

# Support From Universal Leaf Foundation Turns New Waterfront Complex Into Reality

## VCU Rice Rivers Center

Friends and supporters of VCU Rice Rivers Center recently gathered to celebrate the opening of the Kimages Wetland Complex, a multi-use area providing sweeping views and direct access to the Kimages Creek wetlands at the center.

The complex, completed with generous support from Universal Leaf Foundation, includes a new education building, renovation of the former YMCA wooden pier, the addition of a floating dock for water-level canoe access, and lighting to the site. The education building is an on-site, multi-media equipped classroom that sits over the wetlands, providing a unique and immersive educational experience in line with VCU's commitment to experiential learning. The design of the pier allows safe, ADA-compliant canoe and kayak access to the creek and tidal wetlands by students, instructors, and other outreach program providers at Rice Rivers Center.

Funding from Universal Leaf Foundation has also allowed the center to greatly enhance research and documentation of the ecosystem benefits from wetlands and river restoration, critical to the health of the James River and Chesapeake Bay. This led to installation of a Surface Elevation Table (SET), with the center as one of several locations that tracks sea-level rise in the James River estuary. With the addition of the SET, Rice Rivers Center is now part of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Sentinel Site Cooperative, which generates new research opportunities for our faculty and staff.

