

S.T.A.R.S.

International Newsletter



April 2010

S.T.A.R.S. Takes Orbit With New Equipment



Following the Skin Diving instruction provided by veteran instructor **Jacob Johnson** on March 6th, S.T.A.R.S. participants took to the pool on March 20th to christen the new Oceanic regulators/computers and Omega BCDs. The unique confined water training plan paired 2 participants with one adult mentor in the water who orchestrated their movement between training stations/activities to expedite training for the large group and ensure safety. Premier S.T.A.R.S. instructor, **Mark Niewoehner**, joined the fray with Jacob and 8 Certified Assistants and Advanced adult divers. This is the first of five 6-hour sessions of confined water skill introduction/evaluation which will prepare new divers for the rigors of open water diving. The gradual introduction of deep water provides divers with the confidence in both the equipment and their personal knowledge to move ahead in the program. **Good Luck Divers....and see you at the deep end soon!**

Coming Events

DUI Demo Dog
Days—Haig Quarry

June 12-13

Try any DUI dry suit/BCD
with admission & small fee

Brookwood School District Sees S.T.A.R.S.

On March 16th, Kevin met with the Superintendent (Pam H.) of Brookwood City Schools in Glenwood about the S.T.A.R.S. program. The Superintendent has an interest in applying S.T.A.R.S. in a middle school setting as was done in Kimball Middle School of Elgin. Following some preliminary investigation within the school system, another on-site meeting is planned to shake out the requirements for a potential 2011 program. Seems like we need to start growing more staff!





Kevin at work deep in the Rainforest tank.

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.” --- Booker T. Washington.



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From the Tank

Over the past two months, the Rainforest Café has given Kevin the chance to earn a little extra cash to support the needs of S.T.A.R.S. by cleaning their tropical fish tanks. In addition, it has provided him some much needed solitude. The experience has certainly been entertaining for the many dinner patrons in the restaurant, and also at

times the experience has had TEETH. The fish tend to have particular favorites to chew on; and when Kevin has turned his back, he has been picked or chewed on a few times by the tank bullies (goat fish, gray angelfish, clown trigger fish).

The tank's biggest loss came in mid March when the ten year old snowflake eel

died without warning. Upon examination, it was discovered that the eel was not ill, but perhaps died of loneliness being the only eel in that tank for years.

Safety measures and equipment improvements at the Rainforest make this an ideal place of employment for one of our future S.T.A.R.S. graduates.

Fund Raising

Calling all staff!!! Calling all graduates!!! We badly need to sell off our stock of over 120 13"x19" Rogest S.T.A.R.S. International prints. This is our first and most critical fund raiser to start the year and these prints make a great addition to any home, office, bedroom wall, or kitchen. Please step up and commit to selling 4 or more of these on behalf of the program to keep us alive. They are the perfect reward for a donation of \$15 or more, and the cost is charitable contribution/tax deductible.



Special S.T.A.R.S. Thank You!

We all wish to thank Irene and Captain Tony Bach for their donation of a Sea N Sea digital camera along with a wide array of other dive gear presented to S.T.A.R.S. on March 6th. Their personal donation of over \$1K in equipment will greatly help us expand our programming and equipment to the students this year and beyond Thanks Irene and Tony for thinking of us! Also a special thank you to the Chicago Aquanauts Dive Club, Phil Seils, and Doug Chalmers who offered to loan STARS twelve 80 cf air tanks from the CASA training fleet for our training dives. Doug got the loaners VIPed just in time for Saturday's session.

“Be bold and courageous. When you look back on your life, you’ll regret the things you didn’t do more than the ones you did.”

S.T.A.R.S. Starship on the Launch Pad



Veteran staff member and Cary-Grove High School teacher, **Layne Holter**, has taken command of the new STARSship equipment truck (currently unnamed) and has the auto shop students of Cary-Grove High School prepping it to launch again!

will depart on its own power and brakes by April 1st with offers to paint, equip, and letter it in the coming weeks. Special thanks to **Layne, Frank, Matt Schirmacher, Irene and Captain Tony** for their leg work to pull in individuals to get our new rolling stockroom roadworthy!

Although it was towed into the high school, rumor has it that it

Checkpoint NOT Checkmate

March 20th was the first of the S.T.A.R.S. "Checkpoint" meetings held at key points within the program among staff, participants, and parents. The intent was to provide parents with feedback on their children's performance in the program while at the same time providing participants with metrics and observations regarding their involvement. At this point, we are intentionally pushing participants for the first time by task-loading them with additional homework, and less time to get it done. We emphasized that school work must come first; and if their grades fluctuate downward, their further involvement may be in jeopardy. Program involvement is a reward that must be earned. It was stressed that the confined water work will get more physically demanding and that the best preparation will be to stretch their physical limits in the fitness portion of the program.

While the team is quickly gelling through Self Development led by Marisa Aurelius and Jessie Valencia, the SDI academic scores must also be substantial enough to indicate students are following the material and grasping the diving knowledge. Recommendations on improved study habits were passed along so that participants could begin to use the SDI Open Water books as "reference guides" for the upcoming quizzes and comprehensive exams.

Staff member, Mike Johnson, has offered to meet with students at 5:30 prior to class to offer his assistance with the material. You go Mike!

Parental feedback from the 20th was "ALL GOOD" with positive changes already noticeable on the home front!!! Way to go staff!

Staff Member of the Month ***** Marisa Aurelius



My name is Marisa Aurelius and I am a volunteer for the greatest and most influential youth program, S.T.A.R.S. I am a manager at a sporting goods store and attended graduate school at Roosevelt University to become a school or community counselor. My dream is to help those who are in need and direct those who need a little guidance. Being a part of this program, has kept me connected and in touch with my skills and my goal of student counseling. I have always loved the water and enjoyed the times when I would go snorkeling and explore the world beneath the water. I can only hope that I will be able to take it one-step further and finish my scuba certification. I am a believer in the S.T.A.R.S program and know it is an interesting way to keep kids involved in something positive, at the same time teaching them skills they will need their entire lives. I know, these young people are learning from us, but I also learn about myself while working with every one of them.



S.T.A.R.S. to the North!

Kenosha City Schools



On March 11th, Kevin and Ann met with the Minority Academic Affairs Specialist, Norris J., from the Kenosha City Schools and a small group of local youth and diving experts to provide a full explanation of the program. Following the presentation, the group appeared impressed because the program met a desire they have had on the back of their plate for some time. Norris requested an immediate budget forecast for the program which they hope to fund as a start-up including assistance with a "staff search". Since the meeting, Kevin has already approached the Kenosha area for interested parties/shops/volunteers, and he plans to expand his search into other area local dive clubs. Diver Dan's shop of Kenosha has already expressed an interest in this collaboration with the school.



“Braking Burnout of STARS”

Unexpected program attrition is always a significant disappointment to everyone involved, especially when it comes “out of the blue” (not implying a shark attack).

This year something new is being tried to prevent further attrition. S.T.A.R.S. has solicited staff volunteers to pair up with participants and accept a more active role keeping the teens engaged and their outlooks positive. Staff will

touch base with their assigned participants twice a week to keep a finger on their pulse and their heads in the game towards finishing this incredible opportunity.

Special thanks to S.T.A.R.S. staff members; Frank Kross, Mike Johnson, Jessie Valencia, Ann Paulsen, Ana Medina, Irene Bach, and Heather Gudino for taking on the added responsibility to keep our young participants shooting for the graduation from S.T.A.R.S. in October!”

From Participants Posted on the S.T.A.R.S. Blog

What scared our participants in week #1.....

- * Not knowing if I setup my scuba gear correctly.
- * Whether something bad eventually will happen to me in the water.
- * Will I be able to dive right?

What excited our participants in week #1....

- * We got to learn how to set up scuba gear.
- * I will be spending more time with the STARS staff.
- * We will see tons of different species of fish.
- * I am going to learn sign language.
- * The prospect of going to the ocean and encountering wildlife.
- * Putting together equipment was hard, but I did it!

