



## State of the City

Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts

April 23, 2009 3 p.m.

### Suffolk...Where All the Pieces Come Together!

(Introduction provided by Ward Robinette, President of TowneBank)

Thank you, Ward for those kind words. To all of you – Hello, and welcome to the City of Suffolk! We've had an eventful year, and I thought rather than starting off by telling you all about it, I'd show you. Let's take a moment to look back at last year – after watching, you'll understand why I like to say, "In Suffolk...It's Our Time".

#### VIDEO

I told you we've been busy! This afternoon, I want to begin by saying what an honor and privilege it is for me to serve as the Mayor of the City of Suffolk. As the City's first directly elected Mayor, I am truly humbled and awed by the trust that has been given me by the citizens of this great City.

The Suffolk State of the City is presented by **The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce**, and on behalf of everyone here, I'd like to say to all the members of the Chamber: *Thank you.*

We appreciate all the work you do to promote our region and our community – not just today, but every day.

You know, the State of the City is one of my favorite events because I get to highlight the unique and endless possibilities of our city.

Over the years, we've told you that *any time is a good time to be in Suffolk. And today, it's even better than usual.*

That's because all of you are here, and **together** we can celebrate our accomplishments. You know, it's been said that: Coming **together** is a beginning. Keeping **together** is progress. Working **together** is success. On behalf of my fellow members of City Council – *and I'd ask that they stand and be recognized* – and the people we represent – the citizens of Suffolk – I am happy to report that over the year we have done just that.

Today we are assembled in a building that is unlike any other. You are sitting in what once was the auditorium of the former Suffolk High School. Now resurrected as the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, it has served our citizens for countless years and is a cultural icon that will influence generations to come. It took the vision, hard work and dedication of many people working **together** to bring the dream of this center to reality.

Indeed, vision, hard work and dedication are the cornerstones to the successes we've experienced as we report to you where we've been, where we are today, and where we are heading.

We all know that these are especially challenging times we are facing, not only as a City, but also as a Nation and in fact on a World-wide level. However, I'd prefer to look at it from the standpoint that **breakdowns can create breakthroughs. Things fall apart so things can fall TOGETHER.**

As you saw in our video presentation, we all share in this dynamic experience of what Suffolk is becoming. And we share a vision of an even brighter future. I'd like to thank those who help us achieve that vision: Our City Manager – Selena Cuffee-Glenn – and the dedicated employees of the City of Suffolk. Your professionalism and hard work help us shape this great City.

A reflection of Selena's hard work, Suffolk's financial position has significantly improved and all three of the national credit rating agencies have recently upgraded the City's bond ratings after touring the City. Her focus on the diversification of the City's economic portfolio has helped send the message that "Suffolk Is Open For Business".

In fact, for FY 2008-2009, there has been almost \$164 million in new capital investment, including 756,000 new square footage ready to serve local businesses, and over 173,000 newly occupied square footage. Our approach to economic development is based upon the importance of partnerships. We understand what a business owner's needs are, and they're not always financial. They want to make certain that when their families locate here, they will feel at home. Regardless of the fact that Suffolk is touted as one of Virginia's fastest growing cities – we're still known for our true southern hospitality and down-home charm.

So you see, WORKING TOGETHER is important to the vitality of our City and an important piece of our overall picture.

While we recognize the importance of working together, we haven't forgotten how important it is that we PLAY TOGETHER, as well. Citizens of Suffolk have a beautiful new facility to do just that – the East Suffolk Recreation Center. Who would have thought over 75 years ago when East Suffolk High School was originally built that we would one day be witness to the state-of-the-art facility and equipment that exists today. With over 22,500 square feet, every square inch is dedicated to the recreational needs of our community.

Recreation is defined as "things you do for enjoyment". Recent studies indicate that there is likely to be less delinquency among young people if there is ample space and time for

recreation provided for them. Educators and doctors agree that children need time and opportunity to play if they are to develop healthy minds and bodies.

To be successful in life, no matter what your goal is, you need well-rounded development intellectually, physically, socially, spiritually and emotionally. Recreation helps to develop all of these, and at the East Suffolk Recreation Center opportunities for various forms of recreation – whether for the body or the mind – exist for citizens of all ages.

With the grand opening of this \$7 million facility in January, we brought back to the East Suffolk community – and the entire downtown area we invested in – the tradition of strong family and neighborhood bonds, pride and respect. Not only is this a recreational center, but also a meeting place, social center, and new heart of the community. When we talk about this magnificent facility, we can truly say that “Yesterday’s History is Helping to Build A Healthier Tomorrow”!

Yes, as we’ve seen, Suffolk has much to be proud of in terms of local athletics and how well we PLAY TOGETHER, both on a State and National level in our High Schools. We’ve heard from Coach Worrell during our video montage, and now I’d like to personally introduce you to Coach Joshua Worrell and the State Champion King’s Fork High School Basketball Team. Just five short years ago when this school was first built, their team record was 0 wins and 22 losses. Again, a testament to what can be accomplished through hard work, dedication and teamwork.

Playing together helps keep us vital. We don’t stop playing because we grow old – we grow old because we stop playing.

Another vital piece is LEARNING together. There’s a saying that “The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as we continue to live.” An important aspect of our ability to attract new businesses is the quality of our educational system. This year, Suffolk Public Schools celebrates an academic milestone – all 21 of its schools reached 100 percent full state accreditation. In addition, the Virginia Department of Education recently honored Suffolk Public Schools for dual endorsements – both full state accreditation and a division-wide accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In September, selected ninth-graders kicked off the school division’s first International Baccalaureate program. This program offers a global perspective, cooperative learning environment, and the opportunity for academically gifted students to study interdisciplinary connections. Graduating with an IB diploma will demonstrate to colleges and future employers that these students are ready for rigorous study and continued learning.

Suffolk is fast becoming known as the hub for the region’s modeling and simulation industry, and these businesses play a significant role in preparing students of today to be the leaders of tomorrow. In schools across town, NASA-Langley officials teach students about space through a live teleconference. Students benefit from hearing directly from experts, who bring their textbook lessons to life.

Now in its second year, a new high school program in Modeling & Simulation prepares graduates for exciting careers in the fast-growing field of high tech. These high school courses link into continuing education at Tidewater Community College (ODU Tri-Cities) and beyond for students seeking a 4-year degree. Classes in computer animation and in computer simulation expand the menu of career options for many students.

New this year at The Pruden Center for Industry & Technology is a state-funded grant project called FIRST ... which stands for Fostering Innovation and Relevance through STEM and Trades. To provide support staff for the region's high-demand, high-skilled employment, the Center has started courses in Modeling & Simulation support specialists and Geographic information systems.

Over the years, the school division has used bricks and mortar to serve an increasing student population of a growing City. The 800-student Hillpoint Elementary School opened in September, and is the first two-story elementary school the division has ever built.

Learning in Suffolk isn't limited to our school system. We have many opportunities for our citizens to learn about their local government and the programs and services provided to them in courses such as our Suffolk Neighborhood College, and to develop local leaders in the Suffolk Leadership Academy – which now boasts over 200 graduates who have gone on to serve their community in any number of ways.

The statement that “The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn” highlights the importance of technology in today's education process.

While all teachers are special, I'd like to introduce you to Suffolk's Teacher of the Year, John Tice, an inspiring math and science teacher at Northern Shores Elementary School, who epitomizes for our youth that “Life isn't always easy, but don't give up.” A quadriplegic since an injury on the baseball field his senior year in high school, he has a special way of encouraging his students, and in fact they've maintained a 100 percent pass rate on the math Standards of Learning test for the last two years. The sign above his desk says it all, “You can change the world.” Thank you, Mr. Tice, for proving just that.

You know, it's been said that the more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate. Celebrations abound here in Suffolk, whether they be ribbon cuttings at our newest businesses, fireworks over our waterways for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, enjoying music with friends at Suffolk Parks & Recreations' TGIF events, or sharing in the glory with Suffolk resident and two-time Olympic Gold Medalist LaShawn Merritt as he visited and inspired our youth as Grand Marshall of last year's Peanut Fest Parade. Yes, in Suffolk, we even celebrate PEANUTS ... after all, that's what initially put us on the map, and we're proud to have the legacy of Planters and Amadeo Obici as part of our history. Over 100,000 people shared in the family fun and festivities at Peanut Fest this year, from demolition derbies, carnival rides and top of the line musical entertainment. Suffolk knows how to throw a party!

Speaking of celebrations, Suffolk was first in the Nation in our National Night Out “Going Away Party for Crime”! Sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch, last August our citizens joined over 35.4 million people across the country to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Night Out. This was the largest community-law enforcement cooperative effort in Suffolk’s history, and more than 5,000 people participated in local events. We were selected from close to 300 entries from cities with populations of 50,000 to just under 100,000, and placed higher than any city in Virginia and were the only Hampton Roads city to be recognized. Several City Departments, local groups and civic leaders are currently planning events for this year’s celebration, as they truly understand the sense of pride and community involvement that these types of celebrations produce towards reinforcing a feeling of old-fashioned values and neighbors looking out for neighbors.

This event is designed to heighten crime and drug prevention awareness, generate support for local anti-crime efforts, strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships and to send a message to criminals letting them know neighborhoods are organized and fighting back. It was truly amazing to see our citizens and communities working together – and CELEBRATING TOGETHER, as we heard from Captain Stephanie Burch – for a common cause.

We also had much to celebrate when the Hampton Roads Association for Commercial Real Estate (HRACRE) announced this past fall that two buildings in Suffolk were recipients of Excellence in Development Design Awards for 2008. This year, HRACRE awarded Virginia Commerce Center Building 100, located on Kenyon Road with an Award of Merit. Also awarded was the Virginia Modeling, Analysis & Simulation Center, located in Northern Suffolk, which received an Award of Excellence. Suffolk continues to endorse good design standards for commercial and industrial development, and we look forward to seeing what the next year will hold.

The Virginia Downtown Development Association (VDDA) also announced that Downtown Suffolk was the recipient of a 2008 Award of Merit in the Organization category, which recognizes excellence in the aspects of a local revitalization program. The official submission included details on over 70 projects and businesses in Downtown Suffolk that has led to almost 793,000 square-feet of impacted commercial and residential space, 480 new jobs and approximately \$162,300,000 in capital investment. We continue to focus on working with developers to encourage renovation of historic structures for new development in our greater downtown.

You know, as a realtor, I know the three most important considerations are **location, location, location!** As the largest city in Virginia in terms of land area, we still have plenty of acreage available for development, but we fully understand – and practice – balanced growth.

This City Council is committed to welcoming new and maintaining existing business in our community. Suffolk is open for businesses both large and small – from the Fortune 500 to the independent small business owner.

Yes, here we GROW again! Suffolk has surpassed other cities in the region in population growth according to the latest report from the U.S. Bureau of Census – a 28.2% increase since 2000's figures – and it's no wonder – our residents are able to reap the amenities of a big city, while at the same time retain the affordability, flavor and character of a small town.

Speaking of growth, 13 companies announced major expansions, and 24 new businesses made Suffolk their home. This is a diverse mix of companies ranging from major defense contractors and manufacturers to banks, health care facilities, restaurants, and fitness centers. All play an important role in providing new opportunities for our citizens.

We congratulate and welcome all of you!

Just over a month ago, Governor Timothy Kaine announced that SPARTA Composite Products, a division of SPARTA, Inc., will invest 13.2 million dollars to open a manufacturing facility in Suffolk. The company will manufacture composite parts for the aerospace and defense industry, creating 198 new jobs over a 5 year period. We successfully competed against Georgia, Florida, and Iowa for this project. The quality of life here in Suffolk, close proximity to excellent academic institutions and a high-technology skilled and disciplined workforce were the driving forces in SPARTA's decision to call Suffolk "home". This new facility is expected to be operational in December 2009, and hiring will begin in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2009. This project is a great complement to Suffolk's growing and impressive aerospace cluster.

Northrop Grumman Corporation recently moved into their new three-story, 30,000 square-foot building at 8030 Harbour View Boulevard, where the company will continue to support joint military training. Staffed by up to 85 employees, the company intends to hire up to 25 simulation systems engineers in the coming months. The new building includes a classified, state-of-the-art simulation and communications laboratory which will provide research, development and integration for training and communications projects throughout the United States.

Speaking of modeling and simulation, Old Dominion University has acquired the Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center, also known as VMASC, building located in Hampton Roads Crossing. This permanent investment will expand research and economic development efforts aimed at attracting even more new modeling, simulation and visualization – or MS&V – companies by creating accelerator facilities and services at VMASC. There is no more important resource than a well-educated and well-trained labor force, and with this resource in place, we can compete on the world stage. Old Dominion University will soon offer a M&S degree for a Bachelors program, to complement its existing Masters and PhD Degree programs.

Also now calling Suffolk "home" is CAE USA. One of the world's leading modeling, simulation and training companies, they opened a field office in the VMASC building. Based in Montreal, CAE has the industry's largest installed base of civil and military full-flight simulators and training devices. Through its global network of 27 civil aviation and military training centers, CAE trains more than 75,000 crew members yearly.

These company's decisions to expand their operations in Suffolk is a true testament to how our City and region are contributing to the success and growth of the modeling and simulation community. Let's not overlook the fact that over 3,000 people are employed in this industry in Suffolk, with an average salary of \$83,000, and over 1 million square feet of office and research space is occupied.

DLBA Robotics, Ltd. constructed a 30,000 square-foot manufacturing and warehouse building in Suffolk Industrial Park investing over \$3 million and adding 50 new jobs. A manufacturer of large molding patterns for the marine, rail, aerospace and wind generation industries, the technology employed by DLBA Robotics is not new, but is unique to the production tooling industry as two robots controlled by a computer are used to mill these very large patterns and molds. They are a great addition to the growing number of manufacturing companies located in Suffolk Industrial Park.

Announced just after last year's State of the City event, Boeing has leased 7,500 square-feet of office space designed to facilitate collaboration with its customers through experimentation using live, virtual and constructive computer simulation. They invested \$5 million and created 10 new permanent jobs. This new investment will directly support the Boeing and U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) Cooperative Research and Development Agreement to analyze current, emerging and future joint warfighting concepts and capabilities in concert with USJFCOM's Suffolk-based Joint Innovation and Experimentation Directorate. This facility has access to hundreds of labs worldwide and a wealth of special systems experts to support the center's activities.

Yes, folks are coming from all over the world to do business in Suffolk. The Chinese company Shandong Zhangqiu Blower Co., Ltd., a manufacturer of positive displacement blowers, has decided to establish its U.S. headquarters here. Eurus Blower, a division of the company, began operation of its warehouse and sales office early this year. Their decision to locate here in Suffolk was in large part due to our strategic location to the Port, and their choice of location allows them an excellent opportunity to grow and expand.

Even today's Presenting Sponsor – TowneBank – broke ground in the fall for their new Harbour View Banking Center. The 29,000 square-foot facility represents a \$6.5 million investment and will create over 50 new jobs. Opening later this year, they will offer a wide array of financial services, including full-service banking, real estate, investment and private banking services.

With all the new businesses coming to the bustling corridor in Northern Suffolk, people need a place to lay their heads, and we now have two lovely new hotels happy to accommodate! Comfort Suites, located in the BelleHarbour Development, has invested \$13 million on their new 71,704 square-foot facility, creating 30 jobs. The Hilton Garden Inn – Harbour View will be opening soon. This 155,000 square foot facility reflects an investment of \$13 million, and adds 20 new jobs.

In that same area, the Marketplace at Harbour View is a new 184,000 square-foot retail center with an investment of over \$39,300,000, and Harbour View Shoppes broke ground for a new 17,000 square-foot speculative retail center – a \$3 million investment.

ProLogis, a Denver-based global provider of distribution facilities, has purchased 83 acres with rights to an additional 42 acres at Northgate Commerce Park, including 14 acres from the Suffolk Economic Development Authority. The company will develop up to 7 multi-tenant, state-of-the-art distribution facilities, which will be built in accordance with the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED rating system which recognizes performance in 5 key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.

Construction is now underway for Phase One, and at full built-out this project will total as much as 2.1 million square feet. This exciting new development will make industrial space available for many new companies in our city. At full development, Northgate Commerce Park will encompass approximately 500 acres.

Let me highlight the importance of warehouses to our local economy. They pay taxes, employ a wide range of people with diverse skill sets, work with local suppliers, spawn other industries and support services, in addition to being strong civic partners in the communities in which they operate. As an example, ProLogis hasn't even opened their doors yet, and they've already donated \$10,000 to the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts.

Also on our horizon is the CenterPoint development – one of the region's largest warehouse and distribution centers which will be built along U.S. Route 58. With over 5.8 million square feet of light and heavy industrial, distribution, office space and general commercial facilities planned for 13 buildings, this intermodal center is expected to generate about \$3 million in real estate taxes and create over 2,900 jobs, including those associated with the construction of this development. CenterPoint Properties will also be donating land for a new fire station and water tower, as well as assist in the funding and design work on the road expansions which will be necessary along Holland Road. Improvements along that stretch of highway are needed with or without CenterPoint – their choice to invest in Suffolk's future, and indeed the future of our region, will go a long way in improving that important corridor into our city. Joining us today is Neil Doyle, Executive Vice President for Infrastructure and Transportation Development of CenterPoint Properties, as well as Bob Harbour of CenterPoint Properties. Gentlemen, welcome!

In mentioning the proposed new fire station that will be a piece in the CenterPoint project, let me emphasize that the safety and welfare of our citizens is utmost in my and the Council's concerns, and I'd like to thank our Public Safety Officers for their tremendous dedication and commitment to our community, and ask that they **STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED**. So they can continue to serve our ever-growing commercial and residential areas, construction has begun on the King's Fork Public Safety Center, with a completion date of February 2010. This 25,000 square-foot facility will house a fire station, offices for Suffolk Fire Department administration, as well as the Suffolk Emergency Operations Center. Construction also continues on the Police

Administration Building on the corner of West Washington and Henley Place, which will be opening later this summer.

Suffolk also welcomed the 2008 Habitat for Humanity Home Builders Blitz in the Huntersville community – the largest such project ever attempted. For 16 excited families last June, homes went up in 5 days and were dedicated on the 6<sup>th</sup> day – a testament to what can be accomplished by “sweat equity” on the part of the thrilled new homeowners, the commitment on the part of the 2500 volunteers that were on site, not to mention the local businesses and construction companies that contributed. These are also “green” houses, built to EarthCraft specifications, and have 30 percent lower utilities bills than typical homes.

Since we mentioned “GREEN”, I’m pleased to advise that City Council recently approved a permit for Virginia’s first green-energy power plant, which will convert methane gas from rotting trash at the regional landfill into electricity and steam. This \$26 million cogeneration plant will be built at Ciba Specialty Chemicals. Ciba’s new owner as of April 9<sup>th</sup> – BASF – is excited about this initiative in Suffolk. The Suffolk plant would create about 12 high-tech jobs with annual salaries between \$50,000 and \$75,000. It will also reduce about 2,200 tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year – not only from methane oozing from the landfill, but also from the fossil fuels they currently use to power their facility. To hear “first in Virginia” really makes my heart sing!

Also “going green” is the Hilton Garden Inn and Conference Center in downtown Suffolk. Their entire staff is dedicated to decreasing the hotel’s impact on the environment by implementing the “Virginia Green Lodging” program of pollution prevention practices. They have a hotel-wide recycling program, buy locally grown foods, use bio-degradable materials, and offer green conference packages to event planners.

We’ve heard from our Economic Development Director Cindy Cave earlier in the video, and I’d like her to STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED. Cindy, we share your belief that “If you’re going to move forward and progress, change is inevitable”. Truer words were never spoken in light of this current economic climate.

While we welcome new businesses to Suffolk, we also recognize that an important focus for our growth is supporting our existing businesses and industry, as the more successful they are, the more successful Suffolk will be. So to our old friends Planters, Massimo Zanetti Beverage USA, Sara Lee Coffee and Tea, Unilever Lipton Tea, U. S. Joint Forces Command, CSX Railroad, Amadas Industries, Birdsong Peanuts, Suffolk Iron Works, Target and many more, we say THANK YOU!

When we talk about GROWING in Suffolk, we don’t just mean our commercial growth. Just as they have for centuries, agricultural fields stretch for miles across our city’s rural landscape. Honoring the farming tradition that three generations have shared, I’d like to recognize the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce’s “Farm Family of the Year”, James and Glenda Johnson – Matthew and Kristy Johnson, and the youngest farmer, son Zachariah – and ask that they stand. This family’s ancestors worked the land first with mules and plows, and

now use the latest high-tech equipment growing the traditional crops of corn, peanuts and soybeans. We hope to honor Zachariah in another 20 years!

Our final “piece” we’d like to focus on is “Healing Together”. We can’t mention “healing” without including the name “Sentara Obici Hospital” in the same sentence. The original Louise Obici Memorial Hospital was established in 1951 from a trust by Italian immigrant and Planters Peanuts founder Amadeo Obici. So you see, not only did he impact the economy and growth of our city, but also the health and welfare of its citizens. By honoring his wife – Louise – Suffolk continues to benefit from his legacy. The hospital currently experiences the fourth highest occupancy of medical and surgical beds in the state, and a \$22.4 million expansion project is underway. The new three-story addition adjoins the existing patient tower at the rear of the hospital and ensures that Sentara Obici Hospital will continue to serve the health needs of future generations.

There’s a new name for convenient, quality care in North Suffolk, and that’s Sentara BelleHarbour. This state-of-the-art outpatient medical center brings Sentara’s board-certified doctors and top-notch services to the heart of North Suffolk and benefits residents in the tri-city area of Suffolk, Portsmouth and Chesapeake. From 24-hour emergency care with a 30-minute guarantee, to clinical services, to family doctors and specialists, Sentara BelleHarbour offers highly skilled practitioners and comprehensive care. As Suffolk continues to grow, we value the fact that Sentara is willing to grow with us to meet our health care needs.

Bon Secours Health Center at Harbour View, a department of Bon Secours Maryview Medical Center, is also another state-of-the-art facility serving our citizens by providing outpatient surgery, medical imaging, diagnostics and pre-operative testing. Their extended hour’s suit today’s hectic schedules, while ensuring that citizens receive excellent care.

Opening in just a few short weeks, I’m also pleased to advise that Suffolk has a new Health and Human Services Building which will be a catalyst in the rebirth of the Fairgrounds area of Suffolk. This 64,500 square-foot state-of-the-art facility will house the Suffolk Department of Health, as well as our Social Services Department. A \$500,000 contribution from the Obici Healthcare Foundation made a tremendous impact in getting this project underway. The first LEED certified building in Suffolk, newly released studies and reports point to “green” building as one of the growing bright spots for the U. S. economy. Also included in this project is a lighted, landscaped park and water feature – complete with a walking trail – which will be enjoyed by visitors, employees and the entire community. Built on-time and under budget, this energy-efficient and environmentally friendly facility will be a “one stop shop” for those persons seeking assistance, and will provide enhanced health, hope and healing for our citizens.

You know, as we talk about HEALING TOGETHER, I can’t help but remember the devastating Class III tornado that struck Suffolk last April 28<sup>th</sup>. Random paths of destruction stretched over 25 miles that day, as row upon row of homes were reduced to heaps of splintered lumber, shopping centers were stripped of walls and ceilings revealing bare metal structures, and parking lots turned into junk yards as cars were tossed like toys by 135 mile per hour winds – some even jutting out of buildings. So severe was our devastation that newscasts were seen all over the world. Miraculously, no lives were lost, but damages totaled over \$28

million. Again, I am reminded about the dedication and commitment of our public safety officials – as well as city officials and department heads – as we dealt with a catastrophe none of us could ever imagine. Governor Timothy Kaine visited with us and declared the area a state of emergency, and life-long Suffolk resident State Delegate Chris Jones was by our side constantly, volunteering at the emergency shelters and helping to console those who lost everything. I think Chris said it best in the aftermath of the tornado when he stated “It reaffirmed what I’ve always believed – that neighbors will take care of neighbors and help each other in their time of need”. First responders included the United Way of South Hampton Roads, commissioned to help coordinate the relief and rebuilding effort – an enormous task that Tywana German, Director of Resource Development, and her staff accomplished with skill, compassion and composure. Unfortunately, Tywana couldn’t be with us today as her family is preparing to move to Wisconsin, but we wanted to wish her well and thank her for all she did for our community.

Another of our first responders was The Suffolk Chapter of the American Red Cross, who acted to open an emergency shelter at King’s Fork High School immediately after the storm. For the first 3 days following the devastation, this shelter helped victims until more permanent arrangements could be made. During the initial recovery period, the Red Cross worked with local churches and volunteers to serve almost 12,000 hot meals, as well as to provide medical and mental health assistance, in addition to distributing bottled water, toiletries, clean-up kits, and tarps – many of which were donated by local citizens.

The individual stories told by the survivors of this nightmare will forever remain in my memory. After the storm clouds receded, you could say that the rainbow that shone through was the promise of healing and hope that was foremost on everyone’s mind as they reached out to their neighbors in their true time of need.

Yes, it’s been said that there is something infinitely HEALING in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.

We’ve heard about the wonderful, giving nature of our citizens, but I wanted to focus on a few individuals and share their stories.

LeOtis Williams, CEO of MWM Investments and Manager of LW’s Lawn Service, has been touching the lives of those less fortunate in Suffolk for years. Whether by sponsoring local athletic teams and providing uniforms and travel expenses, feeding hundreds at Thanksgiving, or donating 175 memberships to the East Suffolk Recreation Center for needy children, LeOtis’ reason for his charitable contributions is summed up in his own words, “I want to be a blessing to the community”.

Breaking ground soon is another blessing to the community, and that’s the Obici Healthcare Foundation. To be located just outside these doors at the corner of Main Street and West Finney Avenue, this private foundation was established in 2006 with assets established through the generosity of Amedeo Obici and funds from the merger of Louise Obici Memorial Hospital and Sentara Healthcare. The Foundation is a new independent entity unrelated to any other health organizations, and will address the unmet needs of the medically indigent and

uninsured, as well as support programs which have the primary purpose of preventing illness and disease. I'd like to recognize George Birdsong, Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Obici Healthcare Foundation.

And last, I'd like to recognize "Suffolk's First Citizen", State Delegate S. Chris Jones. Chris will be honored by the Suffolk Rotary Club next week at their annual event. Each year this tribute is bestowed on an individual that best exemplifies the spirit of service and leadership. As you heard during my comments about last spring's tornado, Chris has always gone above and beyond the call of duty, whether here in his own community, or in serving the citizens of the Commonwealth in Richmond. Chair of the General Laws Committee and a member of the Appropriations, as well as the Privileges and Elections Committees, Chris has been a dedicated public servant for decades. His being named "Suffolk's First Citizen" continues the tradition of excellence in service to others that is the foundation of The Suffolk Rotary Club.

In closing, there are many pieces that make up the "PUZZLE" of our lives in Suffolk:

WORKING TOGETHER

PLAYING TOGETHER

LEARNING TOGETHER

CELEBRATING TOGETHER

GROWING TOGETHER

And

HEALING TOGETHER.

The keyword throughout is TOGETHER. To quote Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "What I do you cannot do; but what you do, I cannot do. The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and TOGETHER we can do something wonderful."

So, I submit to you the current state of our city is strong. We will meet our challenges with strength and creativity, and our future will be amazing as we embrace it together.

Thank you all so much for joining us today. In closing, thank you for sharing time with us in ***Suffolk... WHERE ALL THE PIECES COME TOGETHER.***