Kayak for a Cause started as a simple bet - $50- between two friends. Today, it is certainly one of Connecticut’s most popular summer beach and water events, tying in athletic challenge, personal achievement, community activism and charitable support. KFAC IX launches from Crab Meadow, Huntington Long Island and ends at Calf Pasture Beach, Norwalk, CT - where the refreshments are!

A Bit of History: in 2001, two hearty souls packed kayaks provided vague notifications to loved ones. At dawn they set out with every imaginable provision except common sense on an un-assisted cross of Long Island Sound in an attempt to settle a $50 “dare ‘ya” bet. Upon arriving, they realized they did not have a means of proving their accomplishment and worse yet, did not have a ride home. They would have to duplicate their feat to avoid being found out.

As silly as this story sounds, a handful of friends were keen to join them the following year. And so it went. Six became twelve. Twelve became thirty. Thirty became One Hundred seventy. And so on. Now, two to three hundred cross a year, and celebrate with a few thousand friends on the beach when it’s over.

The Paddlers: KFAC has stewarded, cajoled, coaxed, chided and occasionally towed over 1,000 kayakers across Long Island Sound. Those that join KFAC are brave enough to ask…why not? Some people see it as an athletic challenge, a personal as a triumph or a victory over self doubt. Whatever the reason, people take the challenge seriously, (they are, at times, 7 miles offshore in personal watercraft). Paddlers also:
- Train and pass a safety certification
- Cover their own registration fees and kayak rentals (ranging from $50-$150)
- Raise a minimum donation from friends (ranging from $500 to $1000 each)
- Assemble and work with a volunteer team to support them on the water
- Stay with their pod, a flowing group of paddlers that look out for each other

Charities: KFAC’s charity program began early (KFAC-II) and quite informally: now much more formal, and we have realized that, if we did not empathize and integrate closely with our charities we would become little more than giant party planners. Didn’t want that to happen!

While money is a very important part of what KFAC provides to charities, it is by no means the only thing. The intangible benefits of cross promotion, media alignment, and marshalling hundreds of passionate supporters have helped organizations leverage their PR, their outreach, and their community impact. KFAC supports five charities every year, including a new one with each annual cycle. Current (bold) and past charities include:
- Outward Bound
- Hole in the Wall Gang
- Courage to Speak Foundation
- Cardinal Sheehan Center
- Save the Sound
- Make-A-Wish
- Stew Leonard Foundation
- American Heart Association
- Pegasus Therapeutic Riding
- Cancer Care
- Sierra Club
- Cousteau Society
- Builders Beyond Borders
- The Maritime Aquarium
- Norwalk Hospital

The army of Volunteers: A very large reason for our very large armada is we make the paddlers feel they have the support to pull off a fantastic voyage. This comes in the form of over 300 volunteers who captain chase boats, haul stack and truck kayaks, build and tear down stages, process thousands of donations and prepare about 1,000 lobster dinners (the lobsters are not counted as volunteers!). While they are not required to raise any funds, they certainly enable the paddlers who do. They also keep the headcount of KFAC down to a manageable number of full time employees: Zero!

Beach Party: celebrating accomplishment has been a tradition at KFAC tradition since before we called it KFAC, though we have evolved from baloney sandwiches and Gatorade to some pretty nice lobster dinners and a finer vintage of beverage. The party is on the beach. And we have enjoyed everyone from the Wailers to The Neville Brothers sing to us while we ate. Not so bad! This year; Donavon Frankenreiter!

To paddle, volunteer, donate or just learn more… visit www.kfac.com