

ROW

trained as a single- or multiple-trunked specimen plant.

**Bloom time** April to May, then sporadically throughout summer

**More information** [www.ag.arizona.edu/pima/gardening/aridplants/Chilopsis\\_linearis.html](http://www.ag.arizona.edu/pima/gardening/aridplants/Chilopsis_linearis.html) (or [www.tinyurl.com/desertwillow](http://www.tinyurl.com/desertwillow))

— Mark Weathington

Sunday | 05.31.09 | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT | PAGE 3

# PUTTING TOGETHER A LOVE OF NATURE

By Rebecca Burcher Jones  
Correspondent

## NORFOLK

John Stewart needs one of those bumper stickers that reads, "Think Globally, Act Locally." If there's anyone who believes those words, it's this resident of Norfolk's Colonial Place.

About two years ago, the retired Virginia Beach library administrator asked a Norfolk environmental engineer what he could do as a citizen to foster environmental stewardship along the Lafayette River.

"I'd like to do something to help the health of the river," Stewart recalled saying.

He learned that he didn't have to look further than his neighborhood to have an impact.

There, at 46th Street and Colley Avenue, was a small urban wetland off Knitting Mill Creek, a tributary of the Lafayette River. It was ugly, mucky and filled with chunks of concrete and debris. It needed restoration.

Since that simple inquiry, big things have happened.

Stewart has helped organize a volunteer group, the Lafayette Wetlands Partnership, to unite citizens, city representatives and businesses in environmental-stewardship efforts.

The group operates with a mission to "enhance and beautify a publicly ac-

knowledged wetland that serves the community and is a model for other wetland improvements."

The partnership volunteers — largely members of the Colonial Place/Riverview, Larchmont and Highland Park civic leagues and other nearby residents — made the ailing parcel on Colley Avenue their first hands-on project.

Now, the 1,500-square-foot wetland is functioning as it should: as a healthy habitat for native plants and wildlife.

"We created a living shoreline," Stewart said. The volunteers cleaned up the site and filled an eroded area with sand. They planted native shrubs in the upper marsh and grasses in the lower tidal area. All the plantings help hold the soil in place and contribute to sustaining the wetland.

Referring to the upper marsh, Stewart noted, "In effect, what's there now is a demonstration garden. It shows how there are beautiful plants that will bloom and provide color and also hold the soil."

Looking out over the restored wetland recently, Stewart said he and other partnership members are committed to maintaining it over time. While he talked, a yellow-crowned night heron flew around the wetland, with urban traffic passing less than 25 yards away.

Restoration efforts were funded with grants and donations.

From here, Stewart said, the partner-



REBECCA BURCHER JONES

**John Stewart of Norfolk's Colonial Place discovered he didn't have to look beyond his own neighborhood to have an impact on the Lafayette River.**

ship will continue to identify other wetland parcels in need of restoration along the Lafayette River and its tributaries.

"Our projects are always going to be small," he said. "But we see them like stringing pearls along the river."

Partnership members have already begun to share what they've learned about with others. Earlier this year,

they taught a course on wetlands stewardship through Norfolk's Neighborhood University. In the fall, they will offer another course, focusing on general how-to information for any community-based environmental project, not just those involving wetlands.

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## want to help?

For more information about the Lafayette Wetlands Partnership, contact John Stewart at (757) 623-8127.

## victorious veggies

Victory gardens, veggie gardens, kitchen gardens. Whatever you call them, they're in. Gracious Living is planning a story on "public" gardens. Tell us if you know about a public vegetable garden that residents work in, learn from or enjoy the fruits of. Send information to [barrow1@cox.net](mailto:barrow1@cox.net).