



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kindra Greene, [kindra.greene@elizabethrivertrail.org](mailto:kindra.greene@elizabethrivertrail.org), 757.681.1405

## **Elizabeth River Trail Foundation Announces New Programs and Partnerships for 2023**

NORFOLK, Va. – The Elizabeth River Trail Foundation is pleased to announce an expanded year of programming and new partnerships with EVMS and Old Dominion University. Partnerships continue with Norfolk Tour Company and Norfolk Master Gardeners. The 2023 schedule also includes the launch of ERT 101 Group Rides. All programs are free and open to the public.

For the second year in a row, February’s African American History Tour drew record crowds. The 2023 tour brought nearly 100 visitors for this waterfront tour that shares stories of the Elizabeth River as a means of self-emancipation. A version of the tour will be revisited in June in honor of Juneteenth. Five additional historical and educational tours are scheduled this year with Norfolk Tour Company.

The Botanical Tours, led by a Norfolk Master Gardener and an ODU doctoral candidate in ecological sciences, explore some of the secret gardens and exceptional trees along the ERT. Participants learn how to identify native and invasive plant species in addition to living shorelines, restoration and resilience efforts.

The new 2023 ERT 101 Rides, led by Assistant Director Morgan Willett, are designed to help new riders feel comfortable navigating the trail and roads in a group setting. Instruction will include the basics of hand signals, bike safety, ERT wayfinding signage and trail etiquette.

Also new for 2023 is ERT’s partnership with EVMS and Mentally Healthy Norfolk Collaborative to bring the Walk and Talk series to the trail. These one-mile self-guided walks are organized at different locations on the trail. Community partners will be available to answer questions about resources available in our community. And, activities will encourage participants to engage in conversations around mental health and learn new skills.

“The trail is truly a community connector and resource that has the ability to play a valuable role in improving both mental and physical health in our region,” said ERT Executive Director Kindra Greene. “The ERT can be a refuge, a gathering place and a safe space for our residents. We believe that talking about mental health is a vital part of how we show up for and support our community. We’re thrilled to bring so many trailside partners into this series.”

“No one is immune to mental illness, and that’s why it’s so important to the Mentally Healthy Norfolk Collaborative to bring the Walk and Talk series to the forefront of our community,” said

Ashley Cilenti, outreach programs coordinator with the M. Foscue Brock Institute for Community and Global Health Eastern Virginia Medical School. “Our goal is to engage and empower our residents to join the work in addressing mental health in Hampton Roads by reducing stigma, encouraging conversation and pointing people to help. Talking about mental health shouldn’t be something we’re afraid of or ashamed of. Whether you’re having a hard time, someone you know and care about is struggling, or you just want to be prepared-we want you to join us at our walks throughout the year.”

March 25 Walk and Talk (EVMS Lead)

April 22 Lochhaven Resilience Tour with Norfolk Tour Company

April 29 Botanical Walking Tour – Wetlands Restoration (ODU lead)

May 20 ERT 101 Group Ride

May 27 Plum Point Park/ Fort Norfolk Tour with Norfolk Tour Company

May 27 Botanical Walking Tour – Ghent Neighborhood Secret Gardens (Norfolk Master Gardener lead)

June 3 Walk and Talk (EVMS Lead)

June 10 African American History Tour with Norfolk Tour Company

June 24 Botanical Walking Tour Orchid House (ODU lead)

July 22 ERT 101 Group Ride

July 29 Botanical Bike Tour – Downtown waterfront plants/trees (Norfolk Master Gardener lead)

August 12 Freemason Tour with Norfolk Tour Company

August 26 Botanical Bike Tour – Plants of the ERT identifying native and invasive species (Norfolk Master Gardener lead)

August 26 Walk and Talk (EVMS lead)

September 17 ERT 101 Group Ride

September 30 Botanical Bike Tour – Secret gardens of West Ghent and Weyanoke Bird Sanctuary ( Norfolk Master Gardener lead)

October 28 Botanical Bike Tour – Significant trees and fall foliage (ODU lead)

December 16 Walk and Talk (EVMS lead)

Reservations are required for the Botanical Tours. To reserve or for more information, please visit <https://elizabethrivertrail.org/events/>.

The Elizabeth River Trail Foundation’s mission is to create an inclusive and resilient urban riverfront trail that connects and inspires people and businesses in the Hampton Roads region. The Elizabeth River Trail runs 10.5 miles through businesses, historic attractions and 28 neighborhoods within a five-minute walk. The multi-use trail is designed for walking, running and biking. It comprises 11 sections from Norfolk State University, through Downtown Norfolk and Old Dominion University to NIT Terminals along the Elizabeth River. The Foundation has completed multiple new unique and award-winning amenities, including a kayak launch, play sculpture and double turbo challenge course in Plum Point Park and most recently, The Glowline. Major sponsors include Sentara and the City of Norfolk.

###