

## **In Chesapeake, 25 years of pride**

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The 25th anniversary of the Chesapeake Jubilee, which we celebrate this weekend, has special significance for me. As mayor back in 1982, I was justifiably proud of our growth and quality of life. However, there was a missing ingredient.

At the time, Chesapeake felt more like a bedroom community than a full-fledged city. We needed something to bring us together, an event that would require cooperation and volunteer effort. What I needed was a way to create that sense of civic pride.

The idea came from one of my predecessors as mayor, Marian Whitehurst, who suggested that Chesapeake establish an event to mark our two decades as a city. The Jubilee was born and in many ways, so was Chesapeake.

Today, I marvel at all that we have accomplished in 25 short years. Chesapeake has matured into a dynamic and diverse locality. The numbers alone are impressive: 118,000 population then, 222,000 today. Per-capita income is up nearly 400 percent, taxable sales almost 800 percent and bank deposits 900 percent.

Our public schools have more teachers with masters' degrees than any other municipality in Virginia. The FBI ranks Chesapeake among the five safest cities in America with populations exceeding 150,000.

And when the world economy began to shift, Chesapeake was quick to adjust. We now host more than 80 foreign-based employers representing 20 different countries. By blending the best of America with the cosmopolitan influence of these global partners, Chesapeake is becoming a true city of nations.

So what does all this have to do with entertainment, livestock and funnel cakes? Simply put: This era of prosperity is thanks to dedicated leaders and everyday heroes who rise each day and work to make Chesapeake a special place to live and raise families. That's worth celebrating. It's good for a city to take time each year to reflect on its heritage and have some fun at the same time.

Of course, we're also proud to be part of Hampton Roads America's First Region. It was my honor in 1982 to be the first mayor to preside over a Chesapeake Jubilee. Back then it was on a lot adjacent to Greenbrier Mall. This weekend we will gather in spacious Chesapeake City Park.

But one thing has not changed in 25 years: a sense of city pride and spirit that continues to make Chesapeake an ideal place to call home.

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Former three-term mayor  
Chesapeake