

April 2011



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

Welcome New Board Members

2011 brings sweeping changes to 60% of the Board of Directors with 4 new members from the Kenosha area; Ismael Torres, Allison (AJ) Johnson, David Hood, and Norris Jones (formerly with S.T.A.R.S. for part of 2010). These new board members have put on their deep diving suits and have gotten into the fray being actively involved in staffing the 2011 venture with the Kenosha Unified School District.

Ismael and Norris will be involved in Self Development while AJ and David will be driving the Fitness component. Setting a precedent, all the new board members will be actively engaged in training alongside the participants beginning in April.



Ismael Torres



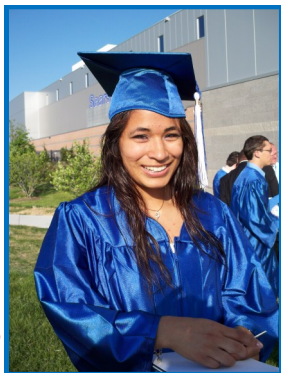
Allison (AJ) Johnson



David Hood



Norris Jones



Taking on Yet Another Challenge

2005 S.T.A.R.S. graduate, Ana Lilia Medina is nearing completion of her first year of college at the University of Illinois in Jacksonville, IL. Ana is attending college on a scholarship and has switched her Major in Graphic Arts to a Business Major. Ana has a full schedule every day which includes classes, studying, sports activities, plus handling a job tied to her scholarship. During a recent visit, Ana voiced her desire to participate in summer diving events with the current candidates. When she finishes college, Ana would like to assume leadership of the S.T.A.R.S. Program. Looks like Kevin can plan on retirement after all!

Featured Staff Member: Stephanie Bedolla

My name is Stephanie Angel and I was raised in Kenosha, WI. I work for the Kenosha Unified School District as a bilingual liaison for an inner city school. I have 2 daughters and enjoy spending time with them doing anything and everything. When I'm not spending time running kids to soccer practice, games or sleepover parties; I enjoy reading books, watching movies, and photography. I love capturing the most memorable moments in time and keeping them forever.

I have always been interested in helping people in one way or another, but especially kids. So many kids are not as fortunate as I was to have grown up in a good home, with great parents to instill the value of respect. They may not feel loved and cared for as I did as a child. I hope that my time with S.T.A.R.S. will make an impact on the children we work with and I so look forward to our new adventure.



Kenosha Volunteer Training

History has shown **S.T.A.R.S.** that the biggest hurdle for any expansion program has been acquiring funds. However, running a close second is the need for a sizable-dedicated volunteer staff with a focus on the community and young people. Twenty-five interested, new, local volunteers have already attended multiple program overviews, making certain that the 2011 Kenosha Program is now fully staffed with room to breathe. A significant number of Illinois staff have shown interest in assisting with the 6 upcoming pool sessions. These pool sessions are scheduled from April to June in order to support the new-local Kenosha volunteers with leadership from Manta Divers Inc. and the IL **S.T.A.R.S.** volunteers.

Significant planning was put into designing the **S.T.A.R.S.** Program to make it a repeatable and reusable template including fully-documented lessons for each week. These easy to use lesson plans help new staff understand and appreciate the methods behind the madness. "Senior Staff Development leader", Marisa A. from Carol Stream, Il., assisted in training the Kenosha volunteers on the Staff Development element of the program on March 28th. Good luck to all the new staff volunteers who will soon find their own personal rewards by diving into the program with the



20110 Graduates: First Underwater Competition

March 13th found 2010 **S.T.A.R.S.** graduates, Jorge, Chad, Sebastian, and Nelida, being coached by Ana Medina (2005) to a Third Place finish in their first, Illinois Scuba Council Underwater Competition. The **S.T.A.R.S.** graduates, diving under the name "The Flying Dragons", were among 4 other teams competing from the Chicago area. Their team strategy was organized and each competitor

was very satisfied with the results in this first competition sponsored by the Illinois Scuba Council. Several of the team members have expressed an interest in driving to Kenosha to assist with that new program during the open water events this spring. Congratulations to all these winners. We hope to see them diving with **S.T.A.R.S.** during some specialty dives this summer.

Kenosha Program Start on Track

The Kenosha Unified School District invited a hand-selected and hearty group of 60 male candidates to the sparkling Mary Bradford High School pool for the **S.T.A.R.S.** Discover Scuba interviews held on March 12. A wide array of "aqua wary" youth cautiously took their first breath underwater under the watchful eyes of seasoned Pros from the Illinois **S.T.A.R.S.** staff. Out of the entire group, only one young man chose to pass up the opportunity unlike the other 99% who had smiles painted ear-to-ear when they surfaced after their 15 minute encounter. Accepted candidates moved forward in the program by attending the Parent/Participant Orientation event held on March 24. Everyone at **S.T.A.R.S.**, SDI, and KUSD sends best wishes to this starting group as they undergo an aquatic transformation that will surely change their lives and outlook.

See photos from the event at: <http://www.starsinternational.org/Gallery.html>



UPCOMING EVENTS

April 4, 2011

Program Kick-Off

April 9, 2011

Skin Diving/Snorkeling Training

April 23, 2011

Scuba Training & Checkpoint Meeting

Des Plaines YMCA Welcomes **S.T.A.R.S.**

In an never ending quest to broaden the awareness and availability of the **S.T.A.R.S.** programming, Kevin was hosted by the Latoff YMCA in Des Plaines, IL to discuss the potential for a 2012 program. **S.T.A.R.S.** will work with the facility directors there in the coming months to chart the course for introducing the program to the YMCA family with hopes of making the Des Plaines venue a new site



Manta Divers of Kenosha Lead the Way



"To Dive is To Live" is their tag line! Mike and Lisa Bain (new **S.T.A.R.S.** Academic Instructors) own the newest dive shop in Kenosha, WI. Mike and Lisa received their Open Water Certification in 1997. They instantly fell in love with the sport and got their two sons certified as soon as they were old enough. During the challenge of earning their Advanced Open Water and Rescue Diver Certifications they made the decision to go on to the professional level of Divemaster.

In October of 2004, Mike and Lisa took the grueling, two-day exam required to become dive instructors. Initial-

ly, the two taught scuba independently; but finally decided, they could serve their students better if they also ran a retail dive operation. And so **Manta Divers** was born! This team believes they offer the best brands with the most support and know-how behind them. Mike and Lisa have a definite passion for diving and hope to ignite the same in their students.

Diving has presented Mike and Lisa many opportunities to travel, meet new people, and of course have many memorable adventures underwater. Please join us in welcoming them to the **S.T.A.R.S.** family.

Blossoming **S.T.A.R.S.** Professionals

Spring brings blossoms and to a few brave souls "ambition" to take the next step in diving education. Although it is expected that every volunteer will take step forward each year, not everyone opts for pursuing the professional divers' rank. Divemaster Mike Johnson is now in training to become an instructor. Phil Seils and newcomers Pete Livorsi and Mitch Brandt are combining forces to tackle the Divemaster course by the end of the summer. Please take a moment and wish them luck in their new endeavor.

