QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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QACPS Celebrates Success of Coaster Action Project

CENTREVILLE - Queen Anne's County Public Schools (QACPS) is thrilled to announce the imaginative and creative student work for its Coaster Action Project, an initiative designed to engage students in advocating for the restoration of local oyster populations and promoting oyster shell recycling.

As part of their Biology curriculum, high school students in QACPS explored "The Amazing Oyster," collaborating with marine and environmental scientists to evaluate existing environmental programs within local waterways. Partnering with ShoreRivers, students embarked on a journey to Horn Point Laboratory at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science campus in Cambridge, MD. There, they engaged in hands-on investigations, including water quality assessments, oyster dissections, and visits to the oyster hatchery, to gain firsthand insights into the health of the Choptank River ecosystem and its interconnected tributaries. Sarah Covington, a biology teacher from Queen Anne's County High School who has contributed significantly to the planning and implementation of these experiences for her students said, "ShoreRivers has been instrumental in providing QACPS students with engaging learning experiences and I am grateful to be able to work with them on this project."

The students were tasked with designing educational coasters and embraced the opportunity to educate restaurant patrons on the vital role of oysters and the importance of oyster shell recycling. The student's artistry resulted in the production of professional and informative coasters that exemplify their commitment to environmental stewardship. The coaster is double-sided, featuring the student's design on one side and partner information on the other. "My favorite part of my job is showing kids that environmental action can take so many different forms," said Suzanne Sullivan, the Director of Education at ShoreRivers. "And so many young

people are naturally creative, artistic, and funny, it's so exciting to channel that into student action." These coasters serve as powerful educational tools, highlighting the critical role of oysters in maintaining water quality and supporting local economies.

The Coaster Action Project served as a culmination of students' comprehensive learning surrounding the significance of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. "This Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) is part of the QACPS Environmental Literacy Plan which includes a vertically aligned K-12 curriculum to meet the Maryland Environmental Literacy Education requirements for students", stated Michael Page the QACPS Supervisor of Environmental Literacy. Each grade level in QACPS explores and engages in relevant environmental issues within their schoolyard habitats and the surrounding regions.

The impactful coasters created through the Action Project Challenge are set to make waves across restaurants in Queen Anne's County, with a particular focus on those actively participating in oyster shell recycling initiatives. These select restaurants partner with Oyster Recovery Partnership and are integral in recycling shells, which are then meticulously prepared to house baby oysters, known as 'spat', before being returned to rivers. This cyclical process not only fosters the growth of oysters but also facilitates crucial environmental benefits that oysters provide such as water filtration and enhanced habitat for various aquatic species.

Among the notable eateries set to showcase these coasters are Fishermans Inn, Crab Deck, Knoxie's Table, and the Narrows. By featuring these coasters, these establishments are not only demonstrating their commitment to sustainable practices but also actively contributing to the preservation and enrichment of the local ecosystem.