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For Immediate Release

Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander to Deliver Keynote Address

Recipient of Groundbreaker award

What: WPA Garden Heritage Celebration – FREE admission 9:00 a.m. to noon

Where: Norfolk Botanical Garden, 6700 Azalea Garden Road, Norfolk, VA 23518

When: Saturday, April 8, 2017 from 11:00 a.m. to noon.

NORFOLK, VA, April 7, 2017 – Join Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) this Saturday, April 8, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. for the 9th annual Works Progress Administration (WPA) Garden Heritage Day Celebration. During this year's celebration, the Garden will honor two community **Groundbreakers** – Old Dominion University Dean of Engineering Stephanie Adams and the Honorable Kenneth Alexander, Mayor of Norfolk, who will also deliver the keynote address. The 2nd annual **Groundbreaker** awards are named in honor of the WPA statue entitled *Breaking Ground*, which recognizes the 220 WPA women and men who significantly impacted our community. The award honors individuals, groups and organizations that exhibit committed and groundbreaking leadership and service.

The event will also feature a reading of known WPA worker names, poetry readings, and a prayer spoken in both Arabic and English by Henry Hornung who is a representative of the Muslim community of Tidewater. WVEC on-air talent and host of Coastal Connections Ashley Smith will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies.

The WPA Garden Heritage Day event began in 2009 with the unveiling of the commemorative sculpture *Breaking Ground* and the dedication of the WPA Memorial Garden. The Memorial honors and celebrates the contributions of the 220 African-American workers whose labor created the Garden.

On June 30, 1938, Representative Norman R. Hamilton announced a Works Progress Administration (WPA) grant project to create Norfolk Botanical Garden. A group of more than 200 African-American women and 20 African-American men were assigned to the project. The workers cleared dense vegetation and planted the first azaleas around what is now called Mirror Lake. In just one year, thousands of azaleas, rhododendrons, shrubs and trees were planted. Laborers were paid 25 cents an hour.

Norfolk Botanical Garden represents an oasis of 53 themed gardens encompassing 175 beautiful acres. From stunning plant collections to *WOW- World of Wonders: A Children's Adventure Garden*, this diverse landscape can be explored by tram, boat, or walking tours. Join the celebration that honors the dedication of the WPA workers and the accomplishments of the Garden over the past 79 years!

About Norfolk Botanical Garden

The Garden is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is recognized as a Virginia Historic Landmark. A Virginia Green attraction, the Garden is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is managed by the Norfolk Botanical Garden Inc., supported by the City of Norfolk. Norfolk Botanical Garden is dedicated to enriching life by promoting the enjoyment of plants and the environment through beautiful gardens and education programs. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and military, \$10 for ages 3-17, children 2 and under are free. For more information, visit

www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org.

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