

# it's all good

Rick Civelli's **SURF CAMP**

By Sara Webster

Photos Courtesy of Surf Camp

**A**t the ripe age of six, Rick Civelli befriended the ocean with his boogie board in tow, and was well on his way to becoming an advocate for one of our greatest resources—our largest biome—the magnificent ocean.

Rick's curiosity for natural sea patterns coupled with a University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) graduate degree in marine science and an innate surfing talent has turned his contagious passion into an every day career; optimal conditions for the thirty-four-year-old goofy foot.

Straight out of college, hired by the North Carolina Aquarium as a marine science educator, Rick is credited for creating North Carolina's first "learn to surf" curriculum called "Surf's Up." The program, like Rick's own personal quest, was a combination of sport and knowledgeable appreciation for the resource that makes it all possible. It was also the foundation for his future, family-owned business.





Camps run June through August.



Rick Civelli shares his love of the ocean with students of all ages.



Instructor ratios are 2 to 1 for kids.



Jean Beasley (left) gives day-trippers a tour of the Turtle Hospital.

“The very first day I met Rick,” his wife, Jen Civelli remembered, “he expressed his dreams of sharing his love for the ocean and all that it brings to others. His passion and respect for the ocean and the surf radiates in all aspects of his life. Rick is the hardest working person I know. He works diligently every day creating opportunities for people to experience the ocean through surfing. I am so proud to be sharing his dream come true.”

SURF CAMP is run by the ‘mom’ of the camp—his wife Jen—and his two right-hands, Chelsea Thornhill and Brenden Calderon. Thirty additional employees also join the ranks to assist with high seasonal demand, each First Aid, CPR, and Lifeguard certified. Part of Rick’s promise is to “experience the ocean in a safe way” and to be an added resource and comfort for the beaches which they frequent.

“Rick has a natural ease about him that just encourages you to relax and trust it’s all going to be okay, especially with those unfamiliar to the water,” said Kersten Mueller, paying homage to her colleague and surfing instructor. Kersten, yoga instructor on international trips, has

been witness to Rick’s ability to take a student terrified of the water and turn the experience into an empowering life-changing event . . . one that translates to all aspects of life.

“His confident, laid-back approach with teaching helped me find my new-found love for surfing,” said Kersten. “He’s the same way out of the water...cool, confident, talks with ease, communes with locals, makes everyone feel like your friend. Traveling internationally was the best experience ever.”

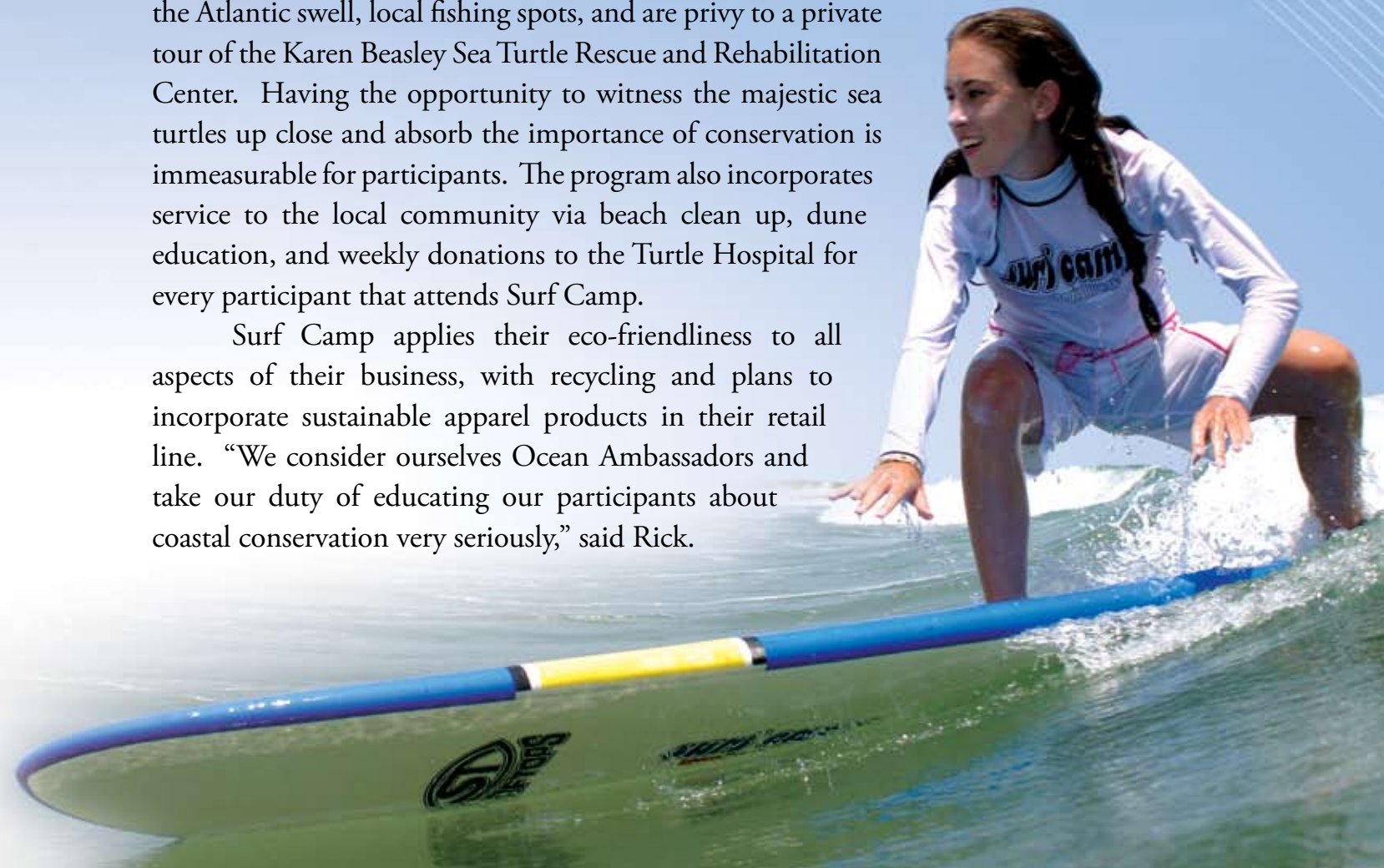
Along with the international trips that run year-round, summer camps kick off in June and run through August along the North Carolina coast. Minimum instructor ratios are three to one for adults and two to one for kids. The focus of instruction varies and class offerings range from kid to adult camps, company retreats, and specialized personal lessons.

Rick’s long-lived fascination for eco-systems has taken him all over the world surfing in remote spots, though he regards beaches along the coast of North Carolina as some of his favorites.

“My parents live in Sneads Ferry and I have been swimming and surfing along the beaches of Topsail Island since I was just a kid,” said Rick. “My travels have taken me to many worldwide exotic surfing destinations, but the beautiful warm clear waters off of south eastern North Carolina are what I call home.”

He can be spotted on Topsail Island alongside his fellow day-trippers engaging in and sharing knowledge of all natural aspects that the island has to offer. Campers are introduced to the Atlantic swell, local fishing spots, and are privy to a private tour of the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center. Having the opportunity to witness the majestic sea turtles up close and absorb the importance of conservation is immeasurable for participants. The program also incorporates service to the local community via beach clean up, dune education, and weekly donations to the Turtle Hospital for every participant that attends Surf Camp.

Surf Camp applies their eco-friendliness to all aspects of their business, with recycling and plans to incorporate sustainable apparel products in their retail line. “We consider ourselves Ocean Ambassadors and take our duty of educating our participants about coastal conservation very seriously,” said Rick.





Jen Civelli and Surf Camp are big supporters of the Turtle Hospital.

Looking ahead, Rick's plans for the future include continuing to grow his apparel line while taking the profits to support scholarships for disadvantaged kids to attend his programs at no cost. "Our program is really a life changing experience that builds confidence in kids of all ages; and I want to provide the opportunity to all kids to be touched by the magic of the ocean."

SARA WEBSTER is a freelance photographer, writer, and designer who has made Topsail Beach her home base. She's often found traveling far and wide to document truths of all kinds.

# goofy foot

Goofy Foot . . . Surfers use it. Snowboarders use it. Water-skiers use it. But many of us have no idea what Goofy Foot means even though it's rumored to have been around since the phrase was supposedly coined in the fifties from a Walt Disney film featuring Goofy surfing with his right foot forward. Yep, now you get it! Putting your right foot forward means you're a Goofy Foot. Every "boarder" is either goofy or regular footed, sort of like being right or left handed. If you're a left-foot-forward-rider, you're a regular or natural foot, meaning your left foot is toward the front of your board. So now you know.

