

Coastal Farm to Table Event Planned

Five local charities benefit from this special event

The Carolina Chocolate Festival fundraiser held in February is a much-anticipated event in Carteret County—but it doesn't end there. The Carolina Chocolate Festival 2018 year began in April and will run through March 2018.

In an ongoing effort to provide support to the five charities that benefit from the work of the Carolina Chocolate Festival, a "Coastal Farm to Table" evening is planned for Friday, July 21, at 6:30 p.m. at Gallants Channel in Beaufort. This lovely outdoor evening event will feature a live band, live and silent auctions, local and organic wines offered by Cru Bar in Beaufort, fresh vegetables on the menu provided by Garner Farms in Newport, and volunteers from the charities and the Chocolate Festival Board of Directors working the event. There will be appetizers, soup, salad, dinner and dessert.

Tickets are priced at \$75, with all proceeds going to help support the important work of five local charities: Carteret County 4-H, Carteret County Domestic Violence, Beaufort Sister Cities, Revive Ministries and Second Blessings Community Outreach.

More details on this event are available at carolinachocolatefestival.com. A limited number of tickets are available for purchase online, and tickets are available from any of the charities, again in limited numbers.

If you have never been to an event like this, this is one you don't want to miss.

BHA Events

Summer Party. Saturday, July 8, 7-11 p.m. With live music from The Dickens Band, catering by Scarborough Fare, an open bar, and over 100 live and silent auction items, this casual party will appeal to all. This year's auction will be conducted using smart phones so bidding can take place by anyone, anywhere—before and during the party. Auction items are already available for bidding, including a Yeti cooler, art, vacations, boat trips, a Roy Williams-signed Carolina basketball and more. For more information on online bidding or to purchase tickets, contact the Beaufort Historical Association as shown below.

Embroidery Stitch-In. Thursday, July 20, 1:30-4:30 p.m. This Living History program will be held in the Beaufort Historic Site's Welcome Center. Seating is limited, and reservations are suggested. Participants are asked to bring their own stitching, needlepoint or cross stitch.

Pine Needle Basket Workshop. Friday, July 22, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. This Living History program will be held in the Welcome Center. Space is limited to 10 participants for this popular workshop so advance registration is suggested. This class carries a materials fee of \$45 and a bag lunch break is scheduled.

For information on these and other events or to make reservations, stop by the Beaufort Historic Site's Welcome Center at 130 Turner Street in Beaufort, call 728-5228 or visit beauforthistoricsite.org.

Artificial Reefs Program

By Chloe Mikles

When a local sees the ocean, he sees a beautiful body of water that provides him with leisure, and probably his dinner. When a fisherman sees the ocean, he sees a vast resource of fisheries, and his paycheck. When a scuba diver sees the ocean, he sees an entirely new world to explore (and all of the fish that haven't been caught by the fisherman). All of these people live off of the North Carolina coast and benefit from the artificial reefs program.

The coastal sea floor is mostly flat, so any foreign structure provides footing for new life. Small marine organisms take up residence, and as they develop they eventually provide food for larger organisms, such as baitfish. These baitfish become food for larger predators, and so on. This ongoing cycle increases the biodiversity of the location over time.

Within hours of a new structure being introduced, small fish will move in and the ecosystem builds from the bottom up. The structure can immediately become a refuge and nursery for fish.

The character of artificial reefs is varied—a reef can form from a piece of concrete, metal piping or a sunken vessel. Sometimes they form by accident, from marine debris or shipwrecks. But with efforts driven by the NC Division of Marine Fisheries, work to create more artificial reefs has progressed. Some items that may otherwise end up in a landfill are instead recycled to the bottom of the ocean. These items first must be rid of any hazardous materials, then strategically placed on the sea floor. Depending on the object of interest, the sinking process varies in complexity.

Just last May, two tugboats were sunk a few miles from Beaufort Inlet. The reef was named in honor of former director of the artificial reef program, the late James "JJ" Francesconi. This underwater memorial was a community production. Donations from the Big Rock Blue Marlin Tournament, Wells Fargo, the East Carolina Artificial Reef Association and the community all made the project (which topped \$100,000) possible. Olympus Dive Center and owner Robert Purifoy helped organize the project and provided divers to assist with its christening. The tugboats sit in about 60 feet of water and span an underwater distance of 180 feet. The tugs immediately became a popular recreational dive site for scuba divers with varying levels of experience.

Olympus Dive Center charts trips out of Morehead City, frequenting the new tugboats. After about a month, small moss-like organisms coated the wrecks. Divers could swim through and explore the cabin, sit at a bench in the kitchen, and even operate a swiveling deck gun. Within several more weeks, schools of baitfish appeared. Large shells washed up on the seafloor next to the hull of the boats, and occasionally a stingray could be seen darting away. Near the end of the summer, barracuda and Spanish mackerel could be observed preying on small fish, and fishing line was tangled the main mast of one of the boats.

The sinking of the tugboats has been a success, increasing biodiversity to the region, bringing in money from dive charters, and creating a new spot for fishermen. Other popular artificial reefs include ships sunk in World War II, giving the coast off Morehead City the name "Graveyard of the Atlantic." One of the most popular shipwrecks, U-352, is a German submarine sunk in 1942. Spanning a distance of 218 feet, U-352 was commissioned in 1942 with a crew of 45 German soldiers. The Coast Guard attacked out of Cape Lookout, and U-352 sank to the bottom of the Atlantic, to be undiscovered until 1975. The wreck sits in over 100 feet of water, and on a calm day with good underwater visibility, a diver can see the span of the entire eerie wreck. The wreck cannot be penetrated because it is a war memorial where lives were lost, but one can explore the outside of the submarine and see sand tiger sharks that frequent the area.

Some artificial reefs may not be as exciting as a shipwreck filled with both fish and historical significance, but are equally important to sustainable fisheries and coastal ecosystems. The artificial reef program includes oyster sanctuaries (structures to support the growth of shellfish populations). Oysters require a strong footing to get started, and once they do will grow and reproduce.

Promoting the survival of marine species positively impacts the community, and artificial reefs truly have a domino effect on the coastal environment. It is critical to maintain and support these populations. Morehead City is historically a fishing town, and we want to keep it that way for generations to live off of and enjoy.

Chloe Mikles is a rising sophomore at Cornell University's Ithaca, NY, campus, where she is an animal science major. She is a staff writer for the university's newspaper, The Cornell Daily Sun, and a member of the varsity swim team. Chloe is spending the summer as a researcher at NC State's Center for Marine Sciences and Technology (CMAST) in Morehead City, and we are pleased to have her as a guest contributor to The Shoreline.—The Editors