



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

2010 Graduates from Larkin High School Program

Nick's Pizza in Elgin hosted the August 2010 meeting with the current participants of the Larkin High School program. Due to a lack of funding additional group dive opportunities were questionable and it was decided to give the participants their credentials and snorkeling gear so they could pursue diving opportunities the rest of the summer.

Participants will be expected to complete the SDI Equipment Specialty Class on October 24th and have also been invited to do a Hyperbaric Chamber dive in November. Following that, S.T.A.R.S. hopes to host a Christmas gathering as we reveal plans to name potential mentors from the group to co-staff the program in 2011.



New SDI Class On-Schedule

SDI/TDI/PADI Instructor, Duane Johnson, will be making his debut with S.T.A.R.S. presenting the SDI Equipment Specialty Class to be delivered at Larkin High School on October 24th from 10 am to 4 pm. This is part of the **PLANNED 2010 program and ALL Open Water graduates are expected to be there** to obtain their first SDI specialty certification. There is no diving or pool work involved in this course. Rather Duane will review in detail each of the pieces

of dive gear used, giving participants a vast knowledge of how it functions and how to care for it to make it last.

Duane is an outstanding instructor and this is not to be missed. Reminders about mandatory attendance will be delivered three weeks prior to the event.

Upcoming Events

- **Sept. 18 at 9:00 am**—International Beach Clean-Up & S.T.A.R.S. Picnic
Blackwell Forest Preserve in Warrensville
Clean-up activities for divers/non-divers & shore clean-up. **RSVP to Kevin by 9/11 for this event.**
- **Sept. 24 & 25** - Overnight Staff Dive Trip Mermet Springs in southern IL. Leave Friday after work, drive 6 hrs., sleep, dive on Sat. (Mermet Springs is home to the 727 jet used in the US Marshalls movie). Also this weekend is **DUI DOG DAYS** which gives anyone a chance to try Dry Suit Diving with DUI on site at no cost.
- **Oct. 3**—Pumpkin Carving at Haigh Quarry
- **Oct. 16**—ICSSD President's Night at Sawa's Dinner Raffle Event
\$23 with over 100 raffle prizes



MORE Upcoming Events

- **Oct. 24** - SDI Equipment Specialty Class for all graduates and staff
Larkin High School, Room TBA
- **Nov. 7 or 13** - Hyperbaric Chamber Dive/Tour
Lutheran General Hospital
Reservation & payment due by Sept. 15
- **Nov. 13** - Diveheart Fundraiser Luau
- **Nov. 17-20** - DEMA Las Vegas

International Beach Clean-Up and S.T.A.R.S. Picnic

On Saturday, Sept. 18, at 9:00 am, the Illinois Scuba Council will host the local 2010 International Beach Clean-Up event for all local dive clubs including S.T.A.R.S. Divers will be required to show their C-Card to the council personnel to participate in the dive. Equipment to assist divers is available through S.T.A.R.S. with advance reservation by Sept. 4.

The event will be held at Blackwell Forest Preserve in Warrensville which is on Butterfield Road (Rt. 45) 1/2 mile west of Winfield Road. Following the clean-up event, a picnic lunch of burgers, hotdogs, and soft drinks will be provided at NO COST.

Come one. Come all to dive the lakes in Blackwell Forest Preserve, help the environment, and have fun diving at this venue which is normally off limits to divers.

REQUIRED 2010

STAFF UPGRADES

Time is running out for all certified S.T.A.R.S. volunteers to gain ONE additional certification which was agreed to last October at volunteer orientation. Each of our certified dive staff (in any element) should contact Kevin to request one additional course ASAP or by Sept. 10th. Some costs may apply based on the course requested.



Diving the "UP" of Michigan

By Matt

Shirmacher

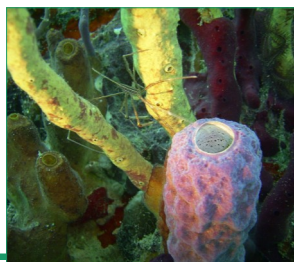
While on a summer family vacation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the "U.P" for those familiar with "Yoopers", I decided to do my very first Great Lakes dive by jumping into the largest of the Great Lakes, Lake Superior. Lake Superior is the largest fresh water lake in the world and is approximately the size of South Carolina. Although the lake is over 1,300 feet deep, the diving I was planning was in much shallower waters off the coast. The southern coast of Lake Superior consists of several underwater preserves which contain shipwrecks dating back to the late 1800's up to 1975 when the SS Edmund Fitzgerald sank off the coast of Whitefish Point, Michigan. I dove two well preserved wooden shipwrecks in the Alger Underwater Preserve.

See the S.T.A.R.S. Blog for the full article and additional photos. Thanks Matt... what a clear tale of these ships and the stunning conditions.

Diving in ST. Croix USVI

By Kevin Vaughn

This year I was so looking forward to taking the Larkin High School STARS to St. Croix because it was a spot I had never dived before and was it was the last of the USVI I had not visited. After meeting up with S.T.A.R.S. International partner, Scuba St. Croix, I completed two days of diving on the western end of the island. Since it is one of the least visited islands, the reef system is well preserved. The highlight of the dive was the famous Fredriksted Pier that hosts cruise ships visiting St. Croix. Below water, each concrete pillar was a virtual display case of life that would take at least 10 minutes per pillar to thoroughly explore. I completed 2 one-hour dives and visited only a fraction of the pier's inhabitants. Some of the larger specimens spotted were an octopus, spotted eagle ray, and sting ray passing by with countless other macro critters. This experience has transformed me into a macro diver. You will understand why from the photos of my trip. 2011 offers the promise of getting S.T.A.R.S. shining brightly in the USVI from a future host.



CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!!!

The next time you see Irene Bach and college student, Ana Medina, give them both a HUGE round of applause. Both ladies completed the coveted SDI Divemaster certification in June and received their c-cards on August 9th at Nick's Pizza. It was a job well done and no easy task, but both young ladies have come away with refined skills and knowledge that will make them valuable divers to everyone they encounter. Congratulations and good luck in your next step as Dive Pros.



Diving in Cozumel is like diving in an earthly paradise. The small island of Cozumel sits on the northern end of the second largest reef in the world and nearly every dive is a drift dive As such, you cover a lot of ground using very little air relative to dives that require the use of fins to move through the dive site. Cozumel is also the perfect place for both novice and experienced divers with nearly 100 dive sites that offer something for everyone whether you are looking for impressive coral or lots of fish. In the summer the water temperature at 100 feet is still 84 degrees and the visibility is over 100 feet which is slightly more comfortable than Pearl Lake.

Diving Cozumel by Layne Holter

We stayed at the Park Royal all-inclusive resort and only had to walk across the street to Babieca Dive Center to dive. The facility offered free locker use so I never needed to haul my dive gear back to the resort until it was time to go home. I did several 2-tank morning dives, afternoon dives, and night dives. Even though I visited a few sites more than once, there was always something new to see and experience.

I saw at least 25 turtles, dozens of rock lobster, crabs, eels, squid, octopus, star fish, sea horses, jelly fish, not less than 10 toad fish (4 on one dive), flounder, barracuda, sturgeon, sting rays, eagle rays, sharks, dolphins (yes there are wild dolphins off the southern coast of Cozumel), and we captured/killed lion fish on many dives.

If you are not familiar with lion fish, they are not native to the Caribbean, and they have no natural predators. The lion fish are destroying the reefs because they are ferocious eaters and reproduce at an alarming rate. They can grow to the size of a beach ball and literally inhale everything in sight. Lion fish are also

very hardy and by illustration one young lion fish was net-caught; and after spending 20 minutes out of the water on the boat, it was still alive and well enough to be put back in the water. They are amazing, they are beautiful, but they do not belong in the Caribbean. On a potentially positive note, we did see a red snapper eat one so maybe they will have a predator.

Many dives offer swim-throughs which are arches, short tunnels, small caverns and giant coral heads that thrive in the relatively shallow waters just above 60 feet. Cozumel is known for the amazing wall dives that are not to be missed. While most dives start in 30 - 40 feet of water, there is nothing like floating out over the edge and down the wall to 90 or 100 feet and letting the current carry you along the wall while suspended above 2,000 or 3,000 feet of water. Cozumel should be on your bucket list of places to dive!

Featured Staff Member: Mike Johnson

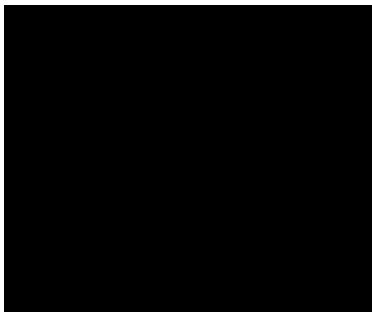
Mike Johnson joined the faithful army of S.T.A.R.S. volunteers last February and has been "diving in" ever since to help students learn more about becoming a skilled and safe scuba diver. "When my kids (5 of them) were growing up, I enjoyed being involved coaching and helping run the sports programs where they were involved. After they graduated high school, I missed not being involved with helping youth develop life skills through organized activities," Mike said. Mike enjoys teaching and considers himself to be a life-long learner, "Never stop studying and getting better at what you love to do." he reminds everyone. One of his favorite things to say is, "I love it when I end the day

smarter than when I started." Every Wednesday night this past spring, you would find Mike in the S.T.A.R.S. classroom at Larkin High School assisting the instructors and students. "I want to be a smart diver," said Mike. "When you must learn enough about something that you can teach it to someone else, it really sticks with you." Mike feels that understanding the physics and physiology of diving is an important part of being a safe diver.

Mike obtained his open water scuba certification in January of 2009 and has not stopped training since. He became rescue diver certified in February of this year and is in the final phases of SDI Divemaster training under the skillful



training of our own Kevin Vaughn. His goal is to become an Open Water Instructor before the beginning of the 2011 S.T.A.R.S. Program next March. "I hope to be able to help S.T.A.R.S. students learn scuba for many years to come," he said.



Night Diving

From the Bottom of the Tank

Following a severe injury to Kevin's back in mid July, He has been forbidden to return to his Rain Forest tank cleaning activities. Kevin hopes to return to the Rain Forest in early September and hopefully add some of the current S.T.A.R.S. dive staff and graduates to the Rain Forest dive crew as they currently have several vacancies to fill.

"There is a great difference between worry and concern. A worried person sees a problem, and a concerned person solves the problem."

**Diving in
North Dakota
By Mike
Jonson**

Almost every weekend in July and August divers travel from all around North Dakota to dive near the face of the Garrison Dam. The embankment of this earthen dam is 2 ½ miles long and 2050 ft. wide at its base. The lake that was formed above the dam is 14 miles wide at its widest point, has some 1500 miles of extended shoreline and depths that reach 175 ft. The body of water held back by the dam is named Lake Sakakawea, after the Indian princess who aided the Louis and Clark Expedition when they navigated the great Missouri River in 1805 in their quest to find a waterway route to the Pacific Ocean. The elevation here is 1,850 feet above sea level so this is considered an altitude dive. Almost all of the diving that occurs on the lake takes place on the face of the dam in 20 to 60 feet of water. The bottom here is boulders and slabs of granite while most of the rest of the lake has a muddy bottom.

My first dive of the summer was the second weekend in July. The bottom temps were 65 degrees so diving with a 7MM wetsuit and hood was the most comfortable. By the end of July, bottom temps were up to 72 degrees and some hearty North Dakotans were diving in 3mm wetsuits and no hood. Air temps were in the 80's or 90's every day.

Please go to the S.T.A.R.S. Blog to read the full story and see a picture of Garrison Dam that Mike speaks of. The story sheds a mythical tale that North Dakota is so close to the Arctic circle that it never thaws out the 8 feet of snow and ice they get annually. Thanks Mike for really putting North Dakota diving on the map for us.



I strained my neck so I could look out the airplane window. We were starting our approach to Turks and Caicos (TCI). As we were descending, the biggest thing that struck me was the color of the water. The water is an unique shade of bluish green. Very cool! I was looking forward to getting in the water. The drive to the hotel was great. At one point, we could see water on both sides of the island.

Diving in TCI by Duane Johnson

August is a great time to go to TCI. The weather was perfect, with the only exception of a brief rain-storm one afternoon. Diving conditions were near perfect. The worst wave conditions must have been only one footer with no currents. I was able to get in four dives while we were there. All dives, but one, were done on the North Point of Providenciales. All dives were wall dives, but with unlimited visibility, we could easily see the bottom (which was at 200+ feet).

The first dive in that kind of visibility was foreign to me. It has been a long time since I last dove in warm water, so I wasn't used to diving without my dry suit and being able to see the bottom from the surface. Each dive lasted about an hour and dive depths ranged from 50 to 100 feet. On the dives we saw a few reef sharks, turtles, octopus, and the usual Caribbean reef fish. Overall, this was a great trip. The island was great and the diving didn't disappoint me in the slightest. I'm looking forward to going back again some-day.

From the Board Room:

- ◆ S.T.A.R.S. will use the recently donated AT&T truck as a fund raising item and has put it up for sale.
- ◆ Blackbeard's Cruise will be raffled as part of our fund raising plan.
- ◆ New fundraising plan in development by Sept. 15. Sept. 13 will kick off a fund raising subcommittee which will meet at Comfort Suites Lobby at 7 pm to get hold of the reins and transition ideas into actions.
- ◆ Bob Marth funded new software for S.T.A.R.S. fleet of lap tops.
- ◆ Rosey Valencia provided a \$750 donation which will be matched by her employer.
- ◆ Equipment rebuilds are underway by Chicagoland Scuba on most of our Oceanic gear.
- ◆ The Board is looking into group insurance for Dive Pros and the dive operations element of S.T.A.R.S.
- ◆ Future host agencies will be required to have a member on the S.T.A.R.S. Board of Directors.
- ◆ Future programs will be guided by a contractual agreement between S.T.A.R.S. and the host to add more stability and accountability.