

Eastern Shore Post

NOVEMBER 25, 2022

THE VOICE OF ACCOMACK AND NORTHAMPTON COUNTIES ON VIRGINIA'S EASTERN SHORE

FREE OF CHARGE

CAPE CHARLES



EASTERN SHORE POST/STEFANIE JACKSON

Cape Charles Rosenwald School Restoration Initiative's 2022 annual meeting presenters, from left, Beth Walker, Mary Ruffin Hanbury, and Tevya Griffin, stand in front of a rendition of the project.

Community center could be open by 2024

School project

Cape Charles' Rosenwald school was featured on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2002 list of the 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. It could be completely renovated as a community center by summer 2024.

BY STEFANIE JACKSON
Eastern Shore Post

The historic Cape Charles Elementary School could be completely renovated and ready to begin a new life as a community center by summer 2024.

The Cape Charles Rosenwald School Restoration Initiative, which was founded by Tevya Griffin and in 2014 became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is more than one-third of the way to its \$2.5 million fundraising goal.

The former Cape Charles Elementa-

ry is known as a Rosenwald school because of the late Julius Rosenwald, the former president of Sears Roebuck who partnered with Booker T. Washington during the Jim Crow era to build more than 5,300 schools for Black students.

The group announced at its annual meeting Nov. 5 that it has applied for a \$1 million Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Industrial Revitalization grant, and if the nonprofit is awarded the grant, it will need only \$600,000 more to achieve its fund-

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REGIONAL

Menhaden meeting set for Dec. 6

After a stinky summer of fish kills, local group will speak at hearing

BY STEFANIE JACKSON
Eastern Shore Post

A local group is headed by bus to a state meeting to speak out against menhaden fishing in the Chesapeake Bay after a smelly summer of fish kills.

When you go

The Dec. 6 bus trip is free and includes lunch. The bus will depart from the Food Lion parking lot in Exmore at 7:30 a.m. For more info, call Christi Medice at 757-442-9310.

meetings.

Their efforts will culminate at a Virginia Marine Resources Commission regulatory hearing in Hampton on Tuesday, Dec. 6.

It will be the last chance for citizens to speak out about menhaden reduction fishing before the VMRC commissioners vote on the matter.

It all started on the Independence Day holiday weekend. On Saturday, July 2, resi-

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School

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raising goal.

The nonprofit expects a decision on the grant before the year's end.

Cape Charles Elementary School served students from 1929 to 1966, when Northampton County schools were integrated. Later, the building was used as an eel-packing plant that closed in 1977.

The group negotiated with the family that had owned and operated the eel plant, and with the help of donors, the nonprofit purchased the building for \$275,000 in 2019.

The nonprofit has received several grants since its founding, including one from Virginia Humanities that enabled the group to partner with Old Dominion University to interview about 18 alumni of Cape Charles Elementary.

The nonprofit recently received a grant from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to hire Mary Ruffin Hanbury, founding principal of Hanbury Preservation Consulting, Raleigh, N.C., to help Cape Charles Elementary School with its

goal of being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources administers two historic designation programs, the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

The Cape Charles Rosenwald school was featured on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2002 list of the 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

Cape Charles Elementary was one of 5,357 Rosenwald schools built in 883 counties across 15 states.

Of 382 Rosenwald schools built in Virginia, 256 have been demolished and only 126 remain standing.

Most Rosenwald schools were built of wood; Cape Charles Elementary School is a rarity in that it is a brick building, Hanbury noted.

Eyre Baldwin, a supporter of the school initiative, added that the Abell Foundation, of Baltimore, donated brick that may have been left over from other projects.

Hanbury's job will include writing two narratives for the National Register of Historic Places application, one describ-

ing the physical building and another explaining its historical significance.

Beth Walker, a group board member and the owner of the historic Northampton Hotel, discussed many of the nonprofit's accomplishments with Cape Charles Elementary School, including acquiring in-kind architectural and civil engineering design services.

The school's mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and structural designs are in progress, and lead and asbestos tests have been done, she said.

CCRSRI acquired more than six acres from the Town of Cape Charles, expanding the school campus to nearly nine acres, and the nonprofit is working with the municipality to provide sewer service to the school building and create a golf-cart path leading to the future new town offices.

The nonprofit has raised about \$600,000 for permitting, demolition, abatement, site work, electrical work, stormwater drainage design, and roof replacement.

Walker noted the Eastern Shore of Virginia Community Foundation donated \$50,000 toward the replacement of the

90-year-old roof at Cape Charles Elementary, which currently is covered with fish-scale-shaped asbestos shingles.

She described CCRSRI's vision for the school, which is to host educational, civic, and community activities and also rent out its spaces for special events and sustain itself financially.

The nonprofit's goal is to break down barriers to educational opportunities and stop the cycle of generational poverty.

In pursuit of this goal, CCRSRI has engaged in a partnership with Eastern Shore Community College, which plans to offer in-person and remote classes at the new community center.

Within one mile of Cape Charles Elementary are many of Northampton County's major employers who also could partner with the school to provide training.

Walker said, "While the school will not function as a museum in the traditional sense, it will be a monument to African American history in Cape Charles and far beyond."

"It will indeed teach about the past but it will be creating a brighter future for many."



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