

Thad Beach

Salina, Kansas

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Thad Beach is a full-time entertainer, musician, songwriter, storyteller, and teaching artist.

As an **entertainer** for over 30 years, he has delighted audiences with his musical talent, humorous antics, wit, and easy-going style, eliciting audience participation and making each performance a spontaneous, unique and personal experience. Thad has performed primarily solo at festivals, libraries, schools and community gatherings throughout Southeast and Midwest regions of the United States and England.

As a **musician**, Beach is a versatile instrumentalist, performing on ukulele, guitar, mandolin, fiddle, jaw harp, and harmonica. Thad's harmonica playing has won state championship honors in North Carolina and Kansas. His CD *Harmonica Harvest* features his talents playing tunes from around the world and has been described as "encompassing the complete range of the harmonica. A must-have album for listening or study." (Al Eichler, Editor, *The American Harmonica Newsletter*). He also showcases instruments from his "Band in a Bucket." The limberjack, washboard, bucket bass and other fun and unique musical devices, inspire young and old alike to get involved in music.

As a **songwriter**, Beach says he "likes to get crazy ideas and turn them into songs." He believes people need a chance to laugh more and recharge their spirit. Beach also likes to write songs that create an awareness of issues in such a way that it does not preach a certain attitude, but rather causes the listener to think, ponder and problem solve on their own. His new CD release, *The Polka Dot Cafe*, is described as a menu full of original and humorous songs for children of all ages. "Thunder on the Mountain" is one such program of songs and stories about topics that are thought provoking and sometimes controversial, such as environmental issues, war, and immigration. "Legends and Ghosts from the Mountains to the Coast" is a journey into the rich history and abundant folklore of the Carolinas.

As a **storyteller**, Beach wows audiences with his wild and wacky fishing stories in "Tall Tales of Catfish County." As an avid fisherman he has had plenty of time to concoct hilarious scenarios about fishing, fisherman and human nature while fishing off The Point at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, while heading out to sea to haul in the daily catch from the Atlantic Gulf Stream in the *Hot Dog* and the *Bluegrass* (fishing vessels), while walking miles of cool mountain streams in the Great Smokies, and sitting on the bank of a muddy river somewhere.

As a **teaching artist**, Thad Beach has excelled in his work with children, teaching all ages his songwriting process. He calls himself the "Songsmith" and has completed his residencies in over 250 schools over the last 19 years, working with students from settings as diverse as coastal island communities in South Carolina to small mountain towns in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina to metropolitan areas of Kansas City and Wichita and small rural communities of Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa. The "Songsmith" Songwriting Residency is a language arts based approach to songwriting. Beach says writing a song is like baking a cake; you take the basic ingredients, mix in flavor and spices and come up with a wonderful song. This interdisciplinary program has yielded related artwork, video documentation, publications, performances and audio/video recordings. He has produced four documentary projects of his Songsmith work – two recordings: *Under a Colorful Kansas Sky*, songs by Thad and students of Winfield Kansas and *Echoes of Avery*, songs by Thad and students of the Appalachian Mountain town area of Avery County North Carolina, as well as two publications of Songsmith songs: "Equipment for Imagination" and "Under a Colorful Kansas Sky" both compiled and edited by Kathy Rogers.

Thad Beach is a Wolf Trap Early Childhood Teaching Artist with Kansas Wolf Trap and Arts Partners of Wichita, which sponsors preschool residencies for children ages 3 to 5. He has conducted numerous workshops for teachers at school districts in the east and midwest. Excerpts from some of Beach's musical presentations have been shown on Arts at Work, an educational channel production of USD 259.

Thad grew up in Hamilton, Ohio and moved to North Carolina after high school. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Geology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. While there, Thad also took classes in music, creative writing, journalism and was the editor of Atlantis the UNCW Literary and Art Magazine. Thad won poetry and creative writing awards and scholarships while attending college.