

Morehead City Marlins Give National Pastime a Home

By Christopher Marmo

The crack of a bat and the roar of the crowd. The taste of a hotdog or hamburger fresh off the grill. The unforgettable smell of leather and fresh cut grass in the summer breeze. These sounds, sights, tastes, and smells have followed me throughout my life. The game of baseball has changed many lives during its existence, and I consider myself lucky to have fully embraced it. Baseball is my way of life and has allowed me to develop close relationships with many others, some of whom I might not have known otherwise. This year, the game of baseball has led me to Morehead City.

I was not responsible for bringing baseball to Morehead City nor have I been actively advocating the use of O'Neal Field at Big Rock Stadium for summer collegiate ball during the past two years. But I wish I had. Riverfront Sports and Entertainment, owned and operated by the New Bern based Bengel family, are the ones who deserve high praise for bringing the game of baseball to the Crystal Coast. I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. Recently, I became the General Manager of the Morehead City Marlins Baseball Club and I firmly believe that the "national pastime" has a chance to impact Morehead City and its surrounding communities as positively as it has me.

The Morehead City Marlins are the newest member of the Coastal Plain League (CPL)—the nation's hottest collegiate baseball league. Now celebrating its 14th season, the Coastal Plain League features 15 teams playing in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

The CPL gives amateur collegiate players the chance to refine their skills with hopes of one day playing professional baseball. This competitive environment is closely monitored by major league scouts hoping

to uncover the next Alex Rodriguez or Albert Pujols. During the CPL's 14-year existence, there have been a number of college athletes who have played professional baseball. In the last two years alone, 219 current and former CPL players have had the opportunity to hear their name called during the Major League Baseball's yearly amateur draft—some of the more recognizable CPL alumni include Justin Verlander (Detroit Tigers), Ryan Zimmerman (Washington Nationals), Kevin Youkilis (Boston Red Sox), Mark Reynolds (Arizona Diamondbacks), and Ty Wigginton (Baltimore Orioles), among others. Ultimately, we like to say we are showcasing the stars of tomorrow.

All players will be staying with host families for the duration of the season. During a player's summer-league experience, most are in a very different atmosphere by being away from their family and friends. Host families play an important role in each player's summer experience by providing a comfortable setting. We encourage host families to help their player(s) become situated with their new environment. This is also a great opportunity for surrounding communities to help further the development of these college athletes as baseball players and as people. The overall experience throughout the league has been an enriching endeavor for all families involved.

As a veteran of the Coastal Plain League, I have had the opportunity to work collaboratively with two North Carolina communities to continue the summer collegiate baseball experience. These communities have been positively impacted by amateur baseball for 24 combined years (not including minor league affiliated years). However, building a baseball franchise from the ground up is something new and

exciting for me. I believe the possibilities are endless in Carteret County, and the Morehead City Marlins have every intention of providing a family-fun atmosphere for many years to come.

The Marlins are thrilled to play at O'Neal Field at Big Rock Stadium this coming summer. The stadium is a community-entertainment venue that will provide an affordable family-fun atmosphere for locals, second home owners, and vacationing families year-round. We foresee the ballpark being used for other events such as legion games, off-season college baseball tournaments, youth baseball games, corporate outings, and concerts. With the community's continued support, this venue has the opportunity to provide an economic boost to Carteret County, further adding additional attraction to the Crystal Coast.

Every successful organization has started with enormous community support. The Morehead City Marlins are currently in the process of acquiring local business support for the upcoming season and beyond. If there is an interest in supporting the Morehead City Marlins this upcoming season, please call our office at 269-9767. In addition to partnership opportunities, another way to show your support is through the purchase of season tickets. We are now accepting single game and season ticket requests for the season. All ticket plans can be viewed and purchased now at our website: www.mhcmarlins.com.

The Marlins can now call O'Neal Field at Big Rock Stadium home. It is time for all of Carteret County to show pride and to support its very own baseball team. Jacques Barzun, a great historian once said, "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball, the rules, and the realities of the game." We hope to see everyone at the ballpark this summer. Play ball!

@ the Library

Noteworthy: May is Mexican-American Heritage month and the local libraries will have displays featuring Mexican-American culture.

The warmer weather provides the ideal opportunity to check out a book and sit at the outdoor picnic table provided by Friends of Bogue Banks Public Library. It's a setting conducive to reading stories to your children or simply relaxing in a quiet retreat.

Bogue Banks Public Library has added to its Large Print collection. Please check out *Blue-Eyed Devil* by Robert B. Parker, *Storm Prey* by John Sanford and *Return to Sender* by Fern Michaels.

Activities for Children: Preschool Storytime is held at 10 a.m., featuring on Wednesday, May 5 and Thursday, May 6 "Happy Mother's Day!" Thursday May 13 will be "Children's Book Week." Wednesday, May 19 and Thursday May 20 it's "Makes Sense."

Thursday, May 27 is "Just Ducky!" Preschool Storytime is for ages 3-5 years old. Programs are with Ms. Brita.

Featured Artwork: The featured artist at the Art Gallery of the Bogue Banks Public Library is Emerald Isle resident, Kevin Geraghty. He is an amateur photographer who learned his love for sea turtles as a volunteer for the Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Protection Program and also at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores. He is retired from GlaxoSmithKline and splits his time between Emerald Isle and Raleigh.

Kevin hopes that beach visitors will take home a new appreciation of these beautiful creatures that are threatened on our shores. They need all the help we can give them. Kevin's photos are available at: www.keving.smugmug.com.

Beaufort resident Sandra Malone will display her

pine needle baskets in the showcases. Sandi has been involved with pottery, needlework and woodwork for many years. After retiring to Beaufort, she became interested in pine needle baskets. She combines pine needles with gourds, ceramic bases, wooden slabs, driftwood and stone slabs into award-winning works of art.

She is currently exhibiting at Diamond Shoal Jewelers, Floyd's Restaurant, The History Place and at the Bellamy Mansion in Wilmington. Sandi has also been juried into the Carteret County Arts and Crafts Coalition.

Please plan to join our gallery artists at the public reception on Friday, May 14 from 3 to 4 p.m. in the Art Gallery.