Memorial Weekend Marks the Unofficial Beginning of Beach Season

By Connie Morrison

Memorial Day weekend, the solemn remembrance of those who died in service to their country in the U.S. military, has also become synonymous with the unofficial beginning of summer. In the case of Chincoteague and other coastal towns, it also means the beginning of their busiest beach season.

“It’s always been one of our busiest weekends, said Joanne Moore of the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce, who added that summer peak is the week of the Pony Swim, when the number of visitors to the island swells to 40,000.

Michael Dixon, supervising park ranger at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, did not have an estimate of the number of expected visitors, but said the park infrastructure is “built for the crowds.” It is one of the most visited wildlife refuges in the country.

To access Assateague National Sea-

(Continued on Page 7)
Art Groups Partner to Bring Live Outdoor Theatre to Chincoteague

Submitted Article

The Chincoteague Cultural Alliance and the Chincoteague Island Arts Organization present two free outdoor live theatre performances this summer in Robert Reed Downtown Waterfront Park. The shows, performed by the Brown Box Theatre Project, will take place Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. The Brown Box Theatre Project is headquartered in Berlin, Md., and performs live summer outdoor theatre throughout Delmarva and New England.

The first performance takes place on Saturday, May 27, at 7:30 p.m. “Songs for a New World,” the first musical from Tony Award winner Jason Robert Brown (“Parade,” “Bridges of Madison County”), is a moving collection of powerful songs that examine life, love and the choices that we make. Brown transports his audience from the deck of a 1492 Spanish sailing ship to a ledge 57 stories above Fifth Avenue to meet a startling array of characters.

The show was an off-Broadway hit and is the most ambitious production by the Brown Box Theatre Project to date. A soaring, vibrant score transports the audience through a mesmerizing exploration of the unknown world and the tough choices that follow. “It’s about one moment” says Kyler Taustin, Brown Box founder and executive artistic director. “We are in a time of great change; personally, professionally, and universally; and this play speaks to that turn, the pivotal shift that must be taken to accept, embrace and champion change.”

Bring a blanket or chair and enjoy this contemporary musical under the stars. In case of rain, the performance will be held at the Island Activity Center on School Street.

Enjoy dinner or a snack while you watch the performance with box meals. Advance orders need to be placed and paid for at Poseidon’s Pantry. Pick up box meals at a pre-event reception at the Island Theatre Annex (next to the Theatre). Beverages will be available for sale during the reception. For additional information about the play, visit www.brownboxtheatre.org

The second performance by the Brown Box Theatre takes place on Sunday, September 3, at 7:30 p.m. Mark your calendar now for Hamlet on Labor Day weekend.

After 35 Years, Episcopal Church Still Happy to Worship in Funeral Chapel

Submitted Article and Photo

Many years ago, Rev. Richard Waters from Dongnings Methodist Church and Rev. Emmitt Mullen were fishing with Jim Fox, the patriarch of Fox Funeral Homes. Rev. Mullen, who was serving Emmanuel Episcopal Church at Jenkins Bridge, relished the idea of an outreach to vacationers and local residents. During their discussion that day, they hatched a plan to use the chapel in the Fox Funeral Home, 5049 Chicken City Rd., Chincoteague, for regular Episcopal church services during the summers, when the island population swelled with tourists. The arrangement has endured for more than 30 years, and has offered many, folks the Episcopal tradition of Holy Eucharist on Sunday mornings during the summer.

The main players have changed a bit. Rev. Claire M. Hunkins is now the pastor, or rector as they are called, at Emmanuel Episcopal, and thus, the main celebrant at the chapel. The chapel itself is now in the Fox-Holston Funeral Home. Jim Fox, Dale Fox and Dale Holston have continued to make folks feel comfortable, and have donated various religious articles for the altar area. And with garden flowers often adorning the altar as well, it is easy to forget that one is in a funeral home.

When questioned about worshiping in a funeral home, Hunkins has remarked, “What better way to worship, than in a place that has honored the community of saints who have gone before us?”

May 28 will begin the 35th year of Emmanuel’s community outreach of spoken services (without music). Folks are encouraged to come to the 8 a.m. service dressed casually, so anyone on vacation may feel comfortable attending, or even head directly to the beach afterwards. Congregants are traditionally invited to gather for a dutch-treat breakfast together at a local restaurant afterwards. The services run from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, this year that will be May 28 through Sept. 3. Those who have questions are invited to contact the church at 757-894-7078 (leave a message) or to view the church website at www.emmanuelchurchjb.com

All are also invited to share in the celebration of the Eucharist at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 26405 Horsey Rd., Jenkins Bridge (near ‘T’s Corner) at 10:30 a.m. throughout the year. You never know what a fishing trip may bring!

Pictured, from left: Dale Fox, of Fox Funeral Home; Scott Norris, a member of the Emmanuel Episcopal congregation; and Claire Hunkins, pastor of Emmanuel.
Chamber Recognizes Citizen and Business Persons of the Year

By Ethan Ross
Special to the Eastern Shore Post

A surprised Bobby Connor received the 2017 Leonard “Buddy” Burton Business Person of the Year Award in The Village restaurant, which he owns, on Tuesday. Connor was met with applause as he walked toward presenter Benjy Holloway, to accept his plaque at the annual Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

Holloway said Connor, who graduated from Chincoteague High School, was chosen for a lifetime of business ventures that started elsewhere but eventually led back to the island where he started a seafood company with his uncle and later opened The Village restaurant. The selection was not based on number of ballots cast, but rather on defining traits and actions such as strong moral and ethical standards, time spent benefiting the community, and general excellence in a number of areas. Benjy Holloway hinted at the winner by speaking of his accomplishments, leading up to the announcement of Connor, who was surprised after apparently being told a family member would receive the award.

The John White Shields Citizen of the Year recognizes a resident for his or her local community involvement. This year it went to Denise Bowden, known in the community for her work with the Volunteer Fire Department and as the vice mayor of Chincoteague. She, too, seemed taken aback at the recognition. “I’m not usually the type of person who is at a loss for words,” she said. A teary-eyed Bowden spoke about the community that means so much to her. “I love every person on this island, and I want to give back just a little of what this island has given to me.”

The Chincoteague Pony Drill Team was recognized as recipients of a $1,491 donation presented by the Chamber. The funds were the proceeds from a silent auction at the 2017 Easter Decoy & Art Festival.

Josh Bale was recognized for his Eagle Scout project of web cameras mounted on the Ropewalk restaurant (formerly the Jack Spot) overlooking north and south views of Chincoteague channel. The cameras can be accessed on the Chamber website, www.chincoteaguechamber.com

Sounding Rocket Launch Will Light The Sky on May 31

Submitted Article

The early morning skies along the mid-Atlantic coast will light up with luminescent clouds as NASA tests a new system that supports science studies of the ionosphere and aurora with a sounding rocket launch May 31 from the Wallops Flight Facility on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Backup launch days are June 1 through 6.

The vapor tracers are formed through the interaction of barium, strontium and cupric-oxide. The tracers will be released at altitudes 96-124-miles high and pose absolutely no hazard to residents along the mid-Atlantic coast.

The development of the multi-canister, or ampule, ejection system will allow scientists to gather information over a much larger area than previously allowed when deploying the vapor just from the main payload.

The NASA Visitor Center at Wallops will open at 3:30 a.m. on launch day for viewing the flight.

Live coverage of the mission is scheduled to begin at 3:45 a.m. on the Wallops Ustream site. Launch updates also are available via the Wallops Facebook and Twitter sites.

Smartphone users can download the “What’s Up at Wallops” app, which contains information on the launch as well as a compass showing the precise direction for launch viewing.

More information on the NASA sounding rocket missions and the use of vapor tracers in science research is available at www.nasa.gov/soundingrockets
Trolley fare is 25 cents per person per ride. Exact change is appreciated. Free ride tokens are available at local businesses. Drivers do not carry cash. The Pony Express is seasonal transportation service provided by the Town of Chincoteague. This service is open to the public. Many of the motels, restaurants, shops, parks, recreational areas, ice cream parlours, and campgrounds are along our routes. Trolleys are equipped with wheelchair lifts. To inquire about Americans with Disabilities Act public transportation option, please contact the Town of Chincoteague during business hours at 757-336-6519, or The Pony Express at 757-854-8572, after 5 p.m.
What to do this week in and around Chincoteague

**May 26-28**
Chincoteague Kiwanis Club Annual Flea Market, 8 a.m. - noon, S. Main St., across from the Fireman's Carnival Grounds. Rain or shine.

**Friday, May 26**
Chincoteague Story Telling Guild, 7 p.m., Chincoteague Island Library 4077 Main St., www.chincoteagueculturalalliance.org/chincoteague-storytelling-guild.html

**Saturday, May 27**
Chincoteague Island Farmer & Artisan Market, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Chincoteague Cultural Alliance, 6309 Church St., www.chincoteagueculturalalliance.org

Investigation Station, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., NASA Wallops Visitor Center, Building J20 Route 175, Chincoteague Rd., Wallops Island, www.nasa.gov/content/wallops-visitor-center/public-programs

**Free Theatre in the Park: “Song for a New World,”** 7:30 p.m., Robert Reed Downtown Waterfront Park. Bring a chair or blanket. In case of rain, the performance will be held at the Island Activity Center on School Street.

**Sunday, May 28**
Jupiter in Focus, 7-10 p.m., NASA Visitor Center, Building J20, Route 175, Chincoteague Rd., Wallops Island, www.nasa.gov/content/wallops-visitor-center/public-programs

**Monday, May 29 - Memorial Day**
Community Bingo, 1-3 p.m., Chincoteague Cultural Alliance 6309 Church St., www.chincoteagueculturalalliance.org/community-bingo.html

**Tuesday, May 30**
Tuesday Nights at the Museum: Where Island Tales Are Told, 7 p.m., Museum of Chincoteague, 7125 Maddox Blvd., www.chincoteaguemuseum.com

**Wednesday, May 31**
Chincoteague Island Farmer & Artisan Market, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Chincoteague Cultural Alliance, 6309 Church St., www.chincoteagueculturalalliance.org

**Saturday, June 3**
Chincoteague Island Farmer & Artisan Market, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Chincoteague Cultural Alliance, 6309 Church St., www.chincoteagueculturalalliance.org

Investigation Station, 11a.m.-3 p.m., Nasa Visitor Center. During this program, participants will investigate a STEM related topic through labs, demonstrations or activities. All Ages. For more information go to www.nasa.gov/centers/wallops/visitorcenter

**Free Kids Art Class, 1-2 p.m., Chincoteague Cultural Alliance Community Center for the Arts, 6309 Church Street, www.ChincoteagueCulturalAlliance.org All supplies provided. Young kids please bring an adult.

Second Annual 5k Walk/Run, 8-9:30 a.m., Assateague Island National Seashore, Register at https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/ChincoteagueIsland/AssateagueIslandNationalSeashore5k

Day Trips and Side Trips Around the Eastern Shore

**Friday, May 26**
ESVA Wildlife Refuge Photo Exhibit, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., 32205 Seaside Rd., Cape Charles, Monday - Sunday through June 1. Admission FREE.

**Saturday, May 27**
Art and Music on the Farm, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Barrier Islands Center 7295 Young St., www.barrierislandscenter.org or 757-678-5550. Admission: $5

**Monday, May 29 - Memorial Day**
War Memorial Dedication, 10 a.m., Town of Parksley, town square. Bring a law chair; seating is reserved for veterans. Rain or shine.

“South Pacific,” 7 p.m., Historic Palace Theatre, Cape Charles, 305 Mason Ave., 757-331-2787. Admission: $5

**Wednesday, May 31**
“Blue Hawaii,” 7 p.m., Historic Palace Theatre, 305 Mason Ave., Cape Charles, 757-331-2787. Admission: $5

**Thursday, June 1 - Saturday, June 3**
“Gigi,” 7:30 p.m.,The North Street Playhouse, 34 Market St., Onancock, http://northstreetplayhouse.org/tickets/gigi to reserve tickets, Admission: Adults $20, students $10

**Thursday, June 1**

Listings are provided for information; call or check websites for updates.

The Hitching Post is a publication of The Eastern Shore Post, Onley, Virginia. Contact us at 757-789-7678. Editor, Connie Morrison; Ad Manager, Troy Justis; and Ad Designer, Kimberly Perry. Nameplate photograph by Solid Rock Photography, Chincoteague.
When the weather cooperates, this spring is turning out to be one of the most productive fishing seasons in recent memory with nice catches of fish coming from every corner of the Eastern Shore. Summer species have already started to show up, weeks ahead of schedule and the only thing holding anglers back has been the unstable weather.

The first cobia catches of the season have been made in the lower bay. The VMRC has instituted a mandatory recreational Cobia Permit for anglers wishing to retain the fish. Permits are free and available at https://webapps.mrc.virginia.gov/public/mpermits/index.php. Cobia season begins on June 1 and runs through Sept. 15 and there is a one-fish-per-person limit and no more than three fish are allowed per boat, with only one of those fish 50 inches or longer. The minimum size limit is 40 inches. A reminder, it is illegal to gaff a cobia, so a large landing net is a must.

Anglers who were able to take advantage of the opening of the black sea bass season last week were rewarded with easy limit catches of the tasty fish. As pressure for this species increases on the offshore wrecks, expect decreased catches as the population will quickly be thinned out on those structures which are targeted the most.

**Lower Shore** — Mark, from Chris’s Bait and Tackle, reported that black drum and red drum continue to be caught off the Fisherman’s Island shoals, as well as off Buoy 13, and the Cabbage Patch. Some sheepshead catches have been made by anglers targeting black drum. The top three catches in the shop’s recent black drum tournament were: First place - Christian Seay 75-13, second place - Clinton Lessard 61-5, and third place - Stephen Perkins Jr. 59-1. Sea mullet have started to show up but he had not heard of any croaker catches yet. Flounder catches were reported from the area in front of Wise Point, and along the small boat channel of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Tautog catches have come from around the bridge pilings, the rock islands and the cement ships. Spadefish have made an appearance at the Chesapeake Light Tower, Plantation Light, and the Cell.

**Wachapreague** — Capt. Lindsay Paul, at Trident Tackle, reported that flounder catches have been more consistent than the weather with catches of up to 20 fish being made per boat. Approximately one out of every 3-4 fish are keeper size. Paul cited the Hummocks, Burton’s Bay, and Bradford Bay as some of the more productive areas. White or green grubs with minnows have been productive baits during the last week. Don’s Tackle Shop saw flounder to five and a half pounds. There have not been any reports received of anglers making the first trips to the offshore waters yet, though big bluefish have been reported at 21 and 26 Mile Hills.

**Chincoteague** — Jimmy, at Capt. Steve’s Bait and Tackle, reported that there were still a few large rockfish remaining in the surf, but the smaller (schoolie) population is increasing every day. Bluefish to 13 pounds have been taken in the last week by anglers fishing the beach at Assateague as well as a couple of black drum in the 30-pound weight class. Kingfish (whiting) have started showing up and Jimmy recommends the East Coast Surf Balls and Jumbo Surf Balls rigs for this type of fishing. Buck Rippeon limited out on Sunday with a catch of flounder in excess of 17 inches. The Assateague Channel, Black Narrows, and Queens Sound have all produced flounder catches. Mike, at Captain Bob’s reported that flounder fishing was slow during periods of wind and rain but catches were still being made by anglers concentrating in water depths of 5’-10’, particularly in Chincoteague Channel and Assateague Channel. A six-pound flounder was caught from the waters of Tom’s Cove. The shop’s Flounder King and East Coast Rigs have been the hot ticket fished with minnows, silversides and/or Gulp Swimming Mullet. Donna Rae said that there were “lots and lots” of snapper blues in Chincoteague Channel, in Chincoteague Bay towards Wildcat, as well as inside Chincoteague Inlet.

**Upper Chesapeake Bay** — Last week’s opening of the Chesapeake Bay spring striper season has been a bust so far for the most part, with very few fish meeting the 20-inch minimum size limit. Anglers fishing the shallows using soft crab and peeler baits are finding a lot of undersized rockfish, but also a few speckles to 20 inches and a decent population of red drum on the 2-35 pound size range, with an occasional larger fish. Matt Abell, from Seahawk Sports Center, has enjoyed recent success in the shallows with casting Bass Assassins on ¼ ounce heads in the Albino Ghost and Opening Night color schemes. Scattered catches of bluefish, sand mullet, and flounder have been made over the deepwater rocks.

Bill Hall was the first Eastern Shore resident to achieve Virginia Salt Water Master Angler Status. He has been named Virginia Saltwater Angler of the Year and Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament and a longtime member of the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament Committee. He is the Virginia Recreation Fishing representative on the ASMFC Striped Bass Management Panel and is a past recipient of the CCA-VA Virginia Outdoor Writer Conservation Leadership Award.
Dixon said much of the park’s preparation is getting visitors ready before they arrive. “Start your visit from home” is an agency motto, he said, and visitors can begin at the refuge Twitter account, Facebook page, or website (www.fws.gov/refuge/chincoteague). “Preparing them to know what to expect, check the fees, know what they can do and where they can go,” said Dixon, helps to smooth the flow on heavy traffic days. Entrance passes can be purchased in advance online. “It’s questions at the entrance fee booths that add to the back up,” he said.

While beachgoers are soaking up the sun, those wanting to participate in a Memorial Day observance can head to Parksley at 10 a.m. Monday when the town will dedicate the Eastern Shore Veteran’s Memorial. Volunteers spent hundreds of hours raising funds to remember the men and women of the Eastern Shore who have given their lives in service to their country. Bring a chair; seating is reserved for veterans.

~ Beach ~

(Continued From Front Page)

shore, managed by the National Park Service, visitors much enter through the refuge.

To advertise in the Hitching Post call 757-789-7678 or e-mail Troy at ads@easternshorepost.com

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