

# SHORE

MONTHLY

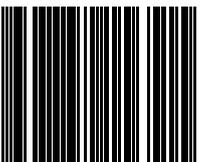
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ON THE COVER: Linsey Hildebrand  
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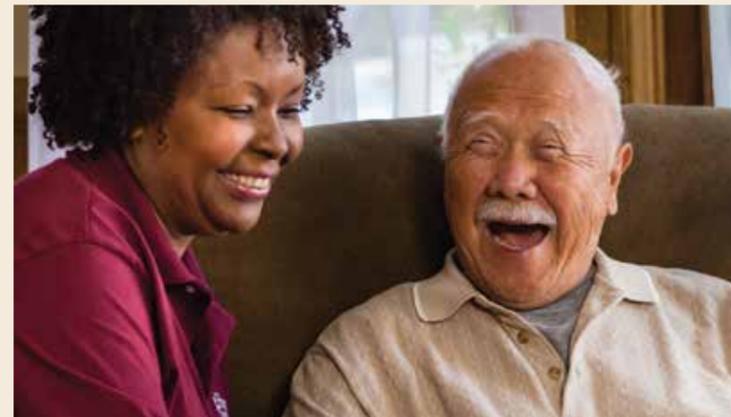
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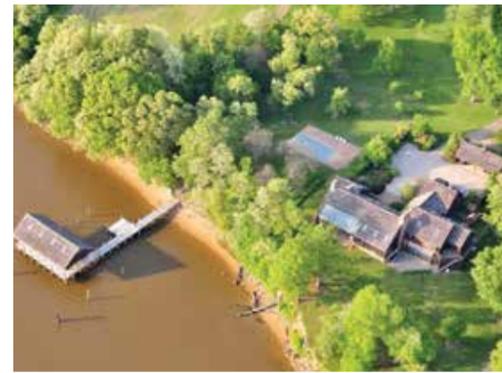
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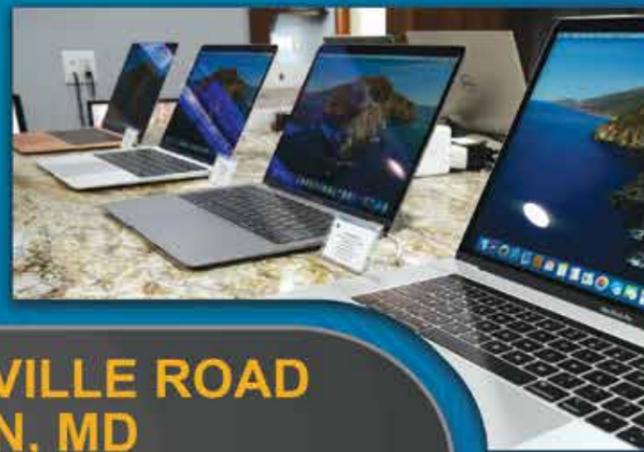
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By Amelia Blades Steward

An overflowing bucket filled with litter is a typical haul for a day's efforts to cleanup Kent Island beaches.

PHOTO BY  
Caroline J. Phillips

april 2020

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## SHORE TIME

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LEFT: A tray of assorted sea glass nuggets from Yank & Limey at the Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival

PHOTO BY Arden Haley

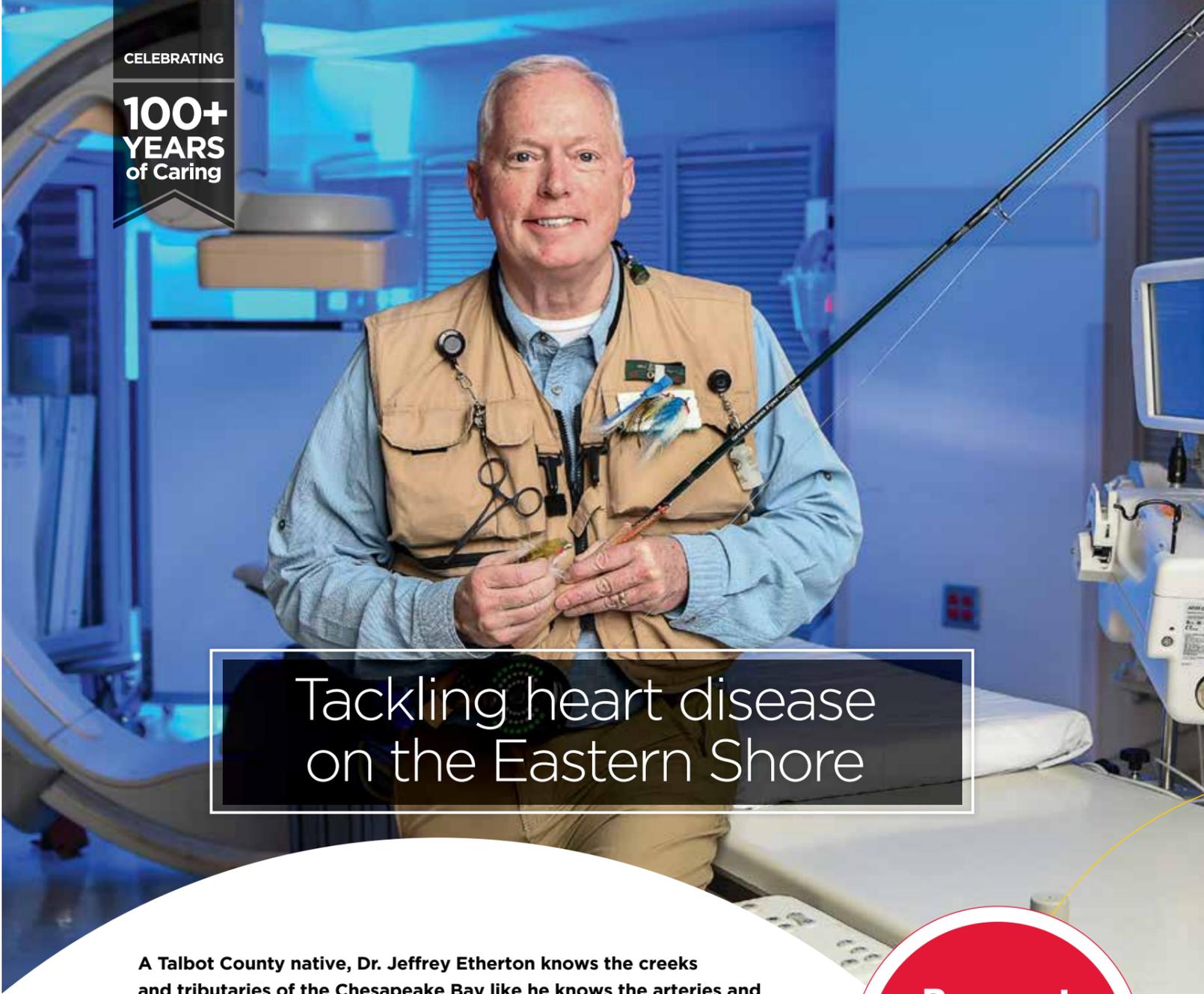
## ON THE COVER

Linsey Hildebrand  
Class of 2020,  
The Gunston School

COVER PHOTO BY Mike Morgan

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## Tackling heart disease on the Eastern Shore

A Talbot County native, Dr. Jeffrey Etherton knows the creeks and tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay like he knows the arteries and vessels of the heart. As a cardiologist with the Heart and Vascular Center at UM Shore Regional Health, he works in the very place where his mother was a nurse, and he is fighting the very disease that took his father's life. You better believe this is personal. He's out to catch heart disease in this community. Because ultimately, it's all about saving the lives of his neighbors on the Eastern Shore.

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# editors' NOTE

**Spring is sprung!** While we didn't have much of a winter this year, it's always good to begin Daylight Savings Time and longer days — more opportunity to be outside to enjoy our gardens, take a bike ride, or just sit on the lawn and breathe in the aromas of spring.

The April issue of the magazine celebrates the environment. April 22 marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and we recount the history of this global celebration and some local ties to its founder. Our love of our planet begins right here at home and we showcase local efforts to preserve what we call precious in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Learn about how local students are a growing part of the efforts with our feature on the Chesapeake Watershed Semester at Gunston. We also capture a Stevensville couple's passion for cleaning up the Bay's beaches, as well as how Environmental Concern is raising awareness about the importance of increasing natural habitat for native species, like the Monarch butterfly population which is declining in North America. Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival founder Kim Hannon shares how their event is becoming the largest, annual ocean arts festival in the nation.

On the creative side of things, this month's issue profiles award-winning indie novelist Stephanie Verni who is capturing the nuances of Maryland and the Eastern Shore in her popular fiction, as well as local artist Jill Basham has competed in and won major awards in over a dozen Plein



From left to right: Maire McArdle, design consultant, Manning Lee and Amy Steward, co-editors, met at the Tidewater Inn for a planning session.

Air competitions around the country.

Experience the more diverse side of the Eastern Shore through this month's departments, featuring Bombay Tadka's new restaurant location in Easton, which is definitely drawing crowds to experience authentic Indian cuisine. Cult Classic is bringing a new live music experience to its local brewery on Kent Island.

Finally, you might be surprised about the popularity of two Eastern Shore delicacies from our waterways — shad roe and snakehead. Don't turn your nose up until you read about what makes them unique and tasty.

We got a great response to our March issue on our pets and appreciate your comments and input on story ideas. Feel free to send them to [info@shoremonthly.com](mailto:info@shoremonthly.com).

We look forward to bringing you our May issue where we will examine how the equine industry has evolved on the Shore — just another aspect of what makes our region so special.

Get outside and enjoy the beauty of the season, experiencing some of our favorite picks for spring!

**Amelia Blades Steward  
& Manning Lee**  
Co-Editors

**Correction:** We apologize for incorrectly crediting the photos on page 18 of the March 2020 issue. The photographs were taken by Ted Mueller Photography.

# SHORE MONTHLY

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*Helping Families Heal*  
By: Ryan Helfenbein



## Ask the Undertaker

“Will you remember me in a week, in a month or in a year?”  
“Why of course”  
“Knock Knock?”  
“Who's there?”

That might be the one concern many of us have regarding generations to come. Will they remember me. Or better yet, how will they remember me? My 10 year old shared this joke with me the other day and it immediately triggered the creation of an article on a question that is commonly asked – How do I write an obituary? First, let's change the word obituary to what I'd refer to as a Life History. Leaving a legacy is important for us all, but leaving an explanation of that legacy is much more beneficial to those left behind and generations to come. We often find the write ups in the newspaper answering a series of questions: Born on...died on...went to school at...married on.... And the list just keeps going. But, do these questions really explain the life of someone? Better yet, does the personality come through in simply answering questions, or should we look at this differently? Perhaps we need to eliminate the idea of listing facts of an individual, and instead look at writing about the highlights of a life lived with the personality of that individual shining through.

The best Life History is autobiographical – written by the person that lived the life being remembered, and well in advance. Second, and most commonly, is a collected effort from close family and friends collaborating over the ways they were touched through the life journey of the individual being remembered. There should be no limit on how long or short, what should or should not be included, who is mentioned or not and most importantly not limited to the answering of a few questions. The recording of a life has no limitations and should shine with personality of that individual vs. a list of facts that simply is no different from another person other than a few dates. Technology today allows modern undertakers to showcase the individual's full life history for all to find with no limitations on words or lines like a newspaper would. In addition, photos and background images are able to be attached to what a modern undertaker can provide to enhance the personality of the life history created.

A great example of what I mean was recently published in March of 2019. See if you can pick out the personality of this individual, in simply the first two lines alone: “Tim

Schrandt (Lynyrd) made his last inappropriate comment on March 29, 2019. If you are wondering if you may have ever met him, you didn't -because you WOULD remember.” With just those first two lines, and there was much more to follow, future generations will know that their friend and relative was quite a character and full of personality! Now if a typical mortician would have written that opening line it would most likely have been written like so: “Schrandt, Tim (Spillville) passed away on March 29 of cancer. He was 63”. Major difference between the two, right? The first sentence alone explained the personality behind the individual and focused on a life lived vs. the reality of his passing.

Everyone that read that Life History of Mr. Schrandt knew his personality, what he must have been like and that he truly lived life to the fullest. The entire write up read just like that too! How he will be remembered for “always wearing his shirts unbuttoned three quarters down” and my personal favorite, that “...he did not lose his battle to cancer, that cancer departed when he did, so technically it was a tie.” What truly hits home is the fact that out of this Life History alone his family will receive the strongest therapy available – an opening for friends, family and acquaintances to freely share memories of his glowing personality.

What if the personality is a bit softer? Not a problem. That in itself is the message to portray in the Life History. “At the age of 63, Sally left this world peacefully, at her home, overlooking her garden, surrounded by family, to be with her savior.” This tells us that Sally was a peaceful person, with strong faith and a love for gardening and family. You can almost picture the person before you.

Take the time now to simply list the highs and lows in life, stories that showcase your personality, and list the memories that were impactful to all around. Each of us has a story to tell, and all of us have impacted someone else at some point in our lifetime, weather we knew it or not. Life Histories are created to allow an avenue of therapy for all to be a part of and most importantly provide a record of personality so that one is never forgotten.

**Knock knock! This is not a joke; this ‘Ask the Undertaker’ was re-run due to an error with the copy from the printing company. Thank you for the calls asking about the last issue; we appreciate that you read it and appreciate the feedback!**



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- Chesapeake Watershed Semester** in Centreville Page 32
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MAP ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA GOODE

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# PICTURE THIS



Chesapeake Watershed Semester students sit and talk after their day along the shores of the Corsica River on The Gunston School's campus. Photo by Mike Morgan



## HISTORY OF THE MARYLAND FLAG

The Maryland flag is the epitome of tangible storytelling; a depiction of how the state came to be.

### THE DESIGN PROCESS

- + Maryland's early association with black and yellow served as an ode to the Calvert family, colonial proprietors of Maryland.
- + George Calvert's mother's position as an heiress to the Crossland line entitled him to use both Calvert and Crossland Coats of Arms in his banner — forming the banner we know today.
- + During the Civil War, Pro-Confederate Marylanders adopted the red and white of the Crossland Coat of Arms to distinguish themselves from Maryland as the world knew it, a black and yellow Union state.
- + By the end of the war, both sets of colors were collectively associated with Maryland. Both sets of colors were integrated during the Reconstruction era to symbolize reconciliation.

BY DABRIANNA GREEN | PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

### THE TIMELINE

- 1880**  
Flags mimicking the stylistic elements of George Calvert's banner appear in published sketches by Frank Blackwell Mayer.
- 1888**  
A flag with the alternating Calvert and Crossland colors is spotted at the dedication ceremonies for the Maryland monument at the Gettysburg Battlefield.


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## APRIL FOOL'S DAY ON THE SHORE

The origin of April Fool's Day remains unknown, but who needs an explanation for a national excuse to play harmless practical jokes? In the effort to keep it fresh and exciting, shore-style jokes are a fool-proof, unexpected way to get in on the fun:

### QUACK CALL

Have a few colleagues dial your spouse's phone number inquiring about a duck calling contest.

### CRAB SEASON CAME EARLY

Send a fellow Marylander a convincing photo of a crab bushel and tell them dinner's on you tonight!

### TO TRUSSST OR NOT TO TRUSSST

Notify your favorite Baltimore Ravens fan that you're attending a local Lamar Jackson meet and greet this weekend at the Baltimore Convention Center.

### SEASONED GREETINGS

Replace the Old Bay can contents with seasoned salt. Sit it on the dinner table to see if your family is Maryland enough to know the difference.

### RUNNING WILD

Ask someone if they heard about all the wild horses running out of Assateague Island last night.

BY DABRIANNA GREEN | PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES



Curated for the health conscious and healthcare professional — this is the **complete guide** for all things health, nutrition, and fitness from Baltimore to Washington D.C. and across the Chesapeake Region.

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JUN. 26  
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# LET'S PLAY **CROQUET**

It's a nostalgic outdoor game, suitable for all ages and a great reason to plan a family and friends' get together.



BY DABRIANNA GREEN | PHOTO BY ARDEN HALEY

### DRESS THE PART

White or light-colored clothing  
Sun-blocking hats  
Pops of bright game colors

### SET THE TONE

Croquet parties lie somewhere between a backyard barbecue and a less-fancy afternoon tea.

#### Optimal ingredients:

A sunny afternoon  
A freshly-mowed lawn  
Finger foods  
Refreshing drinks

### PLAY TO WIN

- International croquet player Chris Williams suggests using a smooth, pendulum-like swing to see better results
- Starting last increases your chances of striking another opponent's ball
- Try not to end your turn by leaving your ball near your opponents
- To serve as a reminder, the peg is almost always painted in the playing order



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# JILL BASHAM

## PAIN T FOR MYSELF

*A full-time mother of 4 discovers and develops her talent*

BY MANNING LEE

PHOTOS BY VAL CALVAHERI

**It was July 2012**, and all the artists and onlookers gathered together at the award ceremony to hear the winners of the year's Plein Air Easton competition. Even though Easton is a small town, Plein Air Easton is the premier event of its kind in the country. Being chosen to compete at all is an accomplishment.

Among those gathered was a first-time entrant named Jill Basham. She chatted as some of the volunteers paraded by her carrying the concealed winning paintings. She recognized one painting's frame from behind as her own. Her painting took third place.

Basham recalled, "I was like, 'Are you sure?'"

Of course, they were sure.

"I'd only been painting since 2009. I hadn't expected to get into the competition, let alone take third place," she continued.

Since that competition eight years ago, Basham's name has become well regarded across the country. She's competed in and won major awards in over a dozen Plein Air competitions, has been lauded and honorably mentioned for her work times too numerous to count.



Jill Basham in her studio in front of her painting, "Overhead," 60x72 inches, oil on linen.



Top: Jill displays her pochade box;  
Above: *Fire Drill, Atlanta, 2019, 30x24"* oil

Basham's work once even hung in the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka as part of U.S. Department of State's Art in Embassies program. Her work hangs in private and corporate collections throughout the United States and abroad.

A native Marylander, Basham grew up in Columbia. Artistic abilities are not uncommon in her family tree. Her mother, Isobel Tascher, was a painter and her uncle, J. Reginald Taylor, was a talented etcher. She considers her talent to be God given, but never as a viable career choice. Instead she chose to work in transportation planning in Howard County and was just shy of earning an advanced degree when her daughter came along.

It wasn't until 2009, when the youngest of her four children was in

elementary school, that she thought about taking an art class. Her husband encouraged her to go ahead and give painting a shot.

She started by enrolling in a drawing class at the Academy Art Museum in Easton under Katie Cassidy, whom she says gave her a wonderful foundation for her painting. Next, she took a painting class at the Dorchester Center for the Arts with Mary Egeli Ekroos, who is nationally renowned and part of the Egeli family of artists from New England.

Basham recalled, "I signed up for my first painting class, got the supplies and I showed up. I had no idea what I was doing, and Ekroos had no idea I'd never painted before. I didn't even know how to put the paints on the palette. She even had

to tell me how to do that. Ekroos quickly realized that I had never painted before." Then she continued on painting under the guidance of impressionist Roberta Seger at the Academy Art Museum.

Basham works best when painting outdoors in wide-open spaces. In exploring each new expansive scene — whether field, waterfront, or beach — it's as if she happens upon the scenes unexpectedly, unnoticed, like an uninvited guest who quietly observes and imbibes. Overwhelmed and delighted with place, she paints simultaneously both what her eyes see and what her heart feels, emitting variations of mood and energy in her work.

"Each painting brings about a different emotion depending upon the scene I'm depicting. It's up to the viewer to decide how they feel about the painting," she explained.

Through the years of competing, Basham learned a valuable lesson relevant to her own life, but coincidentally a universal principle that she shares.

"I realized I wasn't painting for me. I was trying to fill the canvas with a painting that might please others," she explained. "I began to dive back into my work, painting exclusively for myself with my original passion, unencumbered. Three words: Paint for myself. PFM. It's now written on the inside of my pochade box with a sharpie."

From the painter, we learn it's never too late to explore what direction your heart takes you, and that it's okay to do it for yourself. Once you find the right direction, dive in unencumbered with all the passion you can find. And do it with all of your heart.

To see more Jill Basham's amazing work please visit [www.jillbasham.com](http://www.jillbasham.com).



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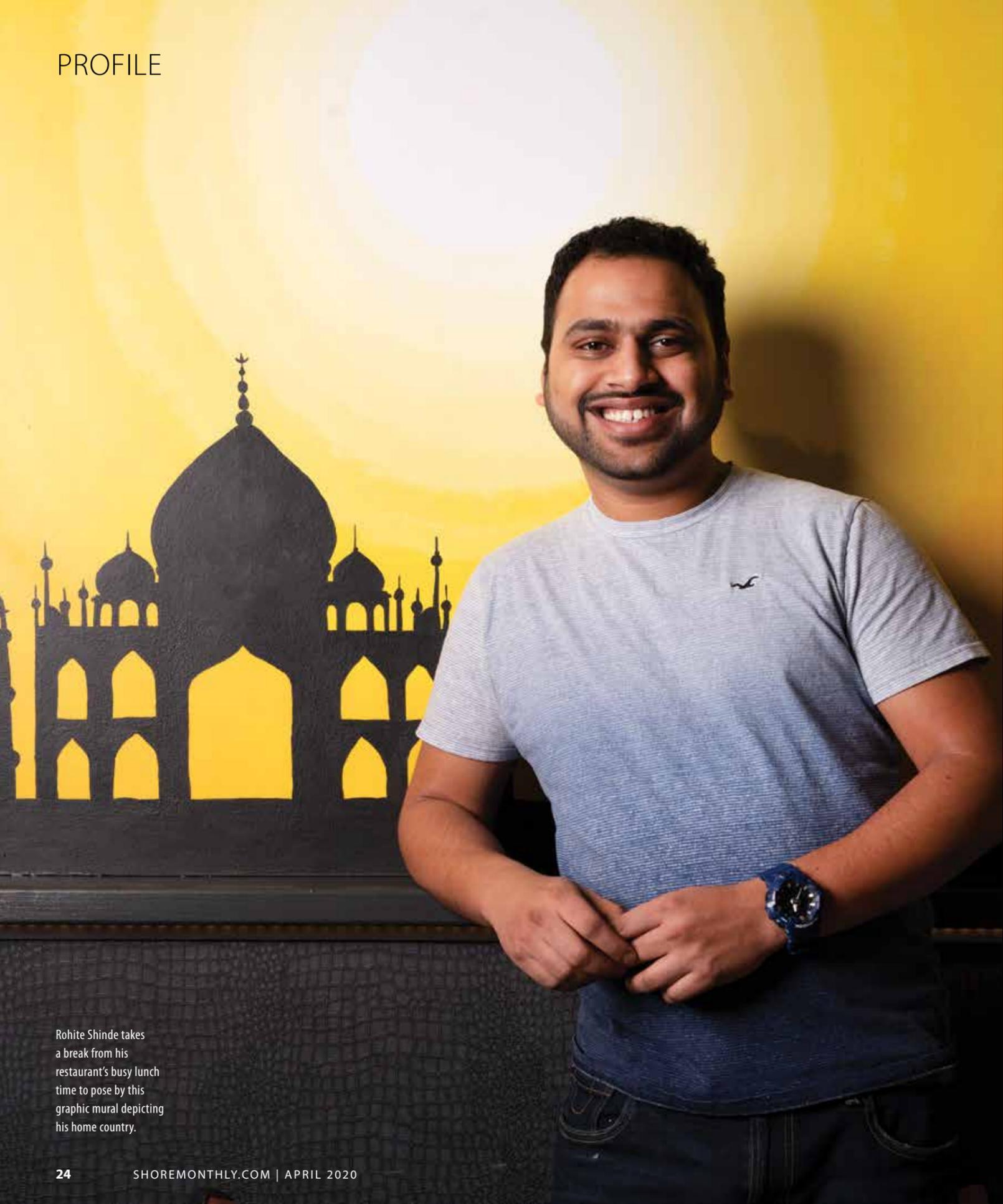


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Rohit Shinde takes a break from his restaurant's busy lunch time to pose by this graphic mural depicting his home country.

# BOMBAY TADKA

**“We live in the land of opportunities. People come from all over the world to hustle and work their way up to places that they only imagine or dream of.”**

**—Farshad Asl**

PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

*Meet Rohit Shinde, the young man behind Easton's newest Indian cuisine*

BY MANNING LEE

**Meet young entrepreneur** and restaurateur, Rohit Shinde. He is 28, originally from a small village near Mumbai, India. Shinde grew up in a middle-class family — his father is a policeman and his mother works in the textile industry. Mumbai is considered the industry capital of India and is home to many opportunities and most of his family.

But Shinde had a different dream for himself that would lead him far away from home. After finishing high school, Shinde headed for college in Glasgow, Scotland to study hotel management.

“My college taught me every aspect of hotel management,” he explained. “After graduation I had a choice either to stay and work in Scotland or come

to the United States. In 2014 after graduation, the Hyatt Properties in Cambridge hired me. That's when I came to the Eastern Shore.”

Shinde's first year on the Eastern Shore proved difficult. Culture shock came from all directions — not only was life in a new country difficult, but Shinde was used to Mumbai. A rural area like Cambridge and the Eastern Shore were different than anything he'd been used to.

But Shinde persisted and eventually pushed through the discomfort of adjusting to his new life. He focused on his training at the Hyatt, making mental notes and asking questions. He studied everything he could to prove himself, taking his time learning how



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each department worked. He felt satisfied with all he'd learned about the hospitality industry.

"I finally realized how this really was the land of opportunity and there were so many things I could do if I had the courage. That's when I decided to open up my restaurant. I could've opened up a pizza place



Above: Buffet items include fish chili and palak pakoda; Left: Rohite with sparkler at a 2018 Diwali Festival in India; a corner of the restaurant's decor shows rich colors and textures

or sandwich shop, but I chose an Indian restaurant because it was what I knew and there weren't any Indian restaurants around. People love Indian food," he said.

His first restaurant, Bombay Tadka, on Race Street in Cambridge opened in April 2018. He named it Bombay — after the colonial name

for Mumbai and Tadka — the name of an Indian cooking technique where fresh spices are roasted in ghee. Tadka brings out the aromas and tastes Indian food is known for.

The support from the community was overwhelmingly positive. People told him how Bombay Tadka reminded them of their travels to India. Coming to his restaurant makes patrons feel as if they were back in India all over again.

In fact, the response over the first two years was so great that Shinde recently was able to open his second location in Easton in January in the spot where Guiffrida's Pizzeria on Idlewild Avenue used to be.

"It was an easy decision to come to Easton because there is something so different about it. Many of Easton's residents come from someplace else — like D.C., Seattle, California, New Jersey, or Montgomery County. What I've found is that Easton's just a slow-paced town close to the big cities. People come across the Bay Bridge to slow down from their fast-paced lives there. Perhaps they only live on the Shore part-time, but when they come to Bombay Tadka they tell me how glad they are to have more ethnic food choices in Easton and how much they love our food," Shinde explained.

While Shinde trusted Easton would love his food, he also knew that many locals had never tried Indian fare. In order to build his clientele, he introduces several foods at lunch every day at his all you can eat lunch buffet.

"Once they're comfortable with foods on the buffet, they'll be confident ordering items from the menu," he said.

For first time visitors to Bombay Tadka, Shinde recommends an appetizer called Gobi Manchurian that is a lightly battered cauliflower deep

fried and sautéed with sweet and hot sauce. Another delicious appetizer is the chili chicken sautéed with onion, bell peppers, and green chili with a yogurt-mint dipping sauce. A classic "must have" for beginners is the Butter Chicken, sautéed in a tomato-based sauce with butter and a tasty blend of spices.

For now, Bombay Tadka serves mostly Northern Indian cuisine, which is characterized by its use of spices and frequent use of dairy products like yogurt, milk, and ghee. However, starting in the summer of 2020, Shinde plans on introducing traditional Southern Indian cuisines to the menu.

While the Southern Indian cuisine also uses the aromatic spices, it is known for using more grains and rice as its staples. Rice is very important to all the Southern dishes, but it's also a key ingredient to the popular ancient bread, Dosa, which will be on the menu. The Southern cuisine uses coconut sauces as well as lentils. Also coming this summer, a few mornings each week Shinde will offer breakfast foods like egg and rice dishes.

Walking into Bombay Tadka is a feast for all the senses. One is met with the aromatic spices of India pleasantly wafting through the room. Jewel and fiery tones line the walls and ceilings giving off a delightful ambient light. Bombay Tadka has the look and feel of India.

What's exciting about Shinde isn't only that he emigrated, or that he's not even 30 and already owns two restaurants. What's fascinating is that he dreamed a life for himself and now he's making it happen. The best part about having Shinde in Easton is having Bombay Tadka down the street to whisk us away to a place where we can experience the aromatic delights of India. He makes Easton a little bit more of a delicious place to live. ●

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Unpolished seaglass is a favorite for beachcombers to save in a jar or scatter on a tabletop. Opposite: A fine craft necklace with sea glass pendant

# RECLAIMED Refraction

## *The Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival*

BY TRACEY F. JOHNS

**Tides and time** can weather the shiniest of souls, softening the light and dulling any sharp edges a person holds. Out of that weathering and wear comes a different light, reclaimed and refracted with a certain beauty and grace.

The same is true with much of the discarded glass in our oceans and waterways. Tossed and tumbled until the glass loses its sharp edges and shine, sea glass washes up along shorelines as frosted pieces of weathered wonder. Each piece differs in color and size, and uniquely gathers the light as if shining from within, reminding us of days spent waterside.

Sea glass is also the main attraction in St. Michaels, where the annual Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival gathers thousands of coastal art lovers at the waterfront Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum over two days each April.

Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival founder Kim Hannon

started the festival nine years ago, soon after opening her coastal-inspired boutique, Ophiuroidea. She wanted a place to showcase the local sea glass artisans who came to meet and do business with her. She says the event started with five artisans in a smaller location before moving to CBMM last year. Now, the event has grown to fill the maritime museum's expansive waterfront campus, displaying the works of coastal and sea glass artisans, plus live music on two stages, regional food, educational lectures, boat rides, and more.

"It's become the largest, annual ocean arts festival in the nation," she says.

Hannon also serves as president of the North American Sea Glass Association, an organization with a mission that goes beyond sea glass education to protecting and restoring waterways and coastlines around the world.

SEA GLASS PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER; NECKLACE PHOTO BY ARDEN HALEY



## MORE ON THE SHORE



A selection of sea glass creations represents the creative jewelry and home decor offered by vendors at the Sea Glass Festival on April 4-5 at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels.

“Part of our mission is to help clean the shorelines,” said Hannon. “So it comes as no surprise that many sea glass collectors and beachcombers will also take a trash bag along with them to pick-up debris. Having this outlet of upcycled art helps to bring awareness to shoreline protection, while encouraging cleaning up the beaches and making beautiful works of art to cherish and enjoy.”

Hannon says the festival feels like a family reunion each year, bringing together artists who take sea glass and other coastal finds and turn them into treasured jewelry, home décor, useable art, and more.

“I’ve met so many wonderful sea glass sisters and brothers throughout the years,” said Hannon. “And every year it is a great way to celebrate a common love of the beach and sea glass with so many people. Plus, with ticket sales through the nonprofit Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, it’s also a great fundraising and membership drive opportunity for them.”

Hannon says last year was a record-breaking event, with more than 9,000 people attending and 75 artisans participating in the event. This year, the April 4-5 festival will feature more than 90 artisans — many from the local Delmarva area, while other artisans will be travelling from as far away as Hawaii — who will exhibit and sell their unique creations.

“The Eastern Shore Sea Glass and Coastal Arts Festival is fun for the whole family, couples or great for a girlfriend’s weekend get together,” said Hannon. “Add in the museum’s working shipyard, exhibits and historic structures, and we have something for everyone of every age to enjoy.”

The festival is now in its 9th year and includes two days of live music on two stages from local musicians John Belser, Jayme Dingler, Dave Hawkins, Emma

Myers, and Chris Sacks. Headlining on Saturday will be Annapolis-based musicians Pressing Strings, performing from the historic Tolchester Beach Bandstand on the Miles River at CBMM.

“This year, I’m also excited that we have more educational lectures from top experts in their fields, including Chesapeake Bay photographer Jay Fleming, author Deacon Ritterbush, also known as Dr. Beachcomb, and author Mary McCarthy with The Beachcombing Center,” commented Hannon.

The Beachcombing Center originally was founded as The Sea Glass Center and is dedicated to educating about worldwide shoreline finds and increasing awareness about eroding coastlines and marine debris. The nonprofit is currently seeking donations to find a permanent space on Maryland’s Eastern Shore to exhibit and preserve a collection of beachcombed items from around the globe. On the eve of this year’s Festival, The Beachcombing Center is hosting a private preview party to launch a new, temporary exhibit space at Knapp’s Narrows Marina Inn on Tilghman Island.

“Combing the shoreline at low tide, particularly after a storm, brings treasures to beach goers and water lovers throughout the world,” said Hannon, who also serves on The Beachcombing Center’s Board of Directors. “We want to create a place to bring together the most treasured finds, while celebrating how beachcombing connects us.”

The people of the Eastern Shore and beyond now have new ways to celebrate the beauty and history of sea glass through the new Beachcombing Center and the annual Eastern Shore Sea Glass & Coastal Arts Festival. Each provides examples of the beauty in reclaiming someone’s trash as another’s treasure, and how refraction of light, especially from an old, worn piece of sea glass, can warm the soul. ●

SEA GLASS FESTIVAL PHOTOS BY ARDEN HALEY

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# taught by **THE TIDE**

*The Gunston School's Chesapeake Watershed Semester*

BY MANNING LEE

**Living on the Eastern Shore**, one doesn't expect to find a place like The Gunston School. Founded in 1911 as a girls' boarding school, the private Centreville high school has fought vigorously to recreate itself throughout its 109-year history. From a small independent high school widely known for its college preparatory curriculum, the school now enjoys a reputation as one of the most innovative high schools in the country for environmental teaching and learning.

The Gunston School, nationally recognized for its 24-year-old Chesapeake Bay Studies Program, finishes each school year by requiring the entire student body to participate in either several day trips or overnight trips to places around the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This program is lauded for giving students a greater understanding of the Bay's delicate ecosystem.

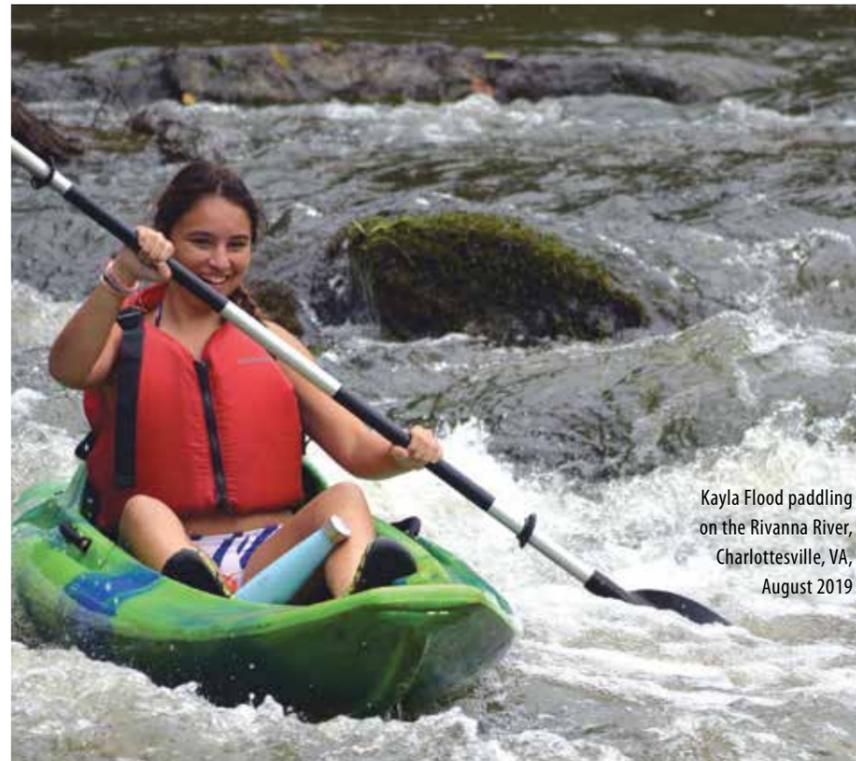


The Gunston Chesapeake Watershed program brings students, like Grace Holmes, to the school's waterfront on a sunny afternoon in late winter.

PHOTO BY MIKE MORGAN



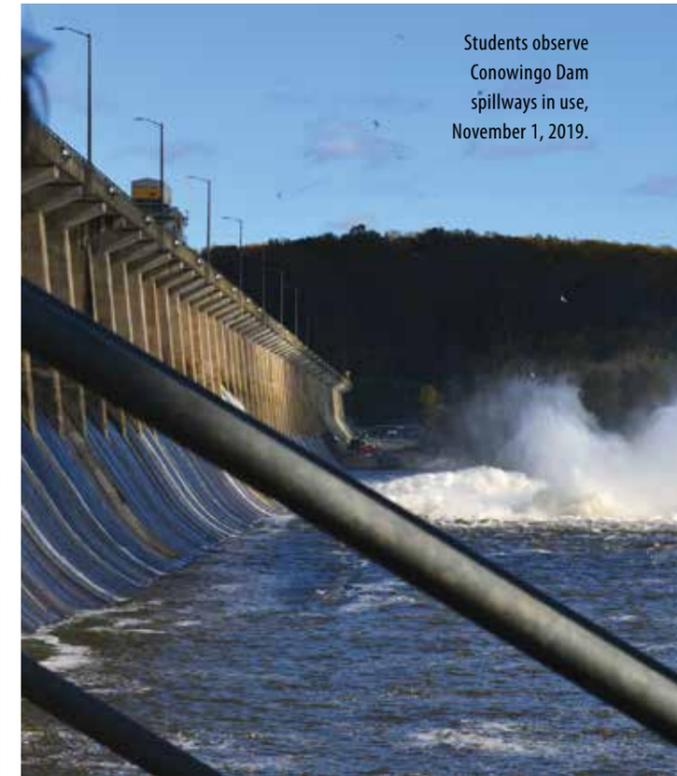
Camy Kelly outlines the watershed boundary, August 2018



Kayla Flood paddling on the Rivanna River, Charlottesville, VA, August 2019



Reagan Gessford (front) and Phebe Wood (rear) examine benthic tidal organisms while working with VIMS in Wachapreague, VA, October 7, 2019



Students observe Conowingo Dam spillways in use, November 1, 2019.

## THE PLAN

With this program in mind, Gunston launched its new Environmental Strategic Plan in 2015. Its goal was to become a regional and national leader in environmental teaching and learning. Out of this ambitious directive, the concept of Chesapeake Watershed Semester (CWS) arose.

“Inspired by the semester abroad study model, we designed an educational deep dive into the science and policy that underly the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay,” said Emily Beck, director of CWS.

“In January 2016, Gunston’s Board of Trustee’s approved the program. In the summer of 2017, a team of Gunston educators wrote the curriculum and, in the fall of 2018, we launched our program. Our goal by 2025, is to be a fully residential semester school with our own campus that can house 36-40 students

somewhere on the Eastern Shore, close to Gunston, but really maintaining its own identity.”

## THE PROGRAM

The Chesapeake Watershed Semester is a fully accredited program of The Gunston School. Students wishing to attend CWS from local high schools will find that each class works toward state core curriculum requirements. Both the environmental science and the government classes enable students to return to their regular AP classes and sit for the AP exams in May. The core academic program also includes literature and leadership classes. CWS also blocks out time for various independent online math classes and world languages.

What makes this program work is the diversity of student learners who thrive within the structure.

“It is interesting to see the different

types of students interested in our program,” said Beck.

“We’ve seen some of our academic highflyers who want to challenge themselves with the collegiate style of teaching as well as the highly experiential learners who have also been drawn to the Watershed Semester’s hands-on approach.”

## THE EXPEDITIONS

The signature piece of the CWS program is the five extensive learning expeditions. During the course of the semester, students take multiple three-day and two-night expeditions:

### Expedition one

Orientation and Headwaters of the Shenandoah in Charlottesville, Virginia is the first trip of the semester. Students involve themselves in icebreakers, getting to know one another, camping, hiking, and kayaking.

### Expedition two

On the Public Policy and Urban Environments trip to Washington D.C., the students visit Capitol Hill. “We had to use everything we’d learned in class in the previous two weeks before the trip. We visited the office of Maryland Congressman Andy Harris and met with his staff, as well as the staff members for Senator Ben Cardin which was pretty cool,” said Olivia Hershey, ’21.

### Expedition three

The goal of the third expedition is to gain a greater appreciation for Chesapeake Bay ecosystems by learning how scientists collect data in the field and in the lab at Virginia Institute of Marine Science, (VIMS). VIMS is one of the largest marine research and education centers in the United States and is located in Wachapreague, Virginia.

“VIMS had a flow-through lab where

water runs directly from the ocean through the lab and back out into the ocean. As it flowed through the lab, we were able to examine critters gathered from the salt flats. We looked at and identified each species then put them back into the water when we were done with them,” said Henry Shifrin, ’21.

“One day, we timed how fast an oyster, clam, and a muscle filtered the water. It was so cool,” said, Kayla Flood, ’21.

### Expedition four

The goal of the fourth expedition is to study the energy and land use in Centralia, Pennsylvania and included a visit to the Conowingo Dam. Centralia is a borough in Columbia County, Pennsylvania. Its population has dwindled from more than 1,000 residents in 1980 to only five in 2017 — a result of the coal-seam fire burning beneath the borough since 1962. It is expected to burn for another 250 years.

On the same expedition, students learned how the Conowingo Dam on the Susquehanna River traps much of the sediment and nutrient pollution carried by the river and prevents it from reaching the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay. Now, the area behind the dam has filled in more quickly than scientists had anticipated. The students toured the Dam and witnessed the debris for themselves. Although the government intentionally funded a debris clean-up project, the result wasn’t what they thought it should be considering the resources allocated.

“That was really interesting because we got there right after the government had agreed to spend millions and millions of dollars to clean up, but from what we saw there’s one guy with a tractor picking up trash,” said Hershey.

While the realization was shocking, it gave the students a spectacular



CWS2 Students on Smith Island, MD during high tide, November 18, 2019.  
L to R: Reagan Gessford, Kayla Flood, Cedar Foster, Sydney Nittle, James Ford, Henry Shifrin, Carter Janney, Jackson Talbott, and Aidan Meyers.



Smith Island, MD during high tide, November 18, 2019

opportunity to ask deeper questions, and to probe the issue in a more meaningful way. There could have been any number of reasons why the students witnessed anemic efforts, but the policy lesson they learned is invaluable: Problem funded does not mean problem solved.

### Expedition five

The goal of the fifth expedition is to explore climate change and coastal

resiliency on Smith Island, Maryland and Norfolk, Virginia.

“This trip was so good because we took our leadership and really applied everything we’d learned all semester. We designed every aspect of this trip ourselves including the supply list, as well as the itinerary,” said Sydney Nittle, ’21.

Phoebe Wood, ’21 described, “On Smith Island, you’re physically seeing

that the island is disappearing and that the water level is rising. We talked with the residents there and did a lot of interviews. This is a tight-knit community who looks at the problem in an old-fashioned way. Then we went to Norfolk to the Office of Resiliency and we were thrust back into the 21st century and witnessed people looking at modern solutions based on resiliency and how a city can come together to work through its problem.”

### THE IMPACT

The Chesapeake Watershed Semester has had a positive impact on the Gunston community as a whole, sparking interest and attracting prospective students at their open houses.

“Upon returning to the general population of the school after their Watershed semester, teachers have noticed a marked rise in the maturity level of the CWS students. They have more leadership skills during class discussions and they seemed to have found their voice. The students have really accelerated their own growth through the program,” said Beck.

JRR Tolkien once said, “It’s the job that’s never started that takes the longest to finish.” In terms of educating people and changing the way we care for the Chesapeake Watershed, we can’t finish what we don’t start. While Chesapeake Watershed Semester isn’t designed to save the Bay, it ambitiously sets into motion the job of placing the Chesapeake Bay’s care into its students’ hands, showing them that it’s their Bay to save.

For more information about Chesapeake Watershed Semester please visit [www.chesapeakewatershedsemester.org](http://www.chesapeakewatershedsemester.org).

COURTESY PHOTOS EMILY BECK, THE GUNSTON SCHOOL

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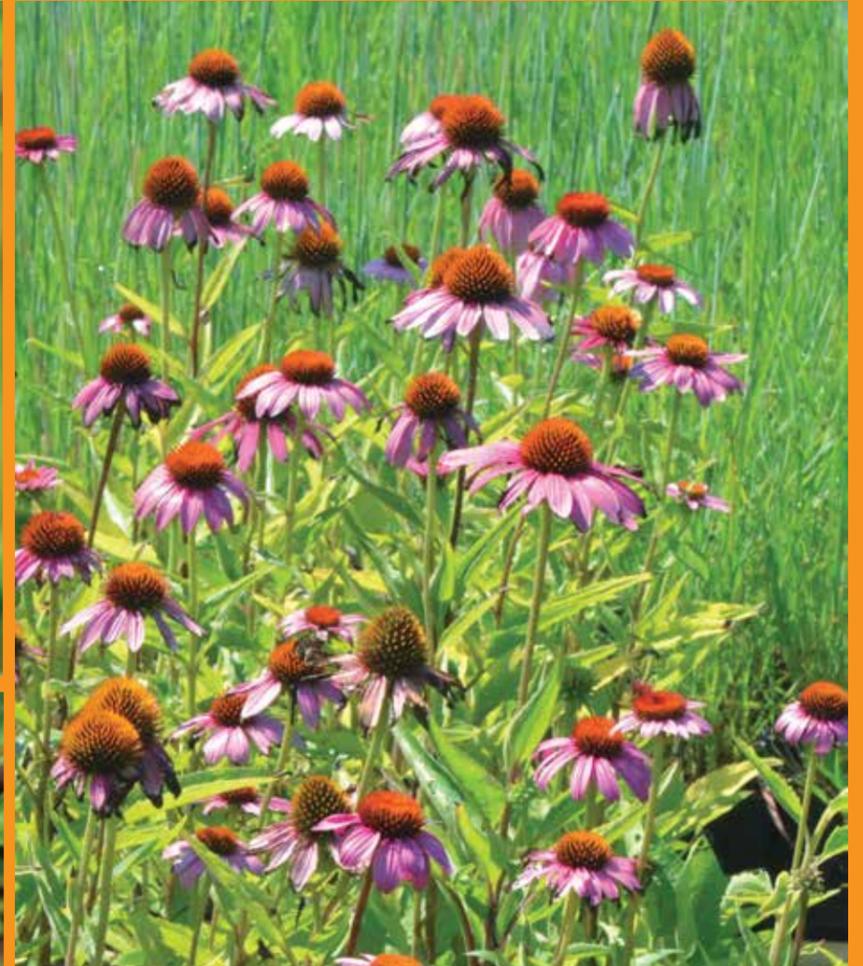


# The Plight of the Monarch Butterfly

*Native milkweed plant  
could save the Monarch*

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD

COURESTY PHOTOS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN INC.





Clockwise from left: EC president, Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, and Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge manager, Marcia Pradines, celebrate World Wetlands Day on February 2nd.

Living shoreline created by EC at the headwaters of San Domingo Creek, protecting the St. Michaels Nature Trail; cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) improves water quality and provides important marsh habitat for fish, birds and crabs.

Eroded Bank on the Miles River: existing conditions before Environmental Concern created a Living Shoreline.



### Monarch butterflies can

travel between 50 and 100 miles a day, and it can take up to two months to complete their seasonal journey to forgiving climates.

Environmental Concern Inc. (EC) in St. Michaels, Maryland has shared this and many other butterfly facts in the hopes to help preserve the “near threatened” species.

The group is a local nonprofit raising awareness about the importance of improving water quality and increasing natural habitat for native species. Butterflies count among their top concerns.

In 2004, 550 million Monarchs completed their annual two-month winter migration from Canada to Mexico. In 2013, only 33 million arrived at their overwintering grounds — a 94 percent decrease over nine years. Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, President of Environmental

Concern is on a mission to share the message that habitat loss is one of the major reasons for the Monarch butterfly’s decline. Over the last 20 years, Pittenger-Slear has developed a real appreciation for the importance of native plant habitat.

Pittenger-Slear and her husband Gene moved to Cambridge in 1991. “We were looking for an affordable place close to the water. We fell in love with the city of Cambridge and the Choptank River,” she comments.

“We were fascinated as we watched the many working Skipjacks leaving the city harbor at dawn, and the thousands of ducks diving for food along the shorelines of the river during the winter migration.

We never anticipated the dramatic changes that would take place over the next decade.”

Pittenger-Slear joined the Dorchester Garden Club to meet some of the local plant enthusiasts, contribute to the Club’s work in the community, and to increase her knowledge about local plant species. She was introduced by a Garden Club friend to Ed Garbisch, founder of Environmental Concern. Soon after, she joined Environmental Concern as editor of their peer-reviewed publication, *The Wetland Journal*.

“As I learned about the many opportunities to raise awareness about the importance of wetland habitat, I wanted to devote more

time to the non-profit’s mission, and to share this knowledge with the community,” she recalls. “Both Gene and I made the commitment to continue EC’s legacy — to dedicate our time and talent to the non-profit. We both agreed that this was our opportunity to make a difference and to leave the earth a better place than we found it.”

In 2001, Pittenger-Slear was elected President and CEO of Environmental Concern and Gene was elected Vice

President. When the Garbisch’s retired from the nonprofit, Suzanne and Gene continued to expand EC’s restoration projects, native plant propagation, and outreach programs. They committed to creating career paths for environmental scientists interested in wetland restoration.

In 2015, Pittenger-Slear was invited to join the U.S. Delegation in San Diego for the 20th meeting of the U.S./Canada/Mexico Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem

Conservation and Management. Her focus at the meeting was on ecosystem conservation and the loss of habitats that has resulted in a 90 percent reduction of the Monarch population over the past few decades.

Construction and development, over-spraying agriculture fields, and more severe storms were causing the loss of Monarch habitat. The U.S. proposed a new program at the meeting which would help increase habitat for Monarchs by increasing the number of milkweed plants grown and planted in the migratory paths of the Monarch.

“Milkweed grows in the ditches and on the fringes of agriculture fields,” she said.

“Monarch butterflies only lay eggs on milkweed plants, and it’s the only plant that the Monarch caterpillar eats. If milkweed habitat disappears, Monarch butterflies will disappear. When I found out that the Monarch butterfly was a ‘near threatened’ species, I realized that EC needed to get this information out to the public.”

Environmental Concern has been growing milkweed plants in its nursery for decades. Expanding education programs that raise awareness about the importance of milkweed habitat was a natural extension of its outreach initiatives. Pittenger-Slear adds, “We have been collecting seeds from our campus, and from plants grown in our nursery and used in EC projects, since our founding. As the demand for native plants increases, EC’s seed inventory must increase to meet the demand.”

She presented the idea of starting a community native seed collection program to EC’s staff in 2015 after returning from the Trilateral meeting. The idea turned into a reality when EC founded the Mid-Atlantic Monarch Initiative© (MAMI) and introduced the Seed Stewards for Monarchs Program to the public in May 2018. The goal of the program is to increase milkweed seed inventory in order to grow more milkweed, engaging both individuals

COURTESY PHOTOS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN INC.



Clockwise from bottom left: Suzanne and Gene checking germination of switchgrass (*Panicum Virgatum*) seeds sown in plug trays in EC's large glass greenhouse.

Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) seed pods, collected in EC's pollinator garden, before seeds were separated from the floss.

Butterfly milkweed plant ready for delivery to a Seed Steward's garden.

Opposite: Students at Sudlersville Elementary School participated in their own Mini Monarch Ultra Run/Walk while following the progress of the adult ultra runners traveling through North America.



and organizations to help them accomplish the program goals.

Today, over 235 Seed Stewards across the state have signed up to become volunteers, receiving free swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) or butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) seeds to start a Monarch butterfly habitat, and a welcome bag filled with milkweed tools, tips, and tags. Stewards collaborate with each other and with EC by sharing helpful hints about plant propagation and seed harvesting through email and social media, as well as in-person. The volunteers share their seeds with EC to help increase seed inventory and milkweed habitat.

Suzanne explains, "Milkweed seed harvesting is challenging. The pods must be collected before they burst. If they are collected too soon, the seeds may not be mature, or be viable."

Environmental Concern has also been working with the Monarch Ultra Run team founders and other Global Partners to raise awareness and interest in the Monarch butterfly and habitat conservation. The

## THE MARSH BUILDER

Environmental Concern was established in 1972 by Dr. Edgar Garbisch, known by many as the "Marsh Builder." He founded the organization because 50 percent of the nation's wetlands, along with the species that depend on the wetlands for their survival, were disappearing. Dr. Garbisch and a number of his colleagues developed the propagation protocol for over 100 native plant species. EC became the first Native Wetland Plant Nursery in the U.S. Today, EC is committed to improving water quality and creating, restoring, and conserving wetlands, living shorelines, and other natural habitats through education and outreach, propagation of native plant species, and professional design and installation.



COURTESY PHOTOS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN INC.

relay run started in Peterborough, Ontario and continued through the United States to the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico following the path of the migrating Monarch. A companion Mini Monarch Ultra Run/Walk program, held for local school-age children between September and November during the Monarch's migration, coincides with the Monarch Ultra Run and models the run in the schoolyard.

This past fall, 300 students at Sudlersville Elementary School participated in their own Mini Monarch Ultra Run/Walk while following the progress of the adult ultra runners traveling through North America, including EC's own Vice President of Restoration Jessica Lister, who ran the relay in Mexico. They followed the midwest Monarch migration and recreated that route

in their schoolyards with students either running or walking a route they created with their teachers. Through their schoolyard habitats, students also learn about the Monarch lifecycle and the importance of milkweed plants to the Monarch's survival.

"The Mini Monarch Ultra Run/Walk program provides a unique opportunity to expand the students' connection with nature and the Monarch butterfly's challenging journey — plus, it's just a lot of fun for the students and their teachers," Pittenger-Slear comments.

"We would like to expand the Mini Monarch Ultra Run/Walk program to other counties on the Shore, as well as our Seed Stewards for Monarchs program. This past year was the best year ever for the butterfly milkweed plant on the Shore and we want to keep increasing those numbers with the hope that we will see an increase in the number of Monarchs migrating through our area."

For further information about the Mid-Atlantic Monarch Initiative®, visit [www.wetland.org/MAMI](http://www.wetland.org/MAMI) or email [monarchs@wetland.org](mailto:monarchs@wetland.org). To contact Environmental Concern, visit [wetland.org](http://wetland.org) or call 410-745-9620 or follow them on Facebook: [EnvironmentalConcernInc](https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalConcernInc); Instagram: [@envconcern](https://www.instagram.com/envconcern); or Twitter: [@EnvConcern](https://twitter.com/EnvConcern).



Above: "Save the Monarchs" pollinator garden created by Autumn, Katie, Madison and Emilee from Girl Scout Troop 1308, along the Rails to Trails in Easton.

## FUN FACTS

### ABOUT THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY AND ITS HABITAT

The orange of a Monarch butterfly's wings is a warning color, identifying itself to predators that the butterfly will taste bad or may be toxic.

Monarch butterflies are not able to fly if their body temperature is less than 86 degrees so they will sit in the sun or "shiver" their wings to warm up.

Butterfly gardens provide habitat for caterpillars and adult butterflies by offering suitable shelter and food sources throughout their life stages.

Native plants provide additional benefits because they are adapted to local soil and climate conditions. They also create habitat for the variety of wildlife that migrates to or lives in the Chesapeake Bay region.

# BEACH BUCKETS

*Kent Island volunteers take care of what they love*

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD | PHOTOS BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

**Some people call her** the “Trash Lady.” But for Kristin Weed of Stevensville, she considers the name a compliment — reflecting her passion for cleaning up trash on the Chesapeake Bay’s beaches to leave them better than she found them. She and her husband Jon founded the nonprofit Kent Island Beach Cleanups in 2012 after noticing trash while visiting Terrapin Beach in Stevensville. The non-profit’s mission is to protect and preserve the beauty of the beaches, parks, and estuaries of Kent Island through regular cleanups, education, awareness, social and communal responsibility, and advocacy.

Weed recalls the day she realized she needed to do something about the litter she was observing. “We loved going to walk at Terrapin Beach Park, but I found I wasn’t enjoying our time together as a family because I couldn’t stop complaining about the volume of trash on the beach every time we went. We had moved from the western shore and I really didn’t think there would be pollution on this side of the Bay. I was clearly naïve.”

She began volunteering at Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center to learn more about what organizations were dealing with beach cleanups on the Shore. In the fall of 2012, Weed contacted the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) through the Ocean Conservancy. The ICC is a worldwide cleanup, organized by the Ocean Conservancy, where people, groups, and volunteer organizations from all over the world gather together on one day to clean a local beach, stream, or bay. Trash is counted and the data gathered is used to raise awareness, develop policy solutions, and define specifically what types of debris are found in definite areas of the world. She learned that the organization didn’t have much presence on the Eastern Shore except in Ocean City and Assateague.

She reflects, “I thought what a great way to get involved.”

The first beach cleanup was at Terrapin Beach Park and involved Weed and four other local



An overflowing bucket filled with litter is a typical haul for a day’s efforts to cleanup Kent Island beaches.



Jon (far left) and Kristin Weed (center) have extensive knowledge about how to properly clean up our local beaches. Kristin has been dedicated to Kent Island beach maintenance since 2012 and hopes these efforts benefit our coastlines while keeping them accessible to the public. Below: It has become a family affair for Kristin, Jon and 10-year-old Evan, inspiring many other families and groups to volunteer around our shores.



## TOP 10 TRASH ITEMS PICKED UP ON KENT ISLAND BEACHES

- Cigarette butts
- Plastic cutlery
- Plastic bottles
- Fishing lines
- Aluminum cans
- Glass beer bottles
- Plastic and Styrofoam food containers and wrappers
- Fishing bobbers
- Buoy markers like milk jugs and laundry detergent bottles
- Shotgun shells

volunteers. The group cleaned up over 20 bags of trash in less than three hours. People visiting the park stopped and told her stories of how they used to see people cleaning the beach years ago, but that they hadn't seen a group there in a while. Many even jogged by and yelled, "Thank you!"

"It was honestly the most fulfilling feeling I had ever had," she said. "I thought to myself, 'I can't stop here. I am going to make this my hobby...my mission going forward.'"

Today, hundreds of volunteers attend each site's cleanup, averaging about 200 bags of trash at each cleanup site. Mostly the cleanups deal with washed up and left behind trash,

ranging from fishing line and beer cans to baby diapers.

Terrapin Park is a 276-acre park with shoreline, oyster shell and dirt walking trails, ponds and dunes with bay grasses. The environmental signage in the park was poor so the non-profit began working with the Queen Anne's County Commissioners and Parks and Recreation Department to make improvements.

Weed states, "About four years into our cleanups, the county hired park rangers which began to have an impact on the people coming to the park. Their presence changed the attitudes of visitors as they saw enforcement happening. Plus, when you go somewhere and see that it's clean and there

are signs posted, you usually decide to respect it too."

The value put on convenience in most modern lifestyles has driven the use of disposables. With the world of recycling becoming not as profitable as it once was, Weed wants people to start rethinking the products they are using to store and carry food. Her non-profit is supporting bills in the Maryland House and Senate this session to implement a plastic bag ban in Maryland and supports a plastic bag ban in Queen Anne's County.

"We are pushing for small wins."

Jon comments, "We saw the beauty of the Island and wanted to help out. Now we have gotten an underground following."

The organization sponsors 10 to 12 cleanups each year, lasting three to four hours in length and held in multiple locations on the same day. To date, cleanups have happened at Terrapin Beach Park, Kent Narrows Landing, Ferry Point Park, Old Love Point Park, Hemingway's Beach, Matapeake Fishing Pier and Beach, Romancoke Landing, and Centreville Landing in Queen Anne's County. Supplies and light refreshments and snacks are provided for volunteers, as is documentation of community service and volunteer service hours. People of all ages participate and most walk away changed. Jon's 10-year old son, Evan, enjoys engaging the younger

volunteers by hosting treasure hunts for trash.

"If you are a denier or non-believer, come to a cleanup. It gives you a different perspective. We collect and sort trash in front of everyone and most people have an 'Ah-Ha' moment just seeing that," Weed says.

Both Kristin and Jon work in sales, and Jon is also a musician. He marries music and his passion for the environment at the non-profit's annual fundraiser, The Krusty Crab Jam, in June of each year. The event includes live bands, a silent auction, and merchandise, and the proceeds help fund supplies for cleanups and educational and marketing materials.



The KIBCU painted trailer is the receptacle for the trash bags and serves as a reminder to everyone who sees it to keep our beaches clean.

Kent Island Beach Cleanups is also in its fourth season of its Leaders in Training internship program for students ages 15 or older in a Queen Anne's County high school or attending college. Interns coordinate cleanup programs, manage and recruit volunteers, and educate the public about the results of the cleanups.

"My whole point is to steadily grow our volunteer base but keep it simple," said Weed. "Our main focus has been at both Terrapin Beach Park and the Kent Narrows Fishing Pier and Landing area. Our efforts and attention in these two regions are important because of their close proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and other estuaries, as well as the lack of regulation and control of pollution in these two very different parts of our Eastern Shore. We love living here on the island so it is a great way to give back to our community while keeping it clean so we can enjoy it too."

Although both Jon and Kristin work

full-time, Kristin continues to stay active in environmental work beyond their non-profit. She serves on the Shore Rivers Advisory Board and was involved as a guest speaker at the first 2020 Upper Shore Youth Environmental Action Summit in March at Washington College.

Looking back on how the experience has changed both of them, Jon states that now he sees trash everywhere, including cigarette butts on the side of the road — crediting his work with the non-profit in opening his eyes to the pollution that is happening all around us. He also credits his wife with changing their household in dramatic ways. The family uses no single-use plastic, they compost, they have changed their driving habits, and they have even greatly changed their eating habits due to climate change by becoming vegetarians and eating vegan as much as possible.

He quips, "Kristin is threatening this month to wean us off using paper

## UPCOMING BEACH CLEANUP DATES

Kent Island Beach Cleanups  
Kent Narrows Pier and  
Ferry Point Park Cleanups  
April 18, 8 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Hemingway' Beach Cleanup  
Hemingway's Beach,  
357 Pier 1 Rd,  
Stevensville, MD 21666  
May 16, 8 a.m. to 12 noon

towels at home. And, she's right."

Kristin adds, "At the end of the day, I want to be on the right side of history at the end of my life. I can't ask people to do things I don't do myself."

For further information, visit [kenti-slandbeachcleanups.com](http://kenti-slandbeachcleanups.com) or call 410-458-1240. ●



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# IT'S ALL ABOUT



# THE ROE

BY KATHI FERGUSON

**When signs of spring** come to mind, our thoughts typically turn to warmer days, songbirds, April showers, and blooming gardens. But for many on Maryland's Eastern Shore, a very different pleasure awaits. It is when Atlantic shad make their way from the ocean to spawn in the freshwater rivers and streams of the Chesapeake Bay—a signal that indulging in the seasonal delicacy of shad roe is bound to follow.

It is also the time when the fish's namesake, shadbush, comes to life. According to local lore, as soon as the shadbush blooms in early spring, the fish follow suit, running upriver to spawn. Boasting clusters of small, white flowers and round crimson fruits, the deciduous shadbush is found throughout the entire Bay watershed, and is easily spotted at fence rows, in open woods, and along the edges of forested wetlands.

American shad are the largest member of the herring family, and have long been an important food source in our region's history. For hundreds of years, shad were caught by Native Americans as a staple food, and European colonists kept barrels of salted shad in their home. During the Revolutionary War, an early shad run helped feed George Washington's troops after a harsh winter spent at Valley Forge in 1778.

The Latin name for the shad, *Alosa sapidissima*, means "most delicious." Tiny, ripe eggs of the female are contained in two, lobe shaped sacs called "sets," each weighing between twelve and eighteen ounces. Bearing a resemblance to liver, shad roe is typically deep red in color, but can occasionally reveal a light yellowish hue. Rich and meaty, the taste leans towards briny and savory, tending to take on the flavors with which it is cooked. There are several



ways to prepare shad roe, but most importantly, it should be handled with care, and cooked at low temperatures to avoid bursting the eggs.

Shad roe has been sought after and enjoyed as fine table fare for generations, but today, it can be hard to come by. Historic overfishing, pollution, and river passages blocked by dams, have contributed to severe

Opposite: A broiled shad roe dish topped with bacon is served at Suicide Bridge Restaurant in Hurlock;  
Top: the shadbush in bloom in spring;  
Above: the shad

FOOD PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER, SHAD BUSH GETTY IMAGES; SHAD FISH COURTESY CHESAPEAKEBAY.NET

“Many of our regular customers call ahead or stop in to see if it’s on the menu,” says **Craig Cropper**, manager of Suicide Bridge Restaurant in Hurlock. “I call them the shad roe ‘connoisseurs.’”

depletion of shad populations. Although protected under the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act since 1965, the Maryland fishery closed its commercial harvest in 1980, with Virginia following suit in 1994. Most of the local restaurants and fish markets look to North Carolina for their supply these days.

Ask any Eastern Shore native who has been around for a while about shad roe, and chances are good he has eaten it. “We always rolled ours in flour, and

pan fried it in bacon fat,” says Tilghman native John Kinnaman. “The fish itself was too bony to eat, but the roe was something special.”

The roe typically makes its debut in the kitchens of area restaurants during the month of February and is available through the end of March. “Many of our regular customers call ahead or stop in to see if it’s on the menu,” says Craig Cropper, manager of Suicide Bridge Restaurant in Hurlock. “I call them the shad roe ‘connoisseurs.’ They

tend to be an older clientele who grew up with it, and really enjoy it.” Broiled and served with crispy bacon on top, with a side of lemon butter sauce makes the dish.

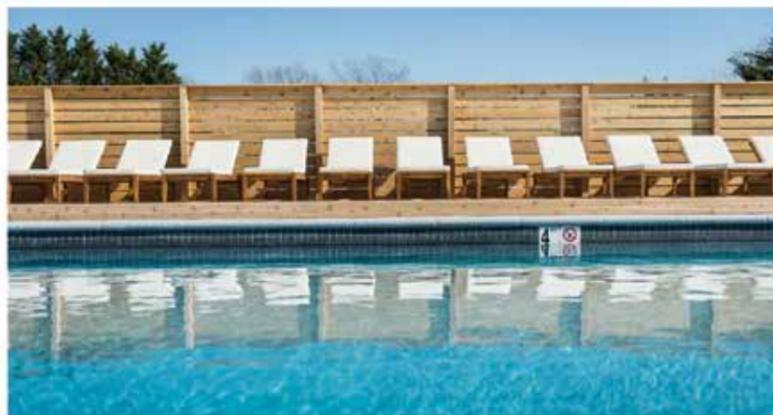
Flavorful dishes of shad roe are eagerly awaited each year by a loyal culinary following on the Shore, leaving little doubt the springtime migration that once brought abundant schools of this storied fish to their rivers of origin has become a significant part of Chesapeake history and culture. ☉



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# READ LOCAL, DREAM LOCAL

BY DABRIANNA GREEN  
PHOTOS BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

**Independent author Stephanie**

Verni has penned three award-winning indie novels, and her inspiration may feel a little close to home. The love affair between Verni and Maryland is evident throughout her works, and she can't help but capture the essence of our "Little America" throughout each and every page.

From the capital city of Annapolis to the rural Eastern Shore, Verni's prose serves as an unofficial literary tour guide. She engulfs her readers on journeys of contemporary love, heartbreaking tragedy, and small-town charm.

We caught up with Verni to find out a little more about her work and her locative love.



Stephanie Verni  
strolls through St.  
Michaels on a crisp late  
winter afternoon.



Stephanie Verni with a stack of her books by the water in St. Michaels

**Shore Monthly:** What about Maryland contributes to your renewed inspiration for each project?

**Stephanie Verni:** I think with Annapolis, where the first book is set, I just had a great upbringing. I had a great family. I loved the area. So Annapolis was my first choice because I knew it well. I could write about the town - I mean, I know it like the back of my hand. One of my friends said, "You captured Annapolis like *Sex & the City* captured New York City." So that was a great compliment!

The other two books are set in Oxford (*Inn Significant*) and St. Michaels (*Little Milestones*). I just love it over here. Whenever I get a free day to come over the bridge, I want to be here. I'm little by little hopefully convincing my husband that at some point we're going to live over here

when we retire. I just adore it.

I've been coming here for 20 years, just coming. Sometimes I get in the car by myself and just come over and stroll. Sometimes I bring friends, but I just love the Eastern Shore. I think Maryland has a lot to offer and we need to bolster what a great state this is, so that's why I write about it. When I drive over that bridge, my stress just goes away. As soon as I hit the Eastern Shore, it's just a different pace of life. When I drive on that Baltimore beltway, I yearn for a small-town feel. It's just quaint and charming. I just love everything about it.

**SM:** You have quite a cohesive catalogue of fiction influenced by the places you've been. Was that a conscious decision?

**SV:** When I wrote the first book, I didn't say, "All my books are going to be set in Maryland." It just sort of

happened that way. I write what I know. I've lived in Maryland since I was four and a half years old, so it's what I know.

**SM:** Your audience raves about your knack for bringing settings to life. Do you intentionally write this way?

**SV:** Yes. I do. I take a lot of photos. I try to get it right. The last thing I would want is for someone in St. Michaels to read my book and say, "She doesn't get it. She doesn't get St. Michaels."

I really try hard to. When I wrote *Inn Significant*, I had a woman who lived in Oxford for five years say to me, "Oh my gosh, you captured Oxford beautifully." So I try to spend the time. I talk to people in the town. I get feedback from people. For me, I have to get the place just as right as I get the characters. I wouldn't want to let anyone down.

**SM:** As an indie author, your turnaround time for publishing is unmatched. What keeps the creative juices flowing?

**SV:** I remember sitting in a History of Maryland class in high school. I have a doodle I wrote that says, "I want to be an author one day."

I don't know what it was about the teacher, but she told all these stories about Maryland. She was a really good history teacher. I thought, "Someday I want to write something," so I did. After writing my first book, I just loved that I was finally fulfilling my dream that I thought about in high school. I just want to be a storyteller. Once *Little Milestones* gets out of my head, something else will pop in. I just love it. I love the whole process. I love seeing the story come to fruition. Even if I have a small audience, I don't really care. I'm just doing it because I love it!

**SM:** If you had to pick a favorite of the books you've written, which would it be and why?

**SV:** Hm, that's so hard. I really love *Inn Significant*. It had something none of my other books had because I had

to do research about the Depression era, so that one pushed me a little bit. I had to look and see what people were wearing. I had to see what a cloche hat was! Like, what's a cloche hat from the 1930s? If you forced me, I would say *Inn Significant* because of the history aspect of it. It's kind of like asking, "Who's your favorite child?" I like them all for different reasons.

**SM:** You've also co-written a textbook on event planning and edited a commemorative. Are you still open to other paths?

**SV:** I'd like to get into historical fiction and fantasy. Writing a textbook is the hardest thing I've done. It's unbelievably time-consuming. It takes me hours to do the research. The academic writing is strenuous and not fun for me. I do it, but my other books are fun. Academic writing is work, but I love that I have an academic textbook to show for myself, and I love that we were the first to take communications theory and attach it to event planning.

**SM:** What can we expect from you next as an author?

**SV:** What I might do for a little while is write some short stories and see where that takes me. If you write a short story and you really like the characters, it could become a novel. That's what short stories can do for you. I was watching clips of "Game of Thrones" yesterday and thinking it might be cool to write about a queen and a castle and really cool things about contemporary issues, but in medieval times. I think it might be fun. I don't know if I could pull it off, but it's kind of intriguing. I wrote a ghost story in my short stories and I had two people write to me and say, "Could you turn that ghost story into something? It's a really cool ghost story." I thought, "Eh - Dickens already did that."

Be sure to pick up Verni's fourth and latest novel, *Little Milestones*.

To stay updated on future releases, connect with her via her website, [www.stephsscribe.com](http://www.stephsscribe.com).



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## Picture Pawfect PET PHOTO CONTEST

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Picture Pawfect Pet Photo Contest. Congratulations to the winner of the \$50 gift card to Saint Michaels Pet Supplies and custom pet portrait painted by Griff Griffin, Bill Whaley and his dog Mack!

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First Lady Pat Nixon and her husband President Richard Nixon plant a tree in honor of the first Earth Day.

# EARTH DAY

*Celebrating the planet for 50 years*

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD

## “Act or die.”

This was the message of the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, according to *CBS News* anchor Walter Cronkite, who reported on what was the planet’s largest civic event. Earth Day was started as a populist response to growing environmental concerns of the day, specifically air and water pollution. The early Earth Day organizers helped to found what today is a growing movement to combat climate change.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day this April, it is worth a look back on the origins of this day and its impact on environmental laws in the U.S., as well as a local connection and how the

anniversary will be remembered at one event on the Mid-Shore.

## HISTORY OF EARTH DAY

The founder of Earth Day was Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, who wanted to harness the energy of the anti-war protest movement to put environmental concerns at the top of public consciousness. April 22 was chosen for the date. As it fell between spring break and final exams, it was thought to be the best date to engage the nation’s college and school-aged students. The event involved 2,000 colleges and 2,000 communities. An estimated 20 million people protested a myriad of

things: oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife.

Perhaps biologist Barry Commoner stated it best during Cronkite’s broadcast: “This planet is threatened with destruction and we who live in it with death. We are in a crisis for survival.”

According to the Earth Day Network (earthday.org), “In the decades leading up to the first Earth Day, Americans were consuming vast amounts of leaded gas through massive and inefficient automobiles. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of the consequences from either the law or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment threatens human health.”

Coast-to-coast rallies that first year had an impact, and successfully raised awareness about the state of our planet. Earth Day has been credited with launching landmark environmental laws in the U.S. — the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts, and even the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Many states and counties followed suit.

As 1990 approached, a group of environmental leaders approached Denis Hayes, the first Earth Day’s national coordinator, to organize another major campaign for the planet and to go global with the message. The event mobilized 200 million people in 141 countries and lifted environmental issues such as recycling onto the world stage. In 2016, the United Nations chose Earth Day as the day the historic Paris Agreement for Climate Change was signed.

As we approach Earth Day 2020, the theme has changed to climate action. Earth Day Network president Kathleen Rogers comments, “We find ourselves today in a world facing global threats that demand a unified global response. For Earth Day 2020, we will build a new



Above: Women on a street in Washington, D.C. are unwittingly positioned next to a woman in a gas mask during the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Photo from WASHINGTONIANA/ D.C. Public Library, Special Collections

Right: A vintage poster from 1970 and the one of the 2020 posters in circulation.



NIXON PHOTO PUBLIC DOMAIN

generation of environmental activists, engaging millions of people worldwide.”

## LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS

Local arts advocate Busy Graham, who lives in Royal Oak and is the Founder & Executive Director of Carpe Diem Arts, helped produce a major event, “Song of the Earth: 40th Anniversary of Earth Day Celebration,” at the Music Center at Strathmore in April 2010.

“We had 125 singers ages 10 to 75, and another 25 musicians and dancers, performing for an audience of 900 people,” she said.

“The evening included the world premiere of Malcolm Dalglish’s song

setting of Wendell Berry’s poem ‘Violets.’”

Graham’s personal connection to Earth Day goes back to her childhood. Her father, Richard A. Graham, re-imagined his life at age 40 by leaving a successful career as a mechanical engineer and going into public service. He was friends with Senator Nelson, who paved the way for Graham’s family to move from Wisconsin to Washington, D.C. Dick Graham would join the Peace Corps staff soon after the agency was founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy. Sargent Shriver was the first director, and Bill Moyers was the first associate director of public affairs.

She remembers, “After two years on staff as Shriver’s deputy, my Dad was asked to be the Peace Corps country

director in Tunisia from 1963 to 1965. Two great years for our family. I remain eternally grateful to Senator Gaylord Nelson for opening the door to a remarkable career for my father and a truly enriching experience for our family.”

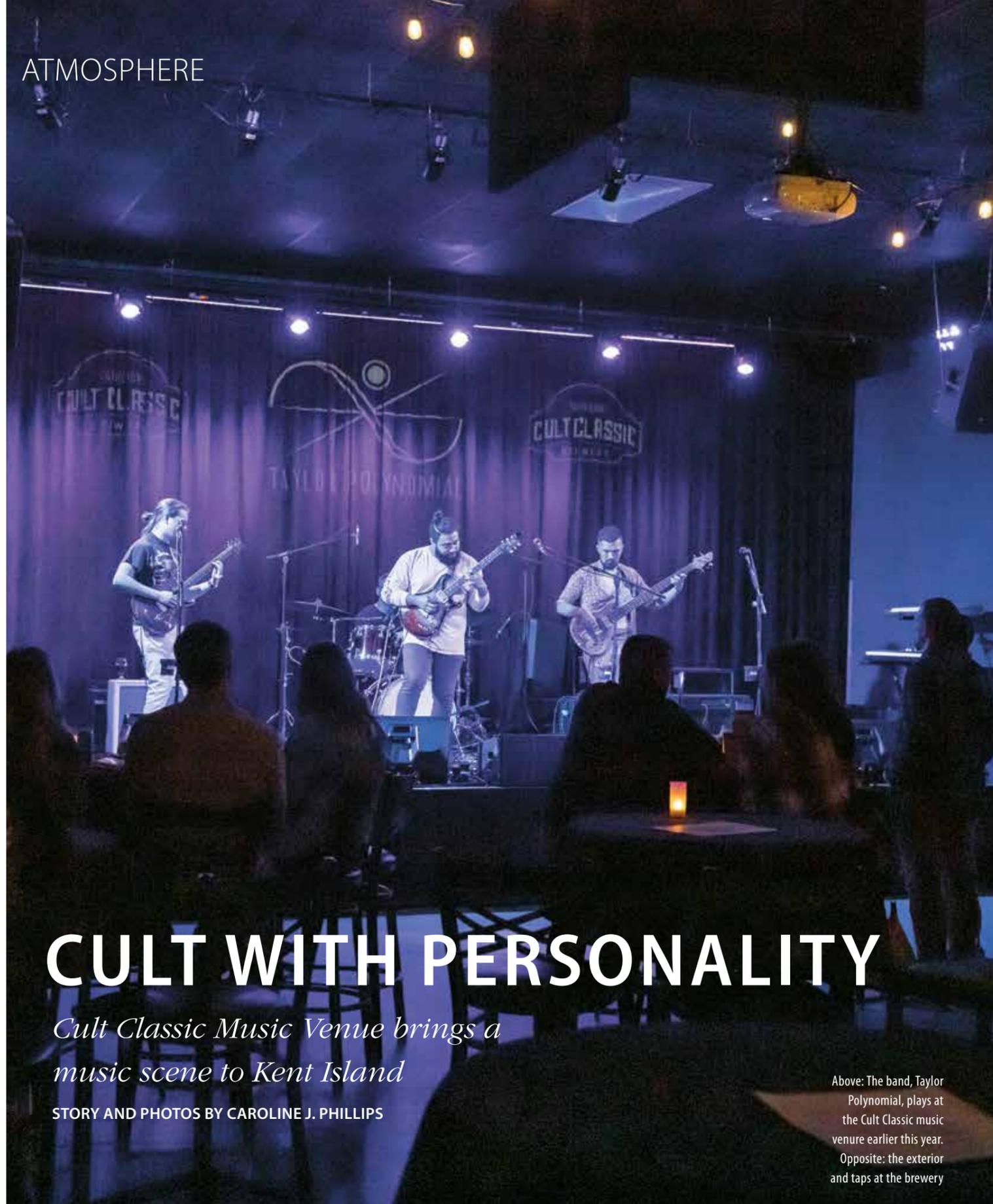
In 1965, Dick Graham was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson as one of the first Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioners, focusing on Latino and women’s rights. As EEOC commissioner, he was approached by Betty Friedan for help in forming a national organization to promote women’s rights. He suggested she call it the National Organization of Women and was named the first Vice President — an unlikely position for a man.

While Busy Graham’s activism has been most visible in her commitment to the arts, she has a deep passion for the environment which has grown out of several jobs she has held. Her goal is to live responsibly with the smallest footprint possible and to promote environmental education in our schools through the arts.

Busy will be working with Ellen Vatne General, founder and former director of the Avalon Theatre, Suzy Moore and the Avalon Foundation staff, and the Multi-Cultural Festival Committee, in producing this year’s Multi-Cultural Festival and Earth Day Celebration in Idlewild Park on May 2. (See box below for further details.)

“I, of course, share the growing concerns about the global impact of climate change. Evidence abounds that we are facing a very real crisis,” Graham states.

While looking ahead to the environmental challenges we are facing, Graham comments that “Slow-and-steady-wins-the-race’ might have been applicable 50 years ago when Earth Day was first founded, but that now, with climate change accelerating at an alarming rate, we are going to have to pick up the pace in a big way, for survival’s sake.” ●



# CULT WITH PERSONALITY

*Cult Classic Music Venue brings a music scene to Kent Island*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

Above: The band, Taylor Polynomial, plays at the Cult Classic music venue earlier this year. Opposite: the exterior and taps at the brewery

**Live music brings** people together, and on Kent Island it's bringing them to a local brewery.

Nestled inside Kent Island's own Cult Classic Brewery lives a new music venue that connects the community to musicians from near and far. There's not a bad seat in the house, and a large stage, high-quality audio abilities, and talented sound engineer make it the go-to spot for local bands and touring musicians passing through the area.

Beer came first — but Jesse McNew, one of the managing partners and head brewers of Cult Classic Brewing, soon realized that the drinkery had the space to build a dedicated music venue off the taproom.

A few months after the site opened in 2018, the stage went live. For just over a year, the sound space has enjoyed great music and successful shows. You can grab one of Cult Classic's own local brews and spend the night listening to music in their cozy space.

"It's a small, intimate venue, with no bad seats," said McNew.

"I want people to come and experience it the best they can."

Although many breweries feature live music to enhance the social vibe, it's often an afterthought confined to a small corner. At Cult Classic, large doors and a box office separate the taproom from the venue. McNew realized that not everyone who comes in for a beer wants to listen to the music.

"We didn't come into it thinking we'd have a separate space tuned for live music that is unique to the area, it kind of just snowballed," McNew said.

The venue is unique to a brewery environment because it was constructed with the music in mind. McNew realized that they needed to create a space that would attract the bands, not just the audience.

"When you have a space that the



band likes, a stage that has what they want, a space that sounds good, and a talented sound engineer that can make them sound great, then the bands are happy," he said. The talent also has a separate outside entrance, restrooms, and their own green room.

This attention to detail has led to a wide variety of musical acts joining the lineup at Cult Classic. While they've seen a good amount of local talent on the stage, the venue has also attracted touring bands from nearby Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Annapolis, and nationwide. It's quite the treat to pop into one of the many shows in their weekly lineup, and one can hear a variety of genres at the Kent Island haunt.

Most weekend nights there are lively shows, and oftentimes there are Thursday or Sunday night bands bookending the Friday and Saturday crowds. One of the most well-attended evenings are their Open Mic Nights on Tuesdays, which is open to any burgeoning musician or musical act in the community. Tickets are affordable, which makes it easy for true blue fans to attend different shows several times a week.

When asked what's next for the venue at Cult Classic Brewery, McNew has a lot of ideas. Just this month, the team received an updated liquor license which allowed for a new kitchen and a fresh variety of food and beverage choices.

McNew says that "with a space like this, we hope to get more and more popular bands that come through the area, but that comes with time. The options are pretty endless."

What you can expect when you walk into the venue at the Cult Classic Brewery is to hear a new band, a new sound, or even your favorite local band playing to a crowd. McNew says that the focus is on the viewing experience.

"We want this room to be a focus on the music. We look to make the bands happy, which makes the fans happy." ●

# SPACE INVADERS

*The growing problem of the predator snakehead fish*

BY BRADY KEEFE



A fisherman catches a 24-inch snakehead from his fishing kayak in the Twin Ponds at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

**When I first heard about** the snakehead fish, I thought it was a fish with a head similar to that of a snake. What could be so terrible about that? After doing some more digging — as any good detective would do — what I found was both concerning and interesting.

First, the snakehead can breathe out of the water. The fish has an organ that allows it to breathe air like humans. This does not mean that the fish is going to sprout legs; the organ is used primarily when the fish needs to migrate. Second, it is a predator and a threat to the Chesapeake Watershed and the surrounding rivers. It's high up on the food chain and known to feed on smaller fish like the small-mouth bass. Both of these facts surprised me, but what I found most shocking is that the fish was found in Maryland in 2002 and the threat of this fish hasn't lessened at all.

How did we get here?

In 2002, the snakehead fish was discovered in a pond in Crofton, Maryland. The pond was poisoned and all the fish along with the snakeheads were killed.

Problem solved, right?

Wrong.

No one knows how the fish spread into the Watershed. The Delmarva Peninsula came up with a plan: Catch and kill all of the invasive species. With no limitations to how many snakeheads one could catch and kill, we again assumed that the problem was solved.

Wrong again. It is now 2020 and the fish has not gone anywhere. In fact, the population of the fish has increased, while other species like the yellow perch and bluegill have significantly decreased. Something needs to be done with this fish.

COURTESY PHOTO

In talking to many locals, I got one of two reactions:

"The snakehead is delicious, and I wish more places carried it."

Or

"It's ugly! Why would I eat such a creepy fish? It even breathes on land and has teeth! No way!"

Sympathizing with the second reaction, I found myself thinking about the first. If the states of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware encouraged anglers to catch and kill as many snakeheads as they want, why don't I see this fish at my local supermarket? I believe the answer is simple: We're afraid of both the name of the fish and the threat it poses to the local wildlife.

I propose that instead of being afraid of the predator, that we see it food. In the Caribbean, the once unwelcomed lionfish has been transformed into a commodity for consumption.

I spent four years in Pensacola, Florida for college. When I was there, many restaurants had lionfish on their menus. The ability to catch and kill the lionfish not only benefitted the environment, but also brought in great revenues to the places that sold the exotic fish.

The Eastern Shore shouldn't be afraid of a fish just because it is ugly or can survive on land for a short time. Markets and restaurants in D.C. sell the fish at a premium, and I suggest that fishers of the Eastern Shore do the same thing.

There are several ways to quell the fear of the snakehead fish. First, let's rename the fish. Many places simply call it by its scientific name, Channa, on their menus. Others give it names like Potomac pike or northern snakehead. Second, focus on how delicious the fish can be.

It's clear that the snakehead fish needs to be stopped from disturbing the delicate ecosystems of the Bay. We can better protect the Bay by using the fish as a source of food and educating each other that it is not something to fear, but something to use to our advantage. ●

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**PHOTO BY TRACEY F. JOHNS**

Sunset on the Choptank River captures winter's low light, illuminating sea glass found along the river's banks. The piece is now part of the photographer's treasured collection.



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