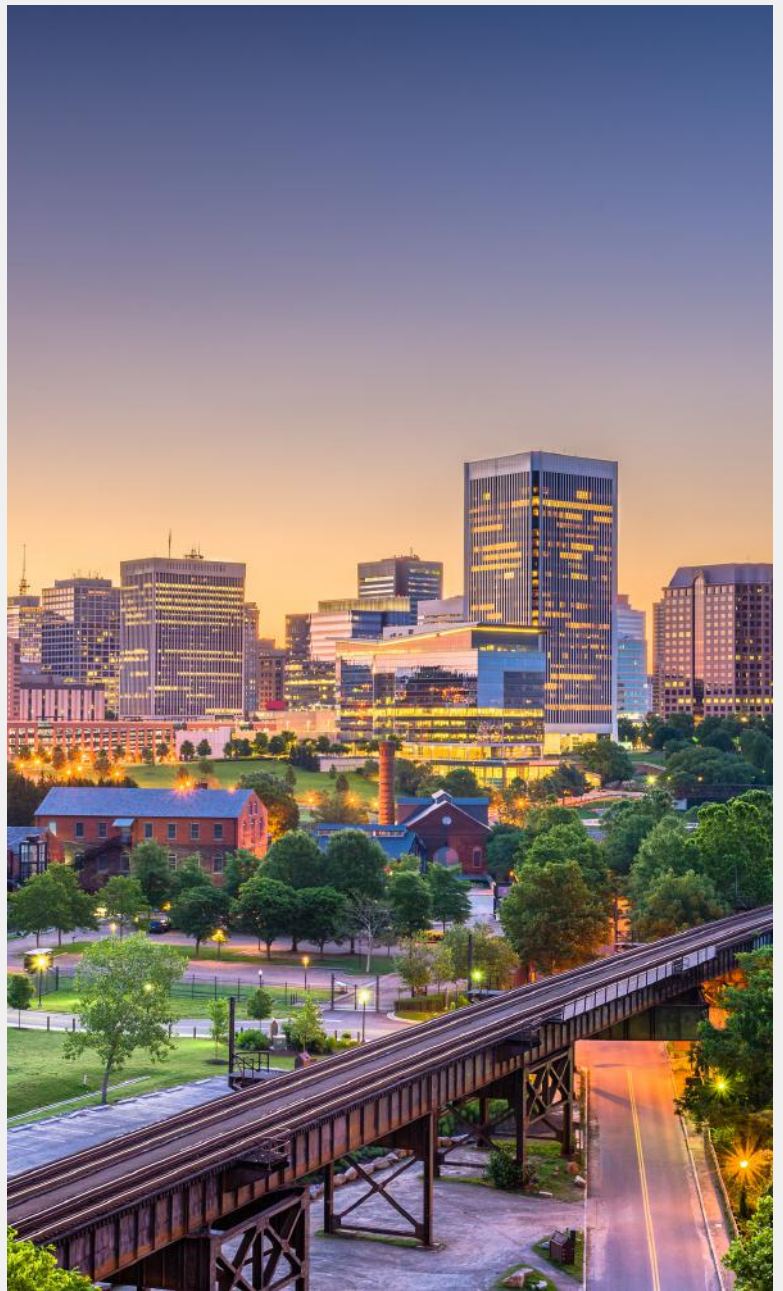
viewpoint

The Economic Ripple Effect

When a traveler books a weeklong stay in Virginia Beach, they're not confining themselves to one zip code. They may attend a festival in Norfolk, explore a museum in Hampton, dine in Suffolk, or go antiquing in Portsmouth. That hotel tax in Virginia Beach might fund city services there, but every tank of gas, every Uber ride, every dinner, and every ticket purchase made elsewhere in the region is part of the broader economic picture.

According to recent data from the Virginia Tourism Corporation, tourism in Hampton Roads supports over 46,000 jobs and generates more than \$5 billion in annual spending. But here's the key: tourism-driven dollars don't respect city boundaries. A family visiting the Virginia Aquarium might decide to extend their trip with a tour of the Battleship Wisconsin in Norfolk or a walk through the Hampton History Museum. Those extra days mean more nights in hotels, more meals in restaurants, and more retail purchases throughout the region.

We must recognize that while Virginia Beach may be the magnet, it's the mosaic of regional experiences that keeps visitors engaged and spending.



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Regional Branding Makes Us Competitive

In today's hyper-competitive travel market, cities aren't just up against each other—they're up against entire regions and countries. Nashville doesn't just sell its downtown—it sells its entire metro area. The same goes for Austin, Charleston, and Denver. These places have successfully positioned themselves as regional destinations where urban culture, outdoor adventure, food scenes, and historic experiences are all within a short drive.

Hampton Roads has that same potential—and arguably, more diversity in experience.

Where else can you surf at sunrise in Virginia Beach, kayak through the Great Dismal Swamp in Suffolk, tour a Civil War-era fort in Hampton, visit a world-class art museum in Norfolk, and catch a minor league baseball game in Newport News—all within an hour?

To tap into that competitive edge, we need to stop marketing ourselves as fragmented municipalities and start promoting ourselves as a regional destination. A traveler planning a trip to Hampton Roads shouldn't have to choose between the beach, the arts, history, or nature—they should be shown that they can have it all.

Infrastructure Investment and Shared Growth

When one city in the region experiences growth in tourism, the benefits can—and should—be shared. Improved roads, enhanced public transit, beautified downtowns, and increased hospitality tax revenue all contribute to a stronger regional infrastructure. But this only works if we see each other not as competitors, but as collaborators.

For example, as traffic into Virginia Beach grows during peak season, nearby cities should look for ways to absorb and benefit from the overflow. More shuttle routes, expanded hotel partnerships, and coordinated marketing can help direct tourists toward lesser-known gems—from Suffolk's burgeoning wine and farm scene to Hampton's vibrant waterfront.

When we take a regional approach to infrastructure and planning, we can better manage visitor flow, reduce pressure on any single city, and make the overall experience more enjoyable for everyone—residents and tourists alike.



Telling a Broader, Richer Story

Hampton Roads isn't just a place—it's a story. And stories are what travelers seek. Yes, the beach is beautiful, but today's travelers want authenticity, culture, and connection. That's where the collective strength of our region truly shines.

From the African American heritage sites in Portsmouth and Hampton to the art and music scenes in Norfolk, to the agricultural tourism of Chesapeake and Suffolk, we offer a spectrum of experiences that no single city can capture alone. By weaving these narratives together, we not only enhance the visitor experience—we deepen the sense of identity and pride for those of us who call this region home.

Imagine a visitor itinerary that connects the Wright Brothers' historic flights in Kitty Hawk to the military innovation at Norfolk Naval Station to the contemporary aviation history in Newport News. Or a cultural trail that starts with the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, winds through the Portsmouth Art & Cultural Center, and ends with a performance at the American Theatre in Hampton. These are the types of cross-city experiences that will leave lasting impressions—and keep travelers coming back.



A Call for Regional Vision

As publishers, city leaders, business owners, and residents, we have a choice: continue marketing our cities in silos, or unite under a shared vision of Hampton Roads as a dynamic, interconnected travel destination.

Let's advocate for a regional tourism bureau with real funding and authority. Let's push for cohesive branding that doesn't dilute individual identities but amplifies them. Let's create cross-city events, joint advertising campaigns, and shared data strategies that allow us to compete not with each other—but with the world.

If we want to grow tourism in Hampton Roads sustainably and equitably, we must think regionally, act collaboratively, and speak with one voice. Because when Virginia Beach thrives, Norfolk benefits. When Suffolk grows, Chesapeake gains. When Hampton shines, we all do.

Tourism is not a zero-sum game in Hampton Roads. It's a shared opportunity.

Let's seize it—together.

Thank You *for your continued support!*



You want to connect and celebrate – to see long-missed friends, celebrate a milestone with colleagues, or have a full-blown birthday celebration. There's no better place to do that than over a shared meal at a local restaurant. We're ready.



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Notable Potables



KENTUCKY BUCK

- 2 oz. bourbon
- 0.75 oz. lemon juice
- 0.75 oz. ginger syrup
- 1 strawberry
- 1-2 dashes Angostura Bitters
- About 2 oz. soda

Muddle the strawberry in the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Add bourbon, lemon, ginger syrup, and bitters, and shake for six to eight seconds. Strain over fresh ice in a tall glass and top with soda water. Garnish with a half strawberry or a lemon wheel or a mint sprig or all three.



ARMY & NAVY

- 2 oz. gin
- 0.75 oz. lemon juice
- 0.75 oz. orgeat (almond syrup)
- 2 dashes Angostura Bitters

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker, add ice, and shake good and hard for eight to 10 seconds. Strain up into a cocktail glass or coupe, and garnish with a lemon peel or lemon wheel, or nothing at all.

CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES

- 1.75 oz. Cognac
- 0.75 oz. lemon juice
- 0.5 oz. simple syrup
- 0.25 oz. Green Chartreuse
- 2 dashes Angostura Bitters

Add all ingredients to a cocktail shaker with ice and shake hard for 8 to 10 seconds. Strain up into a cocktail glass or coupe and garnish with a lemon peel





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Zero's - Honoring Fallen Heroes

By: Rick Polston

On Friday, February 21st of this year, the City of Virginia Beach Police Department learned of the senseless shootings of two of its young police officers during a traffic stop. Officers Cameron Girvin, 25, and Christopher Reese, 30, were pronounced deceased at local area hospitals. Both men were dedicated public servants with stellar reputations and work ethics.

Whenever a tragedy of this nature occurs in any city in the country, people often wonder how they can help ease the pain for the families of those who were lost and the ones who worked with them. Most people don't know what to do. Mark Stevens did. Mark owns a Zero's Subs franchise at 632 Virginia Beach Blvd. He and his team assembled dozens and dozens of submarine sandwiches and delivered them to the local police precinct near his store. Officers were working hard as the police department doubled up all its officers in cars to ensure no single officers were on the road. The gift of these subs was perhaps just a small token to let the officers know that the community supported them in an often under-appreciated career. On February 26, Mark donated 100% of the profits from his store that day to the families of the two officers. "I knew in my heart that this was the right thing to do."

Mark's kindness on that Saturday morning was not the first time he had given back to his community. On May 31st, 2019, a mass shooting at Virginia Beach's Municipal Building took place. A lone gunman and former city employee fatally shot 12 people and wounded an additional four others. Hundreds of subs were delivered to the scene over a day or two, once again provided by Zero's and the kind heart of Mark Stevens.

Less than a year later, when COVID-19 closed down the school systems, Mark and Zero's Subs served 2,700 meals to children and families and installed Wi-Fi in areas that needed it so that children could continue their school lessons remotely.

In 1967, Gene Schmidt established Zero's Subs with a visionary goal: to create a vibrant chain of sub shops that would offer a delightful alternative to conventional fast food. His idea was elegantly simple yet profoundly appealing: to serve oven-baked submarine sandwiches crafted to order, utilizing only the finest quality ingredients, all accompanied by a level of service that would soon become the hallmark of Zero's Subs.



In 1969, Gene welcomed his cousin, Martin Palacios, and his brother, John Schmidt, to join him in this culinary venture. Together, they shared an unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality fare, friendly service, and exceptional value to every customer.



As Zero's Subs proudly celebrates over 50 years of thriving in the business landscape, it remains dedicated to evolving with the changing times and trends. Looking to the future, the company is excited to unveil an ambitious franchise program, presenting a unique opportunity for personal financial independence and success that you may have been searching for.

Contact us today to learn more about our rich history or explore potential franchise opportunities. We pride ourselves on serving our beloved customers throughout the Southeastern United States, including Virginia and Tennessee.

What's on the menu at Zero's Subs? Fresh produce, cheeses, and quality meats from Hormel. The subs and grinders are oven-baked, delicious, and the choices appear endless. Philly Steak and Cheese and Philly Chicken and Cheese Grilled Subs are available. Other meat offerings include turkey, meatballs, ham, tuna, roast beef, pastrami, spicy chicken (17th Street Clucker), the Jersey Italian Monster, and the El Cubano featuring Cuban pork. Sausage and Cheese, barbeque, hot dogs - a Black Angus frank, and even fried bologna are also offered.



WSide dishes include wings, mac & cheese wedges, French fries seasoned with a sprinkle of feta cheese, and either Greek or Caesar salads. There is a kids' menu with chips, cookies, and Pepsi products. They also serve cans of Red Bull.

Adult beverages are also featured on the menu: Proverb Chardonnay, Proverb Pinot Grigio, and Proverb Cabernet wines. One other offering is Vibrant Shore Better Than the Devil, a classic Dreher Vienna-style lager.

Zero's Subs satisfies any craving for great food. Whether you call it a sub, a grinder, or a hoagie, this sandwich is a staple in delis worldwide. From the bread to the meats, cheese, veggies, and toppings, you cannot go wrong visiting any location. There are 22 Zero's Subs locations in Virginia and Tennessee. The vision of Gene, John, and Marty focused on the quality of a great sandwich, and franchise owners like Mark Stevens give our hometowns much to be proud of.



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
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THE NOBLEMEN BEYOND BOUNDARIES



On Saturday, May 4th, families from across Hampton Roads will gather at Mount Trashmore Park for an unforgettable afternoon of fun, connection, and celebration at the Beyond Boundaries event, hosted by The Noblemen. From noon to 4 p.m., the Mount Trashmore Stage will be transformed into a vibrant hub of activity—designed specifically with children with special needs and their families in mind.

This special event isn't just about having fun—it's about making sure every child feels seen, supported, and celebrated. With inclusivity and accessibility at the heart of the planning, Beyond Boundaries offers a wide range of engaging activities that are welcoming to children of all abilities. Families can look forward to an adaptive bike ride along the scenic park path, a live magic show that promises to leave kids wide-eyed with wonder, colorful face painting, and hands-on stations filled with sensory-friendly fun. And when it's time to recharge, a local food truck will be ready to serve up tasty treats for all.



For over 30 years, The Noblemen have been a cornerstone of support in Hampton Roads, consistently stepping up for underprivileged and special needs children throughout the region. Their objective is to create meaningful moments and lasting change in the lives of local kids. Beyond Boundaries is just one more way they're putting that mission into action—bringing together with the community for a day of joy, laughter, and inclusion. But their commitment does not stop there. The Noblemen have spearheaded several initiatives to uplift and support children in the community:

► **Rollin' With Kimball Adaptive Bikes**

Initiative: Recognizing the joy and freedom a bike can bring, The Noblemen, in collaboration with CHKD and Children's Assistive Technology Service, have provided over 100 adaptive bikes to children who cannot ride conventional ones. These specially designed three-wheeled bicycles, crafted by Rifton Equipment, empower children to experience the thrill of riding. The program honors the late Kimball Payne, a dedicated Noblemen member whose passion for helping children continues to inspire.

► **Special Needs Airshow Chalet:** Since 2009, in partnership with Naval Air Station Oceana, The Noblemen have hosted a special chalet during the annual airshow. This event offers children with special needs and their families a comfortable space to enjoy the spectacle, complete with food, beverages, and meet-and-greets with performers, including the awe-inspiring Blue Angels.

► **Holiday Toy Drive:** What began in 2004, inspired by Tracy Reuss Glasheen's heartfelt gesture, has grown into a massive annual endeavor. The Noblemen's Toy Drive has distributed approximately 50,000 toys to over 6,400 children, emphasizing the joy of giving by encouraging children to donate toys to their peers in need.

► **Holiday Trolley Ride:** In collaboration with Edmarc, a pediatric home health and hospice service, The Noblemen bring holiday cheer directly to families' homes. With Santa in tow, they deliver gifts, sing carols, and create cherished memories, especially poignant for families facing challenging times.



To learn more about the event or to find ways to get involved with The Noblemen's incredible work, visit thenoblemen.org!

Day Trip



Day Trip: Destination Cape Charles on Virginia's Eastern Shore

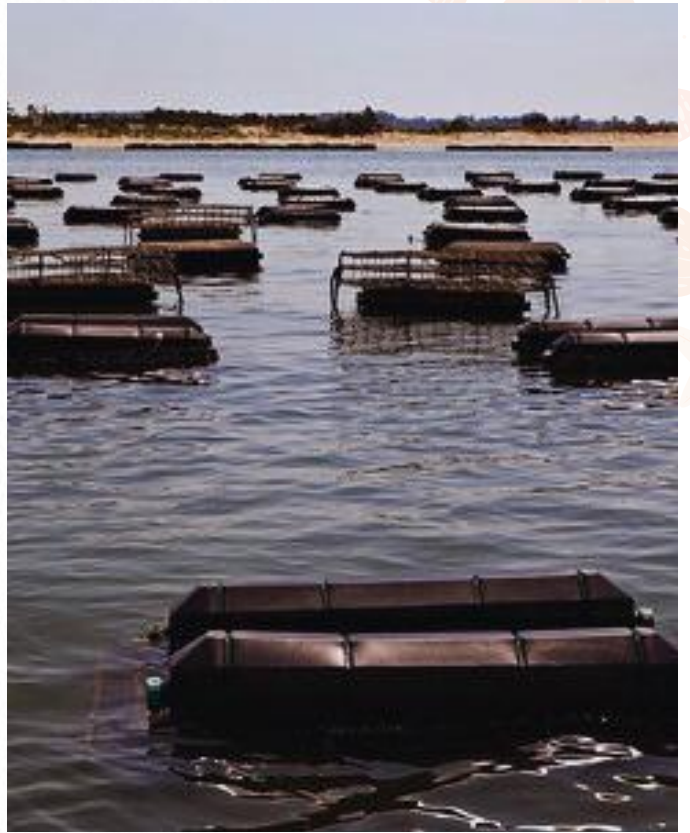
By: Rick Polston

The nostalgic sounds of the 70s filled my SUV as I approached the majestic Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, just as the sun rose, casting a golden glow that danced on the tranquil waters below. This remarkable journey spanned three sections of bridges and two tunnels, covering 17.6 miles across the bay. Despite ongoing construction that promises to enhance this engineering marvel further, today offered a blissfully smooth ride with minimal traffic. The bridge gracefully arches over five islands, intersected by two tunnels that navigate the Thimble Shoal Channel and the North Channel. Upon reaching Fisherman Island, visitors are greeted with a Scenic Overlook—a perfect spot for capturing the breathtaking vistas.

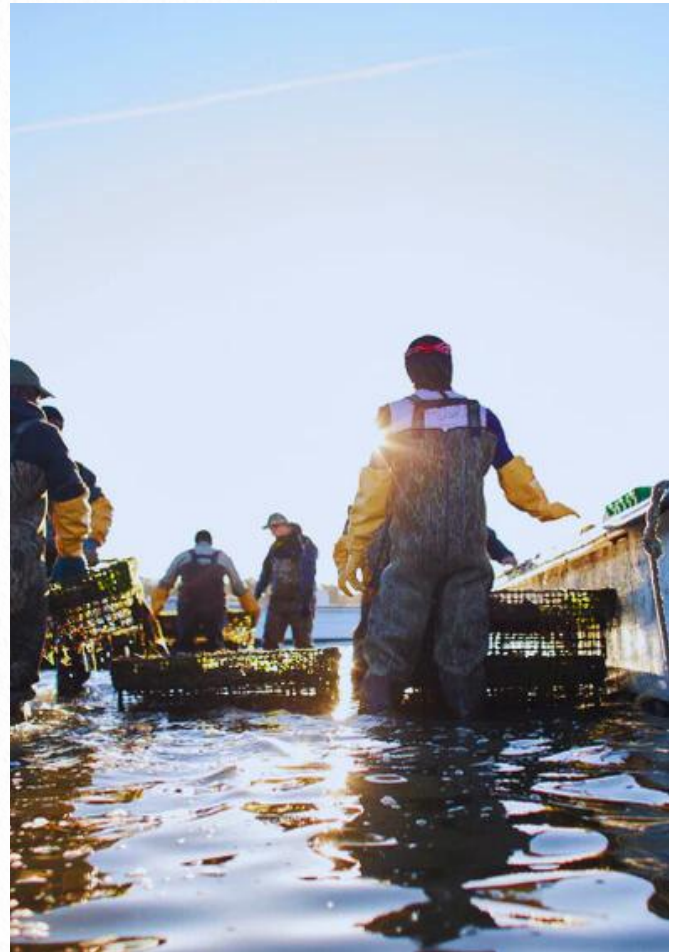


Day Trip

The main objective of my day trip to the eastern shore was to visit the renowned Cherrystone Aqua-Farms. Established in 1895, this esteemed company cultivates clams and oysters celebrated for their freshness, sustainability, and exquisite taste. Upon my arrival, I had the pleasure of speaking with Caitlin Hart, who was an exceptional source of knowledge about these beloved shellfish and the inner workings of the Aqua-Farms. "Here at Aqua-Farms, we grow and provide an impressive 80 to 100 million clams yearly," she explained enthusiastically. "Our clams are the hard-shell *Mercenaria mercenaria*, with most cultivated in beds and some in innovative floating cages." Remarkably, all clams are grit-free as they undergo a thorough purging process before shipment.



The hard clam, scientifically known as *Mercenaria mercenaria*, is affectionately called by various names, including cherrystone, chowder, little neck, and quahog. These clams vary in color and inhabit the tidal and intertidal waters of the East Coast, stretching from Florida to Nova Scotia, Canada. Their rich flavor and versatility make them a popular choice for the harvesting methods used by Cherrystone Aqua-Farms.





The oysters produced here are cultivated using distinctive techniques that yield high quality and consistency, ensuring that each one bursts with flavor. “Don’t say we didn’t warn you: they’re not your granddaddy’s oysters—they’re better!”



Caitlin remarked that the dedicated workforce comprises generational watermen, and Cherrystone Aqua-Farms proudly stands as the largest employer in Northampton County. Chad Ballard, a fifth-generation member of the Ballard family, leads the company, whose deep-rooted legacy speaks volumes about their commitment to the craft. “Our longevity in this business means we’ve had years to refine our methods. We know what we’re doing!” she said with pride, reflecting the company's dedication to excellence.

Contact Information:

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[Cherrystone Aqua Farms](#) Promotional
video worth watching

Day Trip



Nestled across US Highway 13 from Aqua-Farms in the quaint town of Cheriton lies a delightful vacation retreat: Charles Town Tiny Livin'. Embracing the modern less-is-more philosophy, this charming collection of tiny homes invites you to escape to the serene beauty of the Eastern Shore. Each home is meticulously designed, showcasing thoughtful details that combine comfort with whimsical charm, making you feel like you've stepped back into a simpler time.

The decor is a delightful mix of vintage-inspired pieces and cozy touches, creating an inviting atmosphere where nostalgia lingers. Enjoy your morning coffee on the welcoming front porch as you take in the peaceful surroundings. A large fire pit beckons for evening gatherings in the shared outdoor space, providing the perfect setting for storytelling and laughter under the stars.

Most units include mini-kitchens, letting you prepare your favorite meals. Each is equipped with a mini-fridge, microwave, and coffee maker for your convenience. The fully stocked bathrooms feature excellent water pressure, ensuring a refreshing experience. Flatscreen TVs are standard, providing modern comfort in these charming homes. Charles Town Tiny Livin' promises an unforgettable stay where simplicity meets serenity.

Booking and other info:
WWW.CAPECHARLESTINYLIVIN.COM Enter the code - Stay Tiny - to receive a first-night discount on your stay.



Cape Charles

Cape Charles, Virginia, is a charming coastal gem nestled at the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, along the eastern shores of the enchanting Chesapeake Bay. Established in the late 19th century as a bustling railroad and ferry town, this idyllic city radiates historic allure. It is characterized by its Victorian-era architecture, shaded, tree-lined streets, and an inviting atmosphere that welcomes all who visit. The town boasts stunning coastal access, featuring sandy beaches, panoramic bay vistas, and mesmerizing sunsets that paint the sky in vibrant hues. Tourism is the lifeblood of its economy, as Cape Charles stands as the largest of the five incorporated towns within Northampton County. A close-knit community primarily composed of middle-aged and retired individuals, the resident population hovers around 1,200, swelling to over 4,000 during the peak seasonal influx.

Day Trip

Cape Charles embodies the essence of small-town charm, enriched by a profound maritime heritage. Over the past three decades, the town has undergone a remarkable revitalization, spurred by the departure of the railroad industry. The historic district is a harmonious blend of old-world charm and modern vitality, where downtown boutiques, delightful restaurants, and vibrant art galleries line Mason Street. Additionally, the town features a picturesque beach, a 95-slip harbor, a scenic Central Park, and the iconic L-O-V-E sign, crafted from repurposed materials such as old tires, shells, and metal—a testament to the community's creativity and spirit.



The community of Cape Charles is a tale of two towns. Its Historic District forms the heart of the downtown area, proudly listed on the National Register of Historic Places. At the same time, the upscale residential resort development at Bay Creek offers a different allure, complete with its own signature golf course, a network of scenic nature trails, and breathtaking sandy beaches. Residents and visitors alike are enchanted by the town's lively community events, including Festive Fridays, whimsical golf cart parades, the Blessing of the Fleet, the Blessing of the Worms, and soul-stirring Concerts in the Park.

Once a hidden treasure, Cape Charles has recently garnered well-deserved recognition, earning accolades such as "The Happiest Seaside Town" from Coastal Living, "Most Beautiful Seaside Town in America" from Readers' Digest, and "Best Beach Town for Retirement" from Southern Living, to name just a few. Despite its newfound acclaim, the residents continue to cherish the walkability (and golf cart accessibility) of their town, relishing in its charm and relaxed pace of life, often described as a kinder, gentler way of living.



Pearls

Each destination discovered during a day trip around Virginia and the United States showcases its own unique "pearls" of distinction. As you leave the main highway and enter the charming town of Cape Charles, the first sight to greet you is the towering Lighthouse Water Tower, a striking symbol of the area. Built in 1992 to reflect the design of the historic Cape Charles Lighthouse, this modern structure features a functioning light at its pinnacle; however, its distance of over a mile from the bay means it serves more as a picturesque landmark than as a navigational aid.

Near the sandy shores and bustling fishing pier, you will find the town's vibrant L-O-V-E Sign, a colorful tribute to the spirit of Cape Charles. The "L" is crafted from shimmering sea glass and seashells, encapsulating the essence of the local community. The "O" is ingeniously formed from a shiny tractor tire, symbolizing the agricultural roots of the region. The letter "V" showcases a pair of brightly colored kayaks, inviting visitors to explore the wealth of outdoor adventures available, while the "E" is constructed from weathered crab pots, nodding to the town's fishing heritage.



Day Trip

Central Park, tucked away on Peach Street, is the perfect oasis for fun and relaxation. This inviting space boasts lush greenery accompanied by accessible pathways, a delightful playground for children, and a stunning fountain that adds to the park's charm. At one end, the picturesque gazebo serves as the centerpiece for seasonal concerts and festive celebrations, drawing people across the Eastern Shore. Mark your calendars for upcoming events like the Easter Egg Hunt on April 19th and the lively Lovefest on August 30th.

For history enthusiasts, the guided walking tour titled "Invisible History of African Americans in Cape Charles" offers a captivating journey through time. You can hear local residents share their stories at each stop along the route, providing a deeply personal glimpse into Cape Charles's rich historical tapestry.

<https://theclio.com/tour/2388/1>



Eateries and Spirits

As the sun rises on a new day, you might feel tempted to stroll into one of the charming local bakeries, where freshly baked pastries waft through the air, or perhaps you'd prefer to indulge in a hearty breakfast. Consider starting your day at the Cape Charles Coffee House, a cozy spot filled with vibrant energy, or enjoy a delightful meal and friendly banter with the locals at Rayfield's Pharmacy. For a more substantial fare, venture to the Northampton Hotel or Sonny's, where you can savor artisan lattes, mouthwatering breakfast sandwiches, or refreshing avocado toast, all complemented by their famous banana pudding waffle.

If the beach isn't calling you, go to The Shanty for a memorable lunch or dinner experience. This waterfront gem showcases the best local seafood, featuring delectable dishes like creamy blue crab dip and crisp fried oyster baskets. Don't overlook other wonderful options such as Kelly's Gingernut Pub, Cravings, or Cape Charles Brewing Company, where you can sink your teeth into the legendary "Brew Daddy Burger," a culinary delight.

As the day transitions to dusk, consider treating yourself to an exquisite evening meal at Ambrogia Caffè & Enoteca, where authentic Italian cuisine awaits. Enjoy breathtaking views from The Shanty, Hook @ Harvey, or The Oyster Farm Seafood Eatery, all set against the picturesque waterfront. Aj's Bar and Grill offers a lively atmosphere for sports enthusiasts, while Salt and Sand serves up beloved hometown classics. And for those craving a slice of pizza bliss, Deadrise Italian Kitchen won't disappoint. Finally, to round off your day on a sweet note, stop by Brown Dog Ice Cream during the warmer months, or head over to Cowlicks Creamery on Mason Street for a delightful treat that will satisfy any sweet tooth.

Day Trip

Small Town Charm

Many travelers are irresistibly drawn to the enchanting small towns and villages scattered across our country, eager to unearth hidden gems and immerse themselves in places waiting to be explored. These picturesque locales brim with a delightful assortment of charming restaurants, cozy lodgings, vibrant events, and engaging activities—each experience invoking a profound sense of fulfillment, leaving one with the gratifying sentiment of, “Now I can say I’ve been there.” The impressions formed during these visits often ignite a spark of inspiration to return, nurturing a connection that lingers long after the journey has concluded.



Among my personal favorites during a day trip are these towns themselves, with their rich tapestry of historic homes and eclectic businesses, complemented by the warm-hearted residents who lovingly call these places home. On a brisk spring day, as I meandered along the winding, tree-lined streets, I encountered the simple yet heartwarming sight of a man mowing his lawn. His friendly smile and welcoming wave invited curiosity and contemplation. Who is he? What captivating stories lie beneath his inviting exterior? Indeed, every face carries a rich narrative waiting to be told.



As I made a U-turn at the end of the street, I was warmly greeted curbside by 78-year-old Michael Flanagan, his eyes twinkling with the wisdom of decades lived. After exchanging pleasantries, his story began to unfold, much like a treasured novel, each page revealing more about his life’s journey. A native of New Jersey, Michael found his way to the idyllic shores of Cape Charles in 1974, and from the moment he set foot in this quaint railroad and ferry town, he was captivated by the enveloping warmth and hospitality of its residents.

Michael fondly reminisces about the construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, a monumental endeavor that dramatically transformed the region’s landscape. He recalls the vital role played by the local concrete plant—now known as Coastal Precast Systems—which supplied the majority of the sturdy concrete that formed the very foundations of the bridge-tunnel, forever intertwining his personal story with the vibrant history of the town. He shares his knowledge of Cape Charles, highlighting its two major industries: the railroad and the ferry service. Prior to the completion of the bridge-tunnel, this charming town served as a bustling stopover connecting the northern U.S. with Miami, Florida. Travelers who disembarked from the train often enjoyed brief layovers for rest and nourishment before embarking on the forty-five-minute to hour-long journey across the shimmering Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk. Many of the ferries even transported armaments during the Second World War. Interestingly, the last passenger ferry set sail on the very day the bridge-tunnel opened: April 15, 1964.



When I inquired why he chose to move to and eventually retire in Cape Charles, Michael—once a dedicated teacher—simply replied, “The people. Although the physicality of the town has changed and thoroughly revitalized, it is the warmth of the people that truly makes this town thrive.” During our engaging conversation, Michael casually revealed his fondness for turtles. Wooden, ceramic, porcelain, hand-made, knitted, and one formed by the hands of a dear former student. Over a thousand of these charming creatures can be found within his lovely two-story home, which boasts an exterior adorned with six vibrant colors. He mentioned only one relative—an aunt named Rita who resided in Mystic, Connecticut, and whose claim to fame found its way into the movie **Mystic Pizza**, where she is humorously credited as “the whiny customer.”

You won't hear any whining or complaints from me about my delightful visit to this charming little coastal town on Virginia's eastern shore. On the contrary, America can learn invaluable lessons about love, hospitality, camaraderie, pride, and diligence from towns steeped in history and nostalgia. I encourage you to visit Cape Charles and spend a day or two wandering its scenic streets. Remember, you will be the friend they haven't met yet.



About the Author

Rick Polston, is a native Virginian, and a retired public school teacher who worked especially with students with disabilities. He has been a contributing writer/editor with *COVA Blvd.* for several years and enjoys day trips and writing about interesting people that will be featured in the magazine. Rick and his wife, Donna, love to travel and spend time with family and friends.

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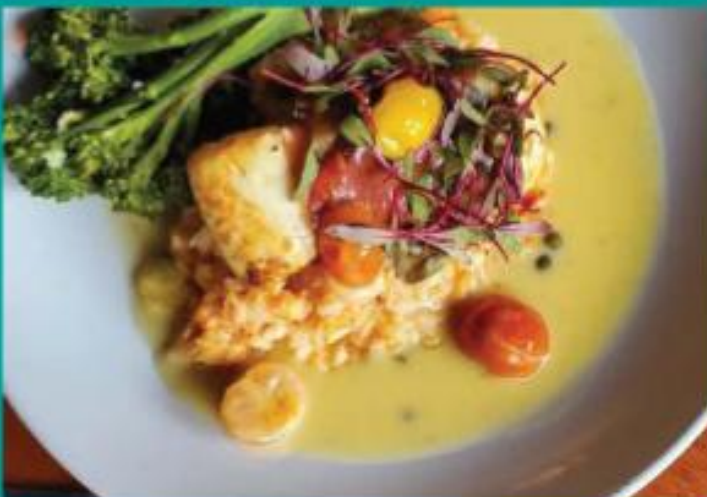
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"LAST CALL" Highlights a location or an artifact in the Tidewater region every issue. Send us your guess via email or on the website as to where you think the photo was taken and identify what it is. Those who send correct guesses will have their names placed into a hat with the winner randomly chosen.

Please provide your email address / contact information with your submission incase you're the lucky one.

We will award a prize each issue. for this contest we will provide a \$150 gift certificate at one of The Boulevard Team's favorite restaurants. Of course, we'll name the winner in the next issue and on social media so you can take advantage of all the appropriate bragging rights with your friends and family. Good Luck Everyone!

Last issue's winner:

Nathan Pearce

Location:

New Orleans, LA

The photo in the Holiday issue is a painting on the wall at the pedestrian walkway from the Arrivals Terminal to the Baggage Claim in Norfolk International Airport. The photo was correctly identified by Nathan Pearce from New Orleans, LA



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