

Press Release

## **Facebook post from Monmouth County New Jersey man results in major benefit concert for Hurricane Dorian survivors of Abaco.**

MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY (December 6, 2019)—"Tickets go on sale this week for the "Hope for Abaco Holiday Benefit Concert featuring the Barefoot Man and Friends of Abaco". The benefit, which hopes to be one of Florida's largest fundraising concerts for Hurricane Dorian victims in Abaco, Bahamas, grew from a Facebook post made by a Monmouth County New Jersey resident, explained P. Steve Calabria. "The benefit will be held at the Martin County Fairgrounds from 2:30PM to 9:30PM in Stuart Florida on December 14, 2019, a venue large enough to accommodate thousands. "

On September 1, 2019 network news reported Hurricane Dorian made landfall on the Abaco islands as the strongest Atlantic hurricane landfall on record. Marsh Harbour, the third largest city in the Bahamas, sustained catastrophic damage. News teams on the ground reported boats were found on rooftops and on-top of uprooted trees.

Calabria explained "I've had a twenty-year love connection with the Abacos. Its where I hope to retire. My connection has been so strong that I took my 30-foot Boston Whaler from Manasquan New Jersey on a 1500-mile trip to Treasure Cay, Abaco. Today, my boat is likely one of the boats in the rubble of Great Abaco, I don't know when or if I'll ever see it again."

"I wanted to share this wonderful place that I've come to know with my friends, so I organized a group 30 to visit Abaco this past April. I planned the trip around the Barefoot Man's final performance in Abaco. The Barefoot Man has been a living legend in the Abacos during the twenty years that I've visited. I believe his popularity in Abaco stems from the fact that he has recorded more than 30 songs about the people and places of Abaco. The locals refer to him as the Jimmy Buffett of the Bahamas. Together we saw the Barefoot Man's final performance at Nippers Beach Bar and Grill on Great Guana Cay, Abaco. Now we are all in shock. This is exactly where the eye of Dorian struck land" continued Calabria.

"Fewer than five months after his trip", Calabria recalls "I was glued in-front of my computer, watching the track of Hurricane Dorian". My phone wouldn't stop ringing. One friend after another was calling to see if I were watching. Sadly, I was, as the unimaginable was about to happen", said Calabria.

"I remember calling Tony and saying it's headed straight for Abaco. There's no place for them to go! My friend, Tony DeCristofaro, is a Shrewsbury New Jersey resident who has been following the Barefoot Man and visiting the Abacos as long as I", continued Calabria.

"Like so many Americans I couldn't stop thinking about Abaco. We hear about disasters and often turn a death ear, but this was different. Dorian was personal for me. I wanted to do something but wasn't sure how one person might make a different. Like so many others, I felt helpless" recalled Calabria.

"One day I went to the Barefoot Man's Facebook page, and made a post. I wrote, Barefoot Man, the people of Abaco have been coming to your concerts for twenty years. Now it's your turn to step-up and give back", Calabria stated.

“The next day I received a message from the Barefoot Man himself, George Nowak. He explained that he wanted to help, but he didn’t know how. Living in Grand Cayman it would be impossible to manage an event. He explained he would come to the US and volunteer his music, but someone else would have to organize the event,” explained Calabria.

A few days later, Calabria said he heard from Nowak again. “Nowak explained that a Hypoluxo Florida resident, Erich Sitko, had contacted him with the same idea and agreed to help organize the event,” remembered Calabria.

“I also felt the pain for the Bahamian residents in Abaco. It was a parallel path that brought us together to help the people of Abaco, Bahamas” said Sitko.

Next, Calabria contacted DeCristofaro and the two joined Sitko as volunteers to make the benefit happen. “The three of us, [Sitko, DeCristofaro, and Calabria] are now producing this holiday benefit, driven only by our common desire to help the people of Abaco rebuild. None of us have any event planning experience and now we are expecting thousands of people to come.”

“This is going to be a phenomenal show featuring the Barefoot Man, perhaps the most well-known musician to ever play in Abaco; along with Stone McEwan, the Bahamian One-Man Sensation; and the Sea ‘N B Island band with Mark and Bugs. Piera Van De Weil will be the icing that makes the cake. Her Bahamian rally song, “Come Back Home” is a call for displaced Abaconians to come back to Abaco. This is going to exceed every Barefoot Man performance ever,” promised Calabria, and “You don’t even need to fly in a small prop-plane or boat across the Gulf Stream to attend.

Tickets sell for \$75 in advance or \$100 at the door. VIP tickets are also available for \$250. 100% of the net proceeds will be donated to Abaco charities to rebuild. Cayman Airways is sponsoring air travel. The group has been assisted by Mirimar Commissioner Maxwell Chambers who has helped set-up a charity partnership through Care Community Center, Inc. of Mirimar Florida, a 510(c)(3) charity. Ticket sales are Tax-Deductible donations made directly into a trust account managed by the Jamaican-American Bar Association and will be held until the three have vetted worthy Abaco charities.

To purchase tickets or to donate:

<https://hopeforabaco.ticketbud.com/holiday-benefit/pr>

For more information: <https://HOPEforABACO.org?tc=pr>

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Page Break – Photos to follow



P. Steve Calabria and Tony DeCristofaro on Great Guana Cay with the Barefoot Man at Nippers Beach Bar and Grill on Great Guana Cay in Abaco. Five months before Nippers and most of Great Guana Cay was destroyed by Hurricane Dorian.



Nippers Beach Bar and Grill the way it looked before Hurricane Dorian.



Nippers Beach Bar and Grill a couple of days after Hurricane Dorian. All that's left of the bar is the ice box and a single bottle of Fireball.