

How it Began: (by Michael Kalna, Founder/Director)

In the summer of 2012 my band was preparing for its album release party. We have played numerous venues in and out of the Triangle and across the state but there was one particular location all of us felt drawn too. Ocracoke Island.

Aside from the band I have personal and family ties to the island. It started over twenty years ago when my brother asked me to be the first employee at his just opened coffee shop, Ocracoke Coffee Company. I graciously accepted the offer and spent the summer making espressos, smoothies, working construction and strumming guitar at restaurants for the weekly rotation of tourists. Summer turned to fall, fall to winter, then to spring and before long I had a PO Box, bank account and was renting a small room in a cottage next to an art studio on Back Road.

In the past twenty years I have made many lasting musical and personal relationships on Ocracoke Island. Past band mates have ranged from local carpenters to commercial fishermen, young bucks with undiscovered aptitude to old O'cockers with equal eagerness to express their carefully whittled talents. One year the local Sheriff and his deputy joined the band. They loved to cause commotion with late night crowds by entering the venue in full uniform and charade about the place before taking the stage.

Our bass player's family, the O'Neals, date back over 100 years on the island. He currently lives at a fish camp and plays the guitar upside down and backwards. Although his "hoi toide" brogue is a bit diluted from years travelling the world in the Coast Guard, you can still get a glimpse, with every conversation, into the ebbing lives of the "Old Salt" generations.



With the help of the Wynns, James and his cousin Ansley, I have helped plan numerous benefit concerts for the Ocracoke Youth Center and they were getting ready to start a fundraising campaign for the construction of a much needed baseball field, soccer field and outdoor event space. I met with local business owners and community leaders to discuss a "Community Park Kick-off Fundraiser". The idea would be simple; invite bands and breweries, have the album release party and help get the word out for the upcoming campaign.

Farris O'Neal, a friend and local commercial fisherman discussed the details with the fish house, got them on board and single handedly set out to catch 400 lbs of bluefish. Within a few hours he called me from the dock. I took one look at the pile of gill nets and knew there was no turning back. Together with my bandmates and a handful of friends and volunteers, we put on the very first Fresh Catch concert.



We had a wonderful turnout with plenty of music, cold craft beer and fresh, fried blue fish. Hundreds of locals and tourists gathered in the Community Square next to the Historic Community Store and tipped back beers and seafood boats as the sun set over the dinghies, docks and sailboats of Silver Lake. We raised \$3,000 for the Community Park Fund. Since then, they have begun construction of the Park with an expected completion date of Spring 2015.



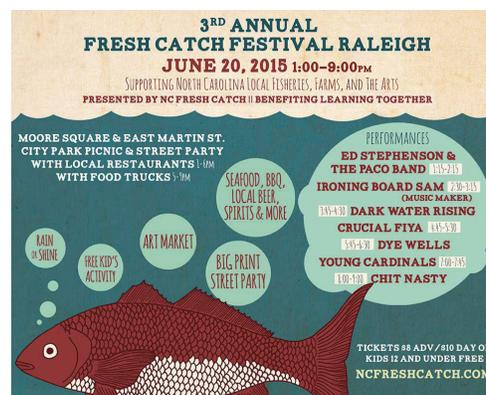
This event was the seed of many more to come. I wanted to duplicate the idea in my current hometown of Durham, NC and eventually take the show on the road and across the state. The band was eager to help and willing to try. I spoke with Robin Payne, Executive Director of the Ocracoke Foundation, the organization responsible for saving the last fish house and she mentioned there was a big push to get NC seafood west of I-95, that most of the seafood caught on our coast gets packed up and shipped north and out of state. I personally had no idea of the ins and outs of the fishing industry but I knew I loved fresh seafood, live music, getting people together and just about every part of North Carolina. So that's how it began. The idea of NC Fresh Catch and The Hills to Holy Water Music Arts Tour was hatched.



Over the past two years NC Fresh Catch has produced 11 events that span the state from the Outer Banks to the Appalachian Mountains. The road has been both smooth and bumpy with no lack of lessons learned. Going into our 3rd year we are excited to be reaching out to more partners and applying everything we have learned to bring to each town a bigger and better festival experience.

Past Events:

1. Aug. 10th 2012: Ocracoke Community Park and Youth Center Fundraiser: Ocracoke Community Square, Ocracoke Island, NC. Benefitting OYC.
2. Oct. 5th, 2012: KidZNotes Benefit: Durham Central Park, Durham, NC. Benefitting KidZNotes.
3. Dec 8th, 2012: Appalachian Oyster Bash & Seafood Boil: Blannahassett Island, Marshall, NC: Benefitting RiverLink.
4. June 8th 2013: NC Fresh Catch Raleigh: Moore Square, Raleigh, NC: Benefitting the Coastal Federation & Nourish International.
5. Nov. 9th 2013: NC Fresh Catch Marshall: Blannahassett Island, Marshall, NC: Benefitting RiverLink.
6. Jan. 19th 2014: 2014 Winter Oyster Tour: Lincoln Theater, Raleigh, NC.
7. Feb. 1st 2014: 2014 Winter Oyster Tour: MotorCo Music Hall, Durham, NC: Benefitting Rebound.
8. Feb. 15th 2014: 2014 Winter Oyster Tour: Cat's Cradle, Carrboro, NC: Benefitting Rebound.
9. June 7th 2014: 2nd Annual NC Fresh Catch Raleigh: Moore Square, Raleigh, NC.
10. June 20th 2014: Highway 64 Tour: Pittsboro, NC.
11. January 2nd 2015: The Blues & The Blues: Durham, NC. Benefitting Ellerbe Creek Watershed Assoc.
12. June 20th 2015: Fresh Catch Festival Raleigh: Raleigh, NC. Benefitting Learning Together.



To date, NC Fresh Catch has helped raise over \$15,000 for local NC non-profits and charities.

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