



Friends of the Environment

Abaco, Bahamas

SUMMER 2012

PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & ACTIVITIES SINCE 1988

VOL. 19, ISSUE II

Local students explore Abaco's environment with FRIENDS Summer Camp



FRIENDS supports its mission of a more sustainable environment for Abaco by focusing on education. What better place to start than with the youth of our island? By integrating engaging indoor lessons with hands-on outdoor activities and field trips, FRIENDS is able to provide a fun and educational experience during summer camp that helps to raise campers appreciation for the environment and help turn them into better stewards for Abaco.



Summer Camp is one of the most important components of FRIENDS' Education Program as it allows kids to truly get hands on with their environment, while learning how they can incorporate conservation measures into their daily lives.



Through fun and interactive games, such as "Sea Turtle Survival", campers learn more about threats to native animals and their habitats, and what they can do to help conserve them.



Field trips are integral to FRIENDS' summer camp. Connecting campers with their environment helps to reinforce conservation messages and provides lasting memories that are passed on to other family members.

Environmental Camp is held in four locations to maximize our outreach on Abaco: Coopers Town, Marsh Harbour, Sandy Point and Moore's Island. Summer Camp is supported by Disney Animal Programs and Environmental initiatives. Last year, FRIENDS worked hand in hand with Educators at Disney to develop a new summer camp curriculum specific to FRIENDS' mission with a focus on Abaconian ecosystems and environmental initiatives. We are working to assess the effectiveness of our new camp activities and materials through pre- and post-camp surveys, but initial responses from the campers and their parents are very positive! To see more pictures from camp visit our Facebook page!



FRIENDS is a 1% for the Planet Partner! 1% was built to support an alliance of businesses financially committed to creating a healthy planet. By joining, your business can contribute to FRIENDS and benefit from international exposure through their efforts! Contact FRIENDS for more information about the program or to find out how to join.

President's Letter



Summer time in Abaco is amazing. Summer time at Friends of the Environment is busy and lots of fun! This summer newsletter is yet another opportunity to thank everyone who supports the work of FRIENDS throughout the year, be it financially, by being an environmental steward, or joining the fun at summer camp, a huge thank you to all!

In addition to camp this summer, FRIENDS is launching a "coral etiquette" campaign to promote awareness of how fragile our reef systems really are; how important the reefs are to our oceans; and how the simple act of touching, standing or anchoring on the coral can destroy thousands of years of growth. Recently, while snorkeling at Mermaid Reef, I watched a visiting child, so excited about looking beneath the surface and seeing the wonders of the under water world. Having to empty the water from his snorkel, he stood up on the coral. This reminded me of how important it is to bring awareness of the fragility of our coral reefs to both visitors and local residents. I also snorkeled with a FRIENDS summer camper, also at Mermaid Reef, who was so excited to see what she had learned about just that morning. She pointed out soft and hard corals and numerous fish species. Again I was reminded that, yes, FRIENDS is creating awareness!

FRIENDS is also busy preparing for a litter awareness campaign with bumper stickers and highway signs. FRIENDS continues to support all efforts for the proposed protected areas of Abaco, as well as the mooring maintenance at four different reefs.

Thank you to those who are the true stewards of the environment. I recently encountered one of you on a gorgeous day at Sandy Cay Reef. I had discovered a mooring ball that had broken loose with the rope tangled in the coral. I gathered the rope and was towing the huge buoy back to my boat. To my great surprise, some people in a nearby rental boat thought I had a crawfish (the discolored line must have looked like a crawfish). They started yelling to inform me that "this was a protected area and I must not get lobster". I immediately looked around, wondering who they were speaking to, and who was taking "lobster" in the closed season, AND from the park. After I realized they were talking to me, it took a moment, and the admission that I was the president of FRIENDS, to convince them that I in fact was rescuing a buoy. I later saw the family in Little Harbour, and felt inclined to thank them all for speaking up and caring so deeply about Abaco's environment. We shared a friendly laugh as well. The lesson learned is that we all need to speak up, share awareness, and protect what we love.

I'd like to encourage everyone to be stewards of this amazing place that we all cherish for it's natural beauty, and speak up to share the information that will help preserve this special small part of the world that we are fortunate to be a part of. Support Friends of the Environment, renew your memberships, donate to this important cause, and FRIENDS will continue to do what it does best, educate, so Abaco's environment will be preserved for many future generations.

Sincerely,
Cha Boyce, President - Friends of the Environment

As the 2012 lobster season opens please remember to fish for a healthy future. You can follow this simple tip from Spike to make sure we have a sustainable and productive season:

A MESSAGE FROM SPIKE

You can help protect our lobster fishery. Make sure your lobster tails measure 5 1/2 inches or BIGGER!



Save the Date

August 12th - 10th Annual Baker's Bay Sailaway
October 5th - FRIENDS Science Fair
(Theme: Habitat Conservation)
November 3rd - Kayak Challenge
November 22nd - Turtle Trot,
5K/10K
February 9th - Hope Town Reef Ball

FRIENDS is a registered 501 (c) 3 organization; that means gifts to FRIENDS are tax deductible in The United States.

FRIENDS Thanks Friends

Lionfish Derby, Marsh Harbour Exporters and Importers, Bahamas Marine Exporters Association, Tropic Seafood, Jib Room, Lauren Yeager, Stephanie Archer, Joey Peters, Bahamas Dept. of Marine Resources, Bahamas National Trust

Earth Day Celebration, Mrs. Eloise Lightbourn, Mike Parotti, The Nature Conservancy
FRIENDS Conservation Photo Contest, United States Embassy, Judges: Elmer Doty, Tim Calver, Peggy Sokoloff, Dana Jea and Erica Thibault

Size Matters, The Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program (GEF-SGP), World Wildlife Fund, Bahamas Marine Exporters Association, The Nature Conservancy, Bahamas National Trust, Department of Marine Resources, Roosevelt Curry, Grand Cay All Age School, New Hope Baptist Church, North Abaco

Advertising and Awareness, Coastal Angler Magazine, The Abaconian, Abaco Cruiser's Net, Conch Salad TV, Steve Dodge and Cruising Guide to Abaco.

Young Marine Explorer's Club, Lindsey Borsz, Nikita Shiel-Rolle, Above and Below Abaco Dive Shop, Bahamas National Trust

Rockin' with FRIENDS, Hope Town Harbour Lodge, Chris Farren, Shane Cash, Aly Boyce, James Boyce, Justin Higgs, Neil & Rachael Aberle, Steve Marinak, Ingrid Marinak, Kristen Powers

Summer Camp, Serina Sebilian, Friendship Tabernacle, St. Martin's Anglican Church, Disney Animal Programs and Environmental Initiatives, Jenna Chaplin, Jordana Kelly, Rashan Burrows, Amelia Burrows, Erica Hepburn, Keva Lightbourn, Zinnia Miller, Robin Miller, Rental Wheels.

Transportation, Mr. Herbert Yardley

3rd Annual Lionfish Derby

The third annual Central Abaco Lionfish Derby was successful and provided interesting numbers as compared to last year's derby. With the assistance of our sponsors, participants and volunteers we were able to remove a total of 667 lionfish from the Sea of Abaco as compared to 2,957 fish last year.

The difference in numbers hopefully reflects the impact that these derbies are having on local lionfish populations. The winning boat, "Kiki", consisted of four local fishermen who participated and won 3rd place in last year's derby. Although they brought in a total of 406 lionfish to win this year, they stated that they had to go to triple the amount of fishing grounds to capture less lionfish than they did last year. This suggests that there has been a significant reduction in the local population.

In an effort to make a larger impact throughout the year, Marsh Harbour Exporters and Importers are contributing two additional cash prizes of \$1,000 and \$500 for the fisherman who brings in the highest number of lionfish throughout the year. Fisherman can drop their catch off at The Fish House during business hours where their catch will be counted and recorded. The winners will be awarded their cash prizes at next year's lionfish derby. There will also be an all year derby held in Green Turtle Cay with a first place prize of \$1,000. Beginning in August, fishermen in the north can take their catch to Larry Lowe at Abaco Seafood the first Monday of every month, between 1pm and 4 pm.



FRIENDS Celebrates Earth Day



Earth Day is recognized worldwide on April 22nd of each year to increase global awareness and appreciation for the environment. This year, FRIENDS held a special Earth Day event on April 23rd to show appreciation for Abaco's environment.

The event started in the Education Center multi-purpose room where Executive Director Kristin Williams welcomed attendees. Education Officer d'Shan Maycock and Board Member Jim Richard presented certificates and badges to students who participated in this term's Discovery Club National Park session. Discovery Club is a program started by The Bahamas National Trust which FRIENDS brought to Abaco. Discovery Club runs during the school year and is open to students ages 6-13. There is a minimal membership fee which includes a hat, t-shirt, sash and badges.

Mrs. Williams then recognized Ms. Erica Thibault (U.S. Embassy) and guest judges for the Abaco Conservation Photography Competition. First place winners were Dwayne Wallas (Adults) and Natasha Albury (students). Natasha was all smiles as she received her prize, an iPad, which was donated by the U.S. Embassy. All submissions in the photo competition were shared on FaceBook and will be used, where appropriate, in FRIENDS' education materials. First, second and third place in each category will be displayed at the U.S. Embassy in Nassau.

Students Seanna Albury (Forest Heights Academy) and Lorenz Carter (Central Abaco Primary) shared their experiences attending the Disney Kids and Nature Celebration with FRIENDS Program Coordinator Olivia Patterson and Board Member Wynsome Ferguson. Special thanks to Disney Cruiselines for sponsoring the trip! It was a trip of a lifetime for Seanna and Lorenz, who will go on to be environmental ambassadors in Abaco!



At this point all guests were invited to go outside to participate in a tree planting in honour of the late Michael Lightbourn, former FRIENDS Board member and past BNT President. Board member Reg Patterson shared memories of Mr. Lightbourn and told attendees of how he was

influenced by Mr. Lightbourn's conservation ethic and love for birdwatching. Michael's daughter Katherine shared some memories as well and explained that the Lignum vitae was her father's favourite tree. Once the tree was planted, guests were invited to take a walk on the newly revitalized nature trail, which now sports special "trail trivia" information and arrows to lead the way through. Each household attending was given a free native plant in honour of The Bahamas' Million Tree Campaign and to support FRIENDS' efforts to reduce invasive plants in Abaco.



Note: The Science Fair that FRIENDS previously held on Earth Day will now take place in October to better accommodate school schedules.

Young Marine Explorer's Club

Young Marine Explorers is a non-profit environmental organization committed to providing transformational educational experiences to Bahamian youth. They aim to inspire young Bahamians to find their personal passion by introducing them to The Bahamian environment and offering learning opportunities within outdoor classrooms. Through creative, entertaining, and inspirational environmental outreach, YME aspires to foster a generation of youth that are motivated to become stewards of the environment who will shape the future of The Bahamas.

Last September FRIENDS and volunteer teacher Lindsey Borsz started a YME chapter in Abaco, under the guidance of YME Director Nikita Shiel-Rolle. Participating students were given the opportunity to go beyond their highschool curriculum to get in-depth knowledge of the marine environment. Students undertook independent research projects on marine species and tried their hand at oceanography related science experiments. Through their research, the students became interested in renewable energy and began investigating feasibility of making biodiesel in Abaco. This spring, several of the YME students have been lucky to take a SCUBA certification course with Kay Politano at Above and Below Abaco, through sponsorship from a Disney Animal Programs grant. These students have volunteered their time to Reef Check surveys and other future marine conservation efforts in Abaco.

Follow Abaco's new research blog!



The Abaco Scientist was started by Dr. Craig Layman of Florida International University and FRIENDS as an effort towards centralizing up to date information about research in Abaco and the rest of The Bahamas. While scientists are in the field you can follow their work as they reveal interesting insights to our local environment! The site is also a good place to look for publications specific to The Bahamas. Please share the site with anyone you think may be interested! If you would like to become a contributor, please email olivia@friendsoftheenvironment.org.

<http://absci.fiu.edu>

2011 Financial Report

INCOME	
Membership and donations	\$76,571.07
Events	
Reef Ball	\$68,859.65
Other Events	\$17,287.00
Merchandise	\$3,970.00
Admin. Services	\$1,386.00
Interest from the CD	\$298.81
Rentals	\$23,600.00
Foundations	\$75,391.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$267,363.53
EXPENSES	
Education Center	
Salaries	\$32,590.00
Rent	\$21,600.00
BEC Electric	\$5,266.19
Communications	\$1,767.40
Office Supplies	\$3,252.07
Office Maintenance	\$2,214.61
Transportation	\$774.00
Financial & Legal Services	\$1,000.00
Bank Charges	\$3,776.14
Meetings/Conferences	\$1,229.55
Insurance for Office	\$2,994.36
Programs	
Marine	\$16,607.76
Terrestrial	\$9,659.15
Solid Waste Reduction	\$11,098.13
Environmental Education	\$48,173.16
Size Matters	\$51,076.26
Sustainable Development	\$1,773.88
Development	\$49,568.89
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$264,421.55
Revenue	\$2,941.98

FRIENDS' Mission: To preserve and protect Abaco's terrestrial and marine environments in order to achieve sustainable living for the wildlife and people of Abaco, Bahamas.

FRIENDS' Contact Information

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Directors: Justin Higgs, Diane Claridge, Reg Patterson, Jody Albury, Wynsome Ferguson, Joy Chaplin, Glender Knowles, Mike Lightbourn, Alana Carroll

Staff:

Executive Director, Kristin Williams
Education Officer, Pride Campaign Manager, d'Shan Maycock
Program Coordinator, Olivia Patterson
Development Officer, Lindsey McCoy
Office Manager, Ruth Albury

Dedicated Volunteers:

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Website, Robert Bethel
Development, Sasha Fair

