

S.T.A.R.S. INTERNATIONAL

February 2008 Newsletter

2007 Mentor of the Year

Congratulations to Ana Medina (2006 Graduate) hailed as the 2007 Mentor of the Year! Ana has been awarded "Trainer for a Day at Chicago's Shedd Aquarium for her extraordinary commitment. More to come on Ana's day as a mammal trainer.

Thanks to Kevin Vaughn for being so tenacious in making this happen.



S.T.A.R.S. FUNDRAISERS — YOU CAN SPREAD THE WORD TO FRIENDS & FAMILIES THAT THEY CAN DONATE ONLINE BY SENDING THEM OUR GLOBAL GIVING LINK BELOW:

[HTTP://WWW.GLOBALGIVING.COM/PR/2000/PROJ1989A.HTML](http://www.globalgiving.com/pr/2000/proj1989a.html)

Nitrox Certification Class will be S.T.A.R.S. first official fundraiser of the year.

Here is your chance to become Nitrox trained and help out a worthy cause at the same time. I will be conducting a Nitrox course on Saturday February 23, 2008. I will be donating all of the proceeds from the course to the S.T.A.R.S. program (www.starsinternational.org). This is a great program that utilizes scuba diving to instill a sense of responsibility and teamwork for "at risk" youth in the Chicago area. The kids not only become certified divers, but learn about physical fitness, responsibility, teamwork, and awareness for our environment. Many of the kids who have gone through this program have raised their grades and have become mentors to the next crop of candidates for the program. It truly is a great program that has produced some commendable divers. I will be providing free pizza and sodas for lunch. Following are the details:

Date: Saturday, February 23, 2008
Time: 10:00 am
Location: Naperville, IL
Cost: \$150 (includes materials and certification fee)

Sign up Deadline: February 11, 2008

Contact: Duane Johnson Duane@PrecisionDiving.net and for additional class information or go to www.precisiondiving.net

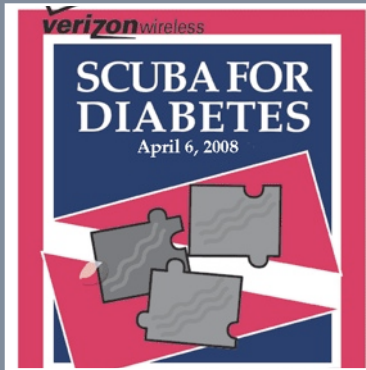


"Real integrity is doing the right thing, knowing that nobody's going to know whether you did it or not"

Oprah Winfrey

February Birthdays
Matt Mursewick - Feb 3

SCUBA FOR DIABETES



What is SCUBA for Diabetes?

Divers work together to assemble 1 of 6 giant metal puzzles in a relaxed, fun underwater setting. Puzzles are 50 sq. feet each, containing 220 giant metal pieces. Dive time is 60 minutes.

A minimum donation of \$100 per person due on or before the day of the event is required to participate. Each diver will receive one hour of dive time, a commemorative Verizon Wireless SCUBA for Diabetes t-shirt, and be eligible to order a FREE ticket to watch the Cleveland Indians take on the Toronto Blue Jays on Saturday, May 10, 2008 at 7:05pm at Jacobs Field (discounted tickets for friends and family will be available). Divers who raise \$200+ will have the opportunity to parade the field before the game!

The event will be **limited to the first 200 divers** age 10 or older with signed waivers and valid certification cards (for insurance purposes, divers without proof of certification will not be allowed to dive). Divers under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

If you are interested in participating please contact Kevin Vaughn at Kevin@STARSIInternational.org. Kevin is looking to put a team of 5 divers together for this event. You can obtain more information on this event at:

www.dagc.org/SCUBA/eventinfo.asp

VIP Class

Duane Johnson will be conducting a course on how to properly conduct visual inspections on scuba cylinders. After successful completion of this course you will be able to visually inspect high pressure scuba cylinders for defective conditions that could cause failure. You will also learn the rules for fill station operators for handling, transporting, and filling high pressure scuba cylinders. If you have any cylinders that need to be visually inspected, bring them along.

Price includes TDI manual, 5 VIP stickers and certificate fee. Lou Malnati's pizza and sodas will be provided for lunch. Certification will be through Technical Diving International (TDI).

Topics will include:

- Legal requirements
- Safe handling of cylinders
- Fill station operation
- Tools and their use
- Visual inspection indications
- Criteria for rejection and condemnation of a cylinder
- Visual inspection procedures
- Valves and valve maintenance

Date: Saturday, February 2, 2008
Time: 9:00 am
Duration: 4-6 hours
Location: Naperville, IL
Cost: \$150
Cut-off Date: Friday, January 25, 2008

Please contact Duane Johnson at duane@precisiondiving.net with any questions.

REQUIREMENTS & RULES

- Must be 18 years

Benefit for IFSA Children's Burn Camp hosted by Cheeseburger in Paradise.
Sunday, February 10, 2008 5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
\$20 - all proceeds to IFSA

Cheeseburger in Paradise
1472 Market Street, DesPlaines, IL

Join the fun or help out by selling tickets or getting raffle prizes. Please contact Mike Rogers at prospectdive@comcast.net if you need tickets or would like to make a donation.



Adventures in Sting Ray City, Grand Cayman

Beginning 2008 in Grand Cayman was the vacation of a lifetime. The most amazing part of the trip for me was the afternoon spent snorkeling and of course stopping to see the famous "Sting Ray City". Being in the same vicinity as the sting rays created the most heart pounding excitement you could imagine. Seeing the rays in person you realize just how incredibly amazing and graceful these creatures are.

One of the boat hands, Danny, was entirely too comfortable diving in and catching the rays that were swimming by. I watched at a safe distance as Danny plucked a ray out of the water like they were man's best friend. Danny told stories of how anyone who kissed the ray would get 7 years of good luck. Yeah, right. Was that what they told Steve Irwin? If there was an incident with one of the rays I wondered if I should volunteer my services as a rescue diver or try to be the first one back on the boat.

I stood back and observed the other tourists smiling as they held the rays and were enticed by Danny to plant a kiss. After kissing the ray Danny rewarded us by using the underside of the ray to shammy

our back. I thought I had seen everything but the real excitement began when the boat captain tossed my daughter, Alex, a dead squid to feed to the rays. As the captain was yelling from the boat deck on how she was suppose to hold the squid "like an ice cream cone" Alex was oblivious to the fact that she had now become the center of attention for all the rays in the water. Before she could fully right the squid into the correct ice cream position one of the rays came out of the water and literally surfed up her belly to get the squid. In a panic she intelligently dropped the squid into the water and screamed...I closed my eyes and hoped for the best. Of course, the rays still thought she had the squid and continued to circle around her and bump into her legs. The water was a little rough and it was nearly impossible to stand still in one spot. I cringed everytime I was pushed over from the waves...remembering the first words out of Danny's mouth were..."Don't pick up your feet".

The unique encounter with the rays was truly the most exciting thing I have ever done. Next time out I hope to be able to dive with the rays which was not an option this time because my daughter is not yet a diver.

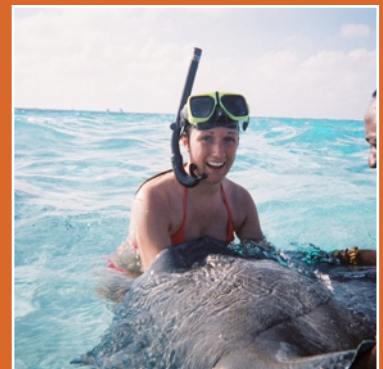
Ann Paulsen

Ray Tidbit

The male ray is about one-third of the size of the female.



STING RAY CITY



HOW SCUBA DIVING CAN CAUSE A CULTURE SHOCK WHILE MOVING ABROAD. HOW A SOCIAL GATHERING TURNED TO SOCIAL SUPPORT. BY MIRJAM IJTSMA

Once upon a time Benno (my husband) went to a show in our hometown Lelystad, in the Netherlands. Lelystad is a city an hour East of Amsterdam and 70,000 residents are calling Lelystad their town. Once a year the city organizes an exhibit where all the local clubs can come and promote themselves. Benno went there and by coincidence started to talk to someone from the dive club "Aquavit". A group of friends who love to scuba dive and share that experience with others formed "Aquavit." If you think about Scuba Diving, The Netherlands is not the first country you think of. Benno was invited to come over and visit the "Aquavit" clubhouse and join in the pool training to see for himself. The rest is history.

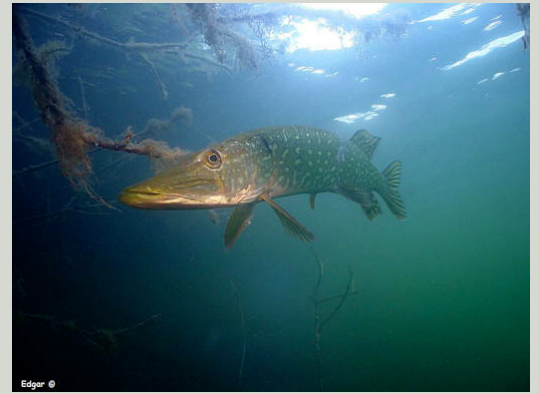
He bought his gear, trained in the pool, improved his endurance, and went to the many dive spots in the Netherlands. Along the way he motivated me so much that I started to join him. We dove in local quarries, and dove in the North Sea and rivers, we saw cold water fish and we couldn't image how diving would be with a visibility of more than 6 or 7 feet or with water temperatures so high that you didn't need a double seven millimeter dive suit. We dove nearly every Sunday 9 months a year. Within an hour drive from our house we had endless possibilities. After the dives in the morning we drove back together to the "Aquavit" clubhouse where we refilled the air tanks and ourselves. Friday evenings were pool sessions to improve our endurance, train new techniques, but most importantly to go the bar to meet with our friends afterwards. Although the equipment was quite expensive, the hobby itself was not. We only paid a monthly fee to the dive club of 10 Euro (which is currently 15 dollars) each person. The tank fills and the pool trainings were included in this price. Because the dive sites

were mainly in public areas, there was no entrance fee to be paid. Once in a while (especially if it was colder outside) we dove at a privately owned quarry for about 3 Euro and that was including the hot shower!! So we felt this was our hobby, our way of spending our leisure time. We made a lot of friends; we dove whenever we could and had so much fun. The instructors were phenomenal. They taught us how to dive, by taking the time, but they also taught us how to enjoy the aquatic life, how to look for the fish and how to survive when there was no visibility.

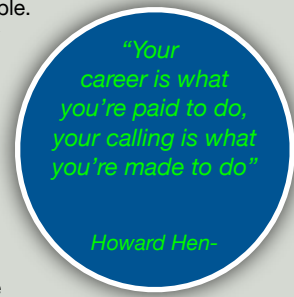
After about two years of diving in local lakes in the Netherlands, Benno came home one day and asked me what I would think of Chicago. Chicago was adjacent to Lake Michigan, and we also saw the "chain-of-lakes" so that looked fine. He was asked to move to the U.S. by his company and we had always wanted to live "abroad". We packed our stuff and took the plane to Chicago on January 1st 2006. It was cold and there was a lot of snow. So in the first couple of months we didn't think of scuba diving.

After a couple of e-mails from our friends at "Aquavit", we started to look around. Quickly we found out, that one of the culture differences was that a club in the U.S. doesn't have a clubhouse and they will meet at Starbucks or any other local establishment. Coffee instead of beer, that's different!! Because we couldn't find the diving spots we were hoping for, we decided to go for our "advanced open water". During the course we learned that the state Illinois doesn't have so many nice lakes where you can go and dive. Since the clubs do not have a clubhouse, you have to go to a dive store to get an air fill.

When I was little my mom taught me that the only thing that is for free was the light of the sun and the air you breathe. Surely my mom hasn't been to the United States; otherwise she would have known that an air fill will cost you at least 7 dollars. The next shock was the entry fee of the privately owned Quarries, twenty bucks for a day! Yes, scuba diving is expensive. Haigh Quarry was the quarry we liked the most because of the way the owner tried to really accommodate the divers and to bring in the nicest fish in the area. We love that place, everything is clean, and everybody is so sweet. And top of the bill is of course the scuba version of the drive through; the air delivery service to the water. You don't even have to leave the water to get some fresh air. Perfect.



Because we still hadn't found what we were looking for Benno decided to get in touch with some scuba clubs, to see if we were able to dive at more spots with people who are like-minded. So one evening we went to a club meeting and there we met Ann, Michael and Kevin from STARS. We finally found what we were looking for. A group of people who enjoy diving and really like to share that passion with other people. We both really enjoy working with and for 'at risk students'. We found out that we couldn't dive the way we were used to so we decided to leave the scuba club behind and see what we could do for S.T.A.R.S.



After half a year of looking around and helping every now and then we finally can say that we found our new diving club. We really enjoy helping kids see a better future by doing what we really like to do; diving. It is great to be able to share our experience with and passion for diving with others and giving students a better chance in life.

You can find more information about S.T.A.R.S. International at www.starsinternational.org

Check out <http://www.casteleijnsplas.nl/> for some pictures of the Dutch underwater world.

Congratulations to Benno IJtsma on taking the role of Activities Director & Scheduling Coordinator. The S.T.A.R.S. organization and staff are pleased to have both you and Mirjam as key contributors in 2008.



The Ultimate Getaway, March 6 -10, \$899.95 per Diver

For new and the experienced divers, join Midwest SCUBA Staff for Caribbean like diving in the Dry Tortugas National Park. Almost 70 miles west of Key West lay a cluster of coral reefs called the Dry Tortugas. These reefs along with surrounding shoals and waters make up the Dry Tortugas National Park. Known for its famous bird and marine life, and includes the largest 19th century American coastal forts.

Let the Midwest SCUBA staff share this exciting liveaboard experience. Log 13 dives over 2 ½ days. The *Ultimate Getaway* is a 100' vessel, air conditioned bunk style quarters, restrooms, showers, space for 20 divers comfortable, air/nitrox fills, and large dive platform.

Sample Itinerary

Day 1 – Depart Chicago, arriving at the marina in Fort Myers Beach between 3pm – 6pm. After a boat briefing, you will be off for an overnight cruise to the remote Dry Tortugas National Park.

Day 2 – Arrive around 7am on the first dive site. Breakfast will be served before or after the first dive. All based upon our preference. We will continue to move to different dive sites throughout the day. Depths among the dive sites range from 40 – 80 feet. Lunch and dinner will be worked in between dives. You won't go hungry! Then we will end our day with a night dive.

Day 3 – Similar schedule as Day 2, we can fit in a visit to Fort Jefferson National Monument. In the past, we usually will wake up this morning docked at the fort. Then it is off to more diving.

Day 4 – You will wake up and the boat will be anchored to the *Baja California*, a World War II transport ship, now sitting at 114 feet of water near the coast of Naples.

The next and final dive will be on an Air Force relay tower. Enjoy a late breakfast and enjoy the

cruise back to Fort Myers arriving in the afternoon. Due to our diving activities, it will be necessary to stay overnight in Fort Myers (if you are flying).

Day 5 – Catch an early flight back to Chicago.

Includes The Following (per diver)

- Charter
- Unlimited Diving
- Meals & Nonalcoholic Beverages
- Air Fills
- Tanks & Weights
- Ground Transportation
- Hotel (The night we return to Fort Myers at the Comfort Suites, breakfast included)

Additional Cost

- Nitrox – Unlimited Fills \$40
- Gratuities
- Air Travel to Ft. Myers, Florida
(Please arrive no later than 4PM on March 6, 2008)
- Detailed flyer at www.midwestscuba.net or contact Bradley at 314-504-2415



Kids Korner

by Matt Mursewick

Scuba, Scouts, and Life in General have changed a lot over the previous year (in a great way!!!) Scuba and Scouts go hand-in-hand, like during the search & recovery class we had to tie different knots and in scouts it's a requirement to know how to tie different knots like the bowline to rescue people. Since I became an open water diver I was able to get a patch for scuba in scouts to show I'm certified, it's awesome!!! And with life in general scuba has helped me in many ways, even though my grades were outstanding last year they have raised a little. I have gotten to make new friends and going through STARS has been a great experience!!

Below are a couple of photos from a recent outing with Matt's Boy Scout Troop to a submarine USS Cobia (SS-245).



Upcoming Pool Dates

Feb 23, 4-10 pm.....Discover Scuba
Mar 22, 4-10 pm..... Skin Diving
Mar 29, 4-10 pm.....Confined Water
April 19, 4-10 pm..... Confined Water
May 3, 4-10 pm..... Confined Water
June 7/8, 4-10 pm..... Confined Water

Dates to Calendar...

Feb 2..... VIP Class
Feb 2-10..... Candidate Selection
Feb 10..... IFSA Children's Fundraiser
Feb 21..... ICSSD Appreciation Dinner
Feb 23..... Nitrox Fundraiser

Mar 6-10..... Liveaboard - Dry Tortugas
March 7, 6:30-9pm..... Dive Club Meeting
Mar 16..... Underwater Scuba Competition
April 6..... Scuba for Diabetes Fundraiser
April 11, 6:30-9pm..... Dive Club Meeting

Our World Underwater - February 15 - 17