



Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor

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Department of Cultural Resources

***News Release***

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**Documentary about Pea Island Life Savers To Debut on Roanoke Island**

MANTEO – The Outer Banks History Center Associates invite the public to the debut of the exciting documentary film “Rescue Men: The Story of the Pea Island Life Savers” on Saturday, Feb. 27, at 7:30 p.m. in the Indoor Theatre at Roanoke Island Festival Park. A question-and-answer session and light reception will follow the free screening of the film.

The film is produced by Los Angeles-based DreamQuest Productions. At the core of DreamQuest Productions is more than 30 years of experience in the film and television industry. Company president Allan Smith is an award-winning producer and director who started his career as a child actor at the age of 6. He has been involved in many films and also worked with: ABC; NBC; CBS; “Good Morning America”; “Inside Edition”; The History Channel; KPAL-TV; “The Howie Mandel Show”; RTP-TV and MyOutdoorTV.com.

“We have been working on this feature documentary film for the past year and a half,” said Smith. “It has been an incredible journey, and we feel very fortunate to tell this remarkable story.”

DreamQuest has worked closely with the Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station Historical Site, the Outer Banks History Center, the National Park Service’s Outer Banks Group, the Pea Island Lifesavers Museum in Manteo, the N.C. Aquarium on Roanoke Island and the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, as well as with many individuals throughout the area. The U.S. Coast Guard participated in the filming to recreate the breaches buoy drill. Co-producers of the film are David Wright and David Zoby, authors of the book “Fire On The Beach: Recovering the Lost Story of Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Lifesavers” that inspired Smith to embrace the project.

The U.S. Life-Saving Service was formed in 1871 to assure safe passage of Americans and international shipping interests, to save both lives and cargo. Stations located along the desolate beaches of the Outer Banks of North Carolina, later known as the “Graveyard of the Atlantic,” bore the brunt of this dangerous but vital duty. In 1880, African Americans were employed by the U.S. Lifesaving Service in support roles, but it was unheard of to have black surfmen in positions of authority, let alone as keepers of their own lifesaving stations. Former slave and Civil War veteran Richard Etheridge became the only black man to lead a lifesaving crew as its captain. He recruited, trained and led a crew of African Americans at Station 17, Pea Island, the only all-black station in the nation.

While civilian attitudes towards Etheridge and his men ranged from curiosity to outrage, the Pea Island crew figured among the most courageous surfmen in the service, performing many daring rescues from 1880 to the closing of the station in 1947. The accomplishments of these brave men, and others like them in the U.S. Lifesaving Service, led to the formation of the U.S. Coast Guard.

“Rescue Men” is the remarkable story of Richard Etheridge and his crew. Never before told on film, it is a story that has largely been ignored until now. “Rescue Men” stresses the contributions these men made to the future of the U.S. Lifesaving Service and their posthumous honor by the U.S. Coast Guard 100 years later with the “Gold Life-Saving Medal,” the service’s highest peacetime honor.

For more information call (252) 475-1500 or (252) 473-1611. View the trailer for “Rescue Men” at [www.dreamquest.tv](http://www.dreamquest.tv) (click on Rescue Men) or [www.rescuemenfilm.com](http://www.rescuemenfilm.com).

This project is made possible in part by grants from the North Carolina Humanities Council, a statewide nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, and the Outer Banks Community Foundation.

This event is part of a weekend of Black History Month programs being offered by Roanoke Island Festival Park as it reopens for the 2010 season. The 6th Annual Freedmen’s Colony Blues Jam will be held in the indoor theatre at Roanoke Island Festival Park on Friday, Feb. 26, at 7:30 p.m. See <http://roanokeisland.com/CalendarOfEvents.aspx> for details.

The Outer Banks History Center Associates, who are hosting the debut, is a non-profit group that exists to support the Outer Banks History Center, a regional archives and research library administered by the N.C. State Archives. Along with Roanoke Island Festival Park, it is part of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, the state agency with the mission to enrich lives and communities, and the vision to harness the state’s cultural resources to build North Carolina’s social, cultural and economic future. Information is available 24/7 at [www.ncculture.com](http://www.ncculture.com).

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