



June 2010

S.T.A.R.S. International Newsletter

A Senior STAR

Upcoming Events

Parents/Participants Night

June 9th
7-8 Pm Larkin HS

Open Water Diving

June 14-20
(based on the weather)

2010 S.T.A.R.S. participant, Frank Gutierrez, was the first high school senior to accept Kevin's personal challenge to make STARS a priority during his senior year and through the fall of 2010. Frank (and his parents) wagered a deposit of \$50 to indicate that he would finish what he started .

Once Frank finishes the program in October (with attendance at all events) he will not only receive his \$50 deposit, but will also receive an extra \$50 from Kevin's personal bank account. "Participants all decide to face the challenges of the program for different reasons and in some cases it may come down to a simple

lure of monetary reward to commit beyond the school year." says Kevin.

To Kevin, Frank's ultimate success is the goal that is worth the wager. The staff supports Frank well beyond high school and we all hope that he sees a future in joining S.T.A.R.S. as a staff member.



A STAR Rises

May 29th marked a significant milestone in the life of S.T.A.R.S. staff member Miss Ana Lilia Medina as she graduated from Larkin High School with many distinguished honors. Ana proudly accepted her diploma with recognition in the areas of National Honor Society, President's Award for Academic Excellence, Member of the Visual & Performing Arts Academy, and Mu Alpha Theta Honor Society (Math) in the upper 10% of the class of 2010. Ana's impressive accomplishments extend far beyond her academic school work to many honorable mentions for her "Family Services" work done within the S.T.A.R.S. organization. She has touched the hearts and minds of every youth and staff member in the program. Ana has a knack of seeing success beyond every adversity that has shaken her since birth.

Ana proudly begins college this fall on a partial scholarship at Illinois College in Jacksonville where she will begin her studies towards a degree in Graphic Design. We hope to encourage Ana to stay closely involved with S.T.A.R.S. and return as a dive Pro or instructor in the coming year. To say that the S.T.A.R.S. family is proud of Ana is a huge understatement. Unknowingly, Ana has a broad level of support behind her from the many positive ripples in the community that she has initiated as a young adult and role model.



A STAR at Prom 2010 by Ana



My date and I were each a few minutes late getting ready for the prom for different reasons. I was late because I helped decorate the ballroom, and even though my hair was not done I managed to do it within 15 minutes when I got home. Everybody blamed me for being behind schedule and says we got lost on the way but we didn't. The parents of my prom date, McKinley, took so many pictures it made us even later.

That was the bad thing; but after we arrived at the prom, everybody

looked very surprised and gave us a huge round of applause. We danced and had a great time. Later we decided as a group to go to post prom at the Elgin Centre. At the post prom, there were organized games and activities run by volunteers from Elgin and Dr. Tuin.

We really enjoyed ourselves and even participated in a tricycle race. We had a blast.. arriving home at 3:00 am just in time to grab some sleep and get up at 7:00 am for the pool session.

From the Bottom of the Tank



Memorial Day marked a milestone at the Rainforest Café in Woodfield Mall, IL. It was the first time ever that the two 5,000 gallon saltwater tanks (with a water bridge in the middle) were drained for cleaning. But where does someone put nearly 100 fish and 10,000 gallons of water for 3-4 days.? Well of course... a salt water swimming pool! Yes, the Rainforest Café curator, Libby, had large child's swimming pool erected in the Rainforest "Amazon Room", the private party dining area. Then the water was transferred while the staff scooped out the fish with a wide array of nets.

A little over 5 hours later the final aquatic hold-outs surfaced in the last remaining inches of water. This was truly a sight that you had to see to believe... so Kevin got photos after he finished his role of clean-up duty once the hard work was done.



The next step of the process is to treat, scrub, and power wash the artificial coral heads then refill the tanks and begin to treat the water again which quickly got nasty in an unfiltered pool. Interestingly plastic crates were tossed into the pool for the interim to create protective habitat for fish in transition.

Take'm Deep

S.T.A.R.S. participants are on cusp of plunging to a new level and breaking down new mental barriers as they penetrate the surface of Pearl Lake, a unique resort located in South Beloit, ILL on the Illinois-Wisconsin border. Pearl Lake offers camping, swimming at a secluded beach, scuba diving, and limited fishing. In addition to water sports, the lake hosts an impressive restaurant serving a variety of steak, seafood, and sandwiches guaranteed to satisfy any appetite. RV camping is another big seasonal draw.

Many local dive shops use the lake for scuba training during the summer. The lake offers a very controlled aquatic environment for new divers including an assortment of deliberately sunken attractions such as a school bus, airplane, canal boat, submarine, flat bed trailer, small boats, and a gutted ice cream truck. Many great memories lie ahead within the depths of Pearl Lake.

Featured Staff Member—Mark Niewoehner (by Mark himself)



Jacques Cousteau hooked me and reeled me in, in terms of being awed by the world underwater. With horrific practices like shark fining, dolphin slaughter in Japan, and large scale oil pollution like what is happening now in the Gulf of Mexico, I think it is even more important that we educate the next generation about the significance of our planet's water.

Learning to dive in an underground lead mine in Missouri (Bonne Terre Mine), I've already inspired my daughter to become an accomplished diver through my love of the underwater world. My move from Missouri to Chicago has provided me with a broader dive industry, opportunities, and exposure. I volunteer weekly at the Shedd Aquarium in the Amazon Exhibit and I plan to be a Shedd diver in the near future.

As a member of both the Chicago Scuba Meet-Up Dive Club and Underwater Archaeological Society Dive Club of Chicago, I've made significant industry contracts. This exposure led to my involvement with S.T.A.R.S. International and their goal to expand into Chicago. This is such a great program to mentor and help high schools children motivate themselves through scuba. My participation with the Elgin S.T.A.R.S. group has been fantastic. I am inspired and thrilled when I see S.T.A.R.S. kids succeed by overcoming challenges they face.

I'm looking forward to the open water dives at Pearl Lake in a couple of weeks and I'm hopeful that we can establish a S.T.A.R.S. program in the city of Chicago to inspire other kids.



Thursday, May 27th marked the final night of both fitness and self-development activities. We spent 12 weeks conditioning the kids for their upcoming Open Water dives beginning Monday, June 14th. The following are the categories we took metrics from:

Cardio – 14 lap run on indoor track

Strength – 60 second abdominal curl ups

Endurance – push ups to failure

Flexibility – hamstring flexibility using sit & reach

On average the kids improved their cardio by 13%, strength by 146% and muscular endurance by 105%. There were only two participants that either decreased or had no change in their ham-

Fitness Metrics

string flexibility.

Highlights included Mrs. Palacios and Melissa taking almost 3 minutes off of their run time. Jorge turning in an impressive 5:17 and Michael having a 5:31 on the nearly mile run. Some of the biggest strength gains were made by Mrs. Palacios, Claudia, and Marco who all at least doubled their original fitness metric. The endurance testing included push ups until the participant was unable to complete another rep. Some of the top scorers were Chad with 67, Mrs. Palacios with 52. Jorge and Daisy each had 50 and Claudia finished with 49.

The most significant changes in flexi-

bility goes to the ladies – Mrs. Palacios with +2.5", Daisy and Claudia each with +2.25".

It was uplifting to watch all the participants take the fitness testing seriously and really put forth an all out effort. By the end of the run everyone was flushed red and breathing heavily but ecstatic with the measured changes they had achieved.

A big thank you goes out to the fitness staff of **Gil, Heather, Frank, and Matt**. Also, **Marisa and Jessie** who both did many nights of double duty by attending fitness and self-development. These are the most impressive fitness results we've had thus far and the kids were enthusiastic about continuing to meet for more fitness and self-development work outs.



Ana's graduation picture.

Congratulations to Norris Jones our newest S.T.A.R.S. Board member

“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

S.T.A.R.S. Inaugural Underwater Competition

May 22nd was certainly the first time that anyone had ridden a tricycle in the Larkin High School Pool. The kids did just that along with the ping pong ball push, cone head relay, and the underwater pipe building. S.T.A.R.S. Instructor, Jacob Johnson, divided Mrs. Palacios and the kids into 3 groups: Team 1: Chad, Sebastian, Daisy and Jorge; Team 2: Brenda, Marco, Jacob and Claudia; Team 3: Mrs. Palacios, Frank, Melissa and Michael.

Team 2 sped through the tricycle race only to be disqualified at the end because the wheels were airborne during the race and not in contact with the pool bottom. Team 1 team members were incredible at the pipe building and were out of the water first.

Cone head relay – Team 3

Tricycle race – Team 1

Ping Pong ball push – Team 3

Underwater Pipe Building – Team 1

After all of the scheduled events, Teams 1 and 3 were tied with 7 points each. The final event was a tired diver tow featuring Chad and Jorge from Team 1 and Michael and Frank from Team 3. Team 1 was able to muster an extra reserve of energy and outkicked Team 3 in the final meters of the pool. Nearly all the participants' parents attended the event and were on hand afterwards to go through the 3rd Checkpoint Meeting with staff. A few of the Larkin staff and administrators stopped by the competition. Congratulations for the fantastic effort from all the participants and a big "thank you" to the staff who orchestrated this event.

