

SBM SOUTH BRUNSWICK MAGAZINE

Life in Southern Brunswick County, NC

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Saying Goodbye to the Sunset Beach Pontoon Bridge

30th Annual
North Carolina Oyster Festival

Explore
Brunswick County Parks



Meet your neighbors:

-Resea Willis
of Brunswick Housing Opportunities

-Walter Shaw
BCC Men's Basketball Coach

-Justin Whiteside
OIB Town Planner



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PHOTO BY SUZY KING



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PHOTO BY SUZY KING

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PHOTO BY CHRIS CAMPBELL



N.C. Oyster Festival

A Shuckin' Good Time

STORY BY BILLY JASON FRYE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUZY KING

Now that summer is gone and we've waved goodbye to our visiting friends and relatives, it's time to kick back and enjoy one of the things that makes southeastern North Carolina such a great place to live — seafood, specifically oysters.

On October 16 and 17, Ocean Isle Beach will play host to the 30th Annual North Carolina Oyster Festival, bringing oyster lovers together for what's bound to be a shuckin' good time. With events and entertainment for the whole family, this is one festival not to be missed.

"We have over 115 arts and crafts, food and entertainment vendors coming to this year's Oyster Festival," says Kelly Mathews, programs and events director for the Brunswick County Chamber of Commerce.

With an average attendance of 40,000 for the two-day festival, Mathews and festival organizers are glad to have so many vendors on hand to serve the crowds.

"Of course, we have your typical festival vendors for food and arts and crafts, but this is the Oyster Festival, so we have an artist coming who hand-paints oyster shells, and the Shriner's Club will be back with their delicious roasted and fried oysters," Mathews says.

In addition to the typical spread of corn dogs, grinders and gyros, the Oyster Festival has plenty of oysters for you to try. Fried, steamed and roasted oysters, oyster stew and oyster chowder are just some of the dishes available at the fair.

If oyster stew is your thing, be sure to get your admission and voting tickets for the Oyster Stew Cook-Off on Sunday. Tasting and voting begins at noon, and only a limited number of



From top: 1) The North Carolina Oyster Festival in Ocean Isle Beach draws as many as 40,000 visitors; 2, 3 & 4) Roasted, fried and steamed oysters are the star of the show; 5) The Oyster Festival Road Race features a 10K, 5K and 1-mile Fun Run; 6) Concerts are held all day on both days.



tickets will be sold. There is a one ticket per person limit, so be sure to taste everything before casting your vote.

On Saturday, from 4 to 6 pm, the North Carolina Oyster Shucking Championship will feature some of the fastest and most sure-handed folks to hold an oyster knife. If you've ever struggled to shuck an oyster, be sure to stop by and see if you can pick up any pointers.

Saturday morning, the North Carolina Oyster Festival Road Race will take place. The three events that make up the Road Race — a 1-mile fun run, a 5K and 10K — are open to walkers, joggers and runners of all ability levels. Entry fees are \$25 until October 8 and \$35 thereafter.

Runners can register at www.active.com (search for "NC Oyster Festival Road Race" and follow the prompts), at TrySports located in Wilmington's Mayfaire Town Center or at the Brunswick County Chamber of Commerce. Registration forms are also available by contacting Kelly Mathews directly at kmathews@brunswickcountychamber.org or at (910) 754.6644 ext. 104.

Early packet pickup and registration will take place Friday, October 15 from 2 to 4 pm at the Ocean Isle Beach Community Center located at 44 E. First Street in Ocean Isle Beach. On Saturday morning, registration and race packet pickup opens at 6:30 am at the Ocean Isle Beach Community Center. The 1-mile fun run begins at 7:30 am and the 5K and 10K races will start at 8 am. Awards will be given to the top three finishers (male and female) in each age category. The first 400 registrants will receive a free special-edition Road Race T-shirt, so register early.

If running isn't your idea of a good time, try one of the concerts planned

for Saturday and Sunday. At 10 am Saturday, The Craig Woolard Band takes the stage, then Coastline Band at noon, Legends of Beach Band at 2 pm and The Painted Man at 4 pm. On Sunday, New Beginnings Praise Band will open the day's entertainment at 10 am with gospel music, then, at noon, Band of Oz starts the afternoon and the Imitations will keep the party going with their 2 pm set.

A festival isn't a festival without fun and games, and for the adventurous types there will be a mechanical bull and a rock-climbing wall, and the kids can enjoy face painting, slides and the usual games. One activity guaranteed to draw a crowd is the NASCAR simulator, free to festival attendees, where you can experience what it's like to race in a stock car.

"None of this would be possible without some hard-working, dedicated people behind the scenes," Mathews says. "I just want to thank our Oyster Festival Committee, our volunteers and the chamber staff who worked

countless hours to organize this festival and will work countless more on site."

Entry to the festival is \$5 per person, with children age 8 and younger admitted free. Tasting and voting tickets for the Oyster Stew Cook-Off are \$5 each with a one-ticket limit to the event. Parking at the North Carolina Oyster Festival is free. Park at The Retreat at Niblock Homes located at the corner of N.C. 179 and Ocean Isle Beach Road. A free shuttle will take you to the festival entrance at the Museum of Coastal Carolina.

If you've never been to Ocean Isle Beach, the Oyster Festival is the perfect excuse to visit. To get there, turn onto Ocean Isle Beach Road SW from U.S. 17 and follow the road over the bridge and onto Ocean Isle Beach. The festival will be on the left at the Museum of Coastal Carolina between 2nd and 3rd Streets.

For more information on the festival or to register for the Road Race, call (910) 754-6644 or visit www.brunswickcountychamber.org. ■

Below: The N.C. Oyster Shucking Competition on Saturday features some of the finest and fastest folks to wield an oyster knife.

