

S.T.A.R.S. INTERNATIONAL

Eagle Ray by Rogest



ROGEST PAINTS NEW HOPE AT LARKIN HIGH SCHOOL

January 2010 Newsletter

Artist Extraordinaire Ron Stevens aka "Rogest" has been a strong supporter of S.T.A.R.S. since meeting a collection of our graduates. Rogest produced the first professional logo for the S.T.A.R.S. program shortly after the 2009 OurWorldUnderwater Scuba Expo which incorporates one of his legendary sea turtle images on the star. With the kick-off of the Larkin High School (LHS) program in 2010, S.T.A.R.S. was able to facilitate a collaboration between Rogest and LHS to provide a 2-day artistic painting clinic in February adjacent to the 2010

Scuba Expo. The event is planned to involve 20 high school students, each creating a masterpiece to be auctioned off at Rogest's booth at the upcoming Expo. LHS students are anticipated to be involved at the booth to share their experience with show attendees viewing their work, and proceeds of the art auction will benefit the LHS S.T.A.R.S. program. This is an incredible opportunity to showcase the talent, skills, and potential of the LHS students.



Your Support Is Needed

<http://www.savejapandolphins.org>
<http://www.seashepherd.org>

One of our own becomes President

S.T.A.R.S. International congratulates Kevin on his acceptance of a two year term as President of the Chicago Aquanauts Dive Club in Mt. Prospect. In addition to the many roles that Kevin fills within S.T.A.R.S. he also remained as a delegate to the IL Scuba Council for 2010. Anything is truly possible when you only sleep 3 hours a day!



Computers Computers Computers

S.T.A.R.S. International was honored, thankful, and simply overwhelmed with gratitude when Mr. and Mrs. Greg Tripino donated 6 hi-end Aeris dive computers in December. S.T.A.R.S. had been struggling to chart an economical course to obtain a total of 15 dive computers for introduction this winter. This donation now has S.T.A.R.S. positioned with half as many total computers as they will need to support both Chicago area programs. Fundraising efforts will hopefully fulfill the final monetary requirements to purchase the remaining units and keep them serviced for use. Many Thanks to the Tripino's for their very generous support.

Website Upgrades Near Completion

For many years S.T.A.R.S. has focused its' attention and financial support on safety, programming, and equipment, with our external image falling a distant second. About a year ago staffer Ty Varner stepped up and hit a home run giving the web site a fresh look for 2009. However with everyone on staff either working another full-time job or looking for one it left little time to keep Ty's creation on the cutting edge. In the past 2 months a concentrated effort by newcomer Matt Schirmacher, Ann Paulsen, and Kevin have flushed out the potential of the site by adding many of missing pieces and polish that time did not permit. The end result is a true collaboration that must be appreciated first-hand. Check out our new look at www.STARSInternational.org, and while you are there subscribe to our new Blog which is linked at the bottom of each page.

Upcoming Events

Larkin H.S. 2010

January 9, 8:00 am - 1:00 pm
Discover Scuba Session #1 (by appt)
 Larkin High School Pool

January 23, 8:00 am - 1:00 pm
Discover Scuba Session #2 (by appt)
 Larkin High School Pool

February 17 and 18
Rogest Art Clinic at LHS

February 19 - 21
OurWorldUnderWater Scuba Expo

February 23
Parents and Participants Meeting

PROGRAM KICKOFF WEEK

March 1, 6:00 - 9:00 pm
Week 1, Session 1
Fitness and Self Development

March 3, 6:00 - 9:00 pm
SDI Module Scuba Orientation

March 4, 6:00 - 9:00 pm
Week 1, Session 2
Fitness and Self Development

March 6, 8:30 am - 2:00 pm
Pool Session #1
 Larkin High School Pool

March 21
ICSSD Underwater Scuba Competition

Congratulations to Layne...for finishing his online SDI Training Course. Layne will be an Assistant Instructor before we know it.



New Staff Member Spotlight Jennifer McGregor



Diving near Norman Island (BVI).

by Jennifer McGregor



Until now my diving experience has been limited to the murky waters of Pearl Lake. Not that I don't love the feeling of gliding freely through the water exploring the wrecks, muddy bottom, and few fish that I've been lucky enough to see, but there is nothing that compares to diving in clear, clean salt water filled with abundant wildlife. I was lucky enough to go on a trip to the British Virgin Islands last month (11/09) and took a SCUBA trip around Norman Island. Norman Island is basically uninhabited, there is a bar and gift shop on the island and everyone who works there needs a boat to get there. The water surrounding the island is filled with coral reefs, huge rocks that peek out of the water and large open sandy bottom areas that attract sand sharks, barracuda and sea turtles.

Before even leaving port the guides prepared my equipment for me.

Of course before I actually plunged into the water I made my dive buddy, Rob go through a safety check to ensure my air was on, my weights properly secured, my buckles locked, etc. If I learned anything from Kevin Vaughn it was that safety always comes first! I entered the water, gave the OK signal and started looking through my mask at the sandy bottom below me. The water was crystal clear. As the guide signaled for us to start following I could feel my breathing increase with excitement. I took a moment, took a few deep breaths and followed him down 45 feet (about 10 feet off the bottom). The first thing I noticed was how far I could see, the ocean went on forever. It was intimidating to think about what lies beyond my field of vision. As we maneuvered over and around coral and rocks I saw countless brightly colored fish, a lobster and several shrimp and crabs crawling across the bottom. I also saw huge purple coral fans attached to the rocks. It felt as if I were in 10 feet of water as it was so light and bright. I kept checking my depth gauge and even asked to see Rob's gauge as I thought mine wasn't working correctly. At the deepest point we were 55 feet under the surface. My thoughts turned to the fact that if I had to do an emergency ascent I didn't think I'd make it. I made sure Rob was within my reach in the event of an emergency and continued on my 45 minute dive. At one point we had a 4 foot barracuda 10 – 15 feet in front of us just hovering over the rocks. We also saw a blue spotted flounder trying to hide in the sand. He was a juvenile as his eyes had not completely made it around to the top of his body. Then we were privileged enough to see a sea turtle whose shell was about 2 feet across. It moved slowly and gracefully through the water before disappearing into the abyss. When my air gauge read 1000 I let my guide know and we started to head back to the boat, stopped at the safety line attached to the back of the boat then took turns climbing onto the back of the dive boat. My first saltwater dive was done. Luckily we had one more dive scheduled and we headed to the next site. I knew that salt water diving would be great but can not even begin to convey the feeling of freedom and excitement that comes from exploring a place on earth that very few people ever get to see up close. My only regret is that I did not get SCUBA certified years ago, I have so much catching up to do and so many oceans to explore.



Announcing a new Meetup for The Chicago Scuba Meetup Group!

What: New Years Day Dive

When: January 1, 2010 9:00 AM

Where: Adler Planetarium
E Solidarity Dr
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 922-STAR

Once again, a number of brave souls from the CSM will join other divers from the Chicago area and beyond to welcome the New Year with a dive in the icy waters by the Adler Planetarium in downtown Chicago. For those that haven't done this before, visibility will be close to zero and water temps in the 30's. Beware of freezing zippers and free flowing regulators. However, we do manage to have a good time and we meet for lunch afterwards.

Last call for S.T.A.R.S. clothing order. I need to place an order for 3 embroidered shirts...in order to avoid shipping charges the order must be at least \$75. We can order other items besides shirts. Please take another look at the web site www.workwearstore.com and send me your order.

ST.A.R.S.

**International
BLOG**

Go to URL - <http://photo2.starsinternational.org>

To register, go to the blog and scroll down to the lower right hand side. There you will see a link to "Register". Click this link and then fill in your desired username and email address. In a couple minutes check your email and the site will send you a password. Once you have this password go back to the blog, scroll down to the lower right and click the "Login" link.

The first time you login you will be sent to a page where you can fill in your information and change your password to something more easily remembered. Be sure to click the "Update Profile" button to save any changes. From this page you can also click on the "Subscriptions" tab in the upper left corner. Once on the subscription page you can select how you want to receive your updates. I would suggest you select all of the Subscribed Categories to make sure you get every update. If you want to save time you can simply select "HTML" updates and then you will get the entire update delivered directly to your email. Once you are done, be sure to click the "Update Preferences" button. To go to the blog click the "View site" link at the top.

What's in the news...

Mall of America Offers Diving

SCUBA WITH THE SHARKS at the Mall of America – Minnesota for just \$195.99. Get an up-close and personal interaction with Underwater Adventures Aquarium at the Mall! Each dive session includes Aquarium orientation and dive safety, a Behind-the-Scenes tour and SCUBA diving in **Fisherman's Hollow** and **Shark Cove!** The program includes: Aquarium Admission, Behind-the-Scenes Tour, Dive into Fisherman's Hollow and Shark Cove, Souvenir t-shirt, Snacks & refreshments. **"It was one of the best dives either one of us ever had."** - Michael White

Chicago S.T.A.R.S. Boys N Girls Club

The planned expansion of S.T.A.R.S. International into metro Chicago took another small step forward on December 8th as a new core team spearheaded by Dean Nolan and 12 interested volunteers met to assess the roles and responsibilities to kick-off another program. The program is expected to run in parallel to the Elgin program, sharing all programming and scuba inven-

tory on alternating days of the Elgin program. Financing looks to be tentatively in-place and a meeting is set with the BnG Board of Directors in January to outline the venture while candidate applications are now being taken by facility director Sidney Johnson. Any interested diver should contact S.T.A.R.S. for volunteer opportunities and rewards.

Applicants on the Rise

As of today the interest by Larkin High School's students has taken another step closer to the expected 50 participants for the start of the 2010 S.T.A.R.S. International Program. More word-of-mouth promotion of the upcoming program has increased the interest level. Some students are keyed in on the availability of scholarship dollars to the top-rated graduates in October, while others see the chance to keep themselves engaged in something FUN and EXCITING during next summer. In any case, priceless rewards are there for those that make the commitment to give it their all for the duration of the program.

Keep the holidays green

Over 80,000 tons of wrapping paper are used each year equating to the lost of 50,000 trees

2.6 billion holiday cards are sold each year

More household waste is produced between Thanksgiving and New Year than any other time of year.

Save some green and make a tax-deductible donation to your favorite charity.



"One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade."

-Chinese proverb

Help yourself to a gorgeous Rogest art print for your home or office and enjoy the fact that you are helping the kids through your donation.