

Friends upgraded donor and member database gives us better control over our mailing process. If you are still receiving a hardcopy of Tidings in the mail and would prefer to be advised by email when the latest newsletter is posted on the web, please email [newsletter@friendsvinp.org](mailto:newsletter@friendsvinp.org) and we will mark your record accordingly. This will save postage dollars and volunteer hours which can be applied more productively toward our programs.

Tidings  
Notes

## Action Alert!

Hassel  
Island

**Now is the time to step up and take action!**

**On behalf of the Coral Reef National Monument, we are requesting your help.**

Volunteers

New Staff

Volunteer  
View

Travel

A Word  
from the  
President

Farewell  
Jim and  
Trudy

Over a year ago, the Virgin Islands was fortunate to have a Presidential Proclamation establish the Coral Reef National Monument with the intention of **protecting the tropical marine ecosystem**. It is well known that these ecosystems contain the most diverse and biologically complex structures on earth and are deteriorating at alarming rates. Our new marine protected area includes 13,000 acres of submerged lands off of St. John where anchoring and most fishing have been banned.

This is the first step to slow the decline. The underwater resources will be given a chance to restore themselves and adjacent areas. It has been proven in other marine protected areas worldwide that fish size, diversity and overall population will increase within the protected area. Residents and visitors will reap the long-term benefits of a fully functional VI tropical marine ecosystem.

Unfortunately, current regulations to protect and properly manage the Monument have not been established by the National Park Service. **This is where the Monument needs your help.** Friends is urging all of our members to write to National Park Service Director Fran Mainella to express your **support of the Monument** and your **disgust for the delay** in implementing the regulations.

We truly believe it is the enduring beauty of this Park and Monument that make this place special. **It is all of our responsibilities** to make sure the beauty is protected not only for us, but also for the generations to follow. **Please join us in this effort.**

Address your letters to:

Honorable Fran Mainella  
Director National Park Service  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

Click the link for model letters for businesses or concerned citizens.  
Please feel free to use all or parts of the model letters. We need  
your help.



*A sailor picks up a mooring for her stay in the Park. The Coral Reef National Monument needs regulations and moorings too.*

## ***Tidings Notes***

### ***Mark Your Calendar***

The Visitor Center Dedication is rescheduled for Thursday, April 4, 1:00 - 3:00 pm. Come to the Visitor Center for a tour and refreshments.

### ***Dedicated VINP Staffer***

Paul Thomas, Chief of Interpretation for Virgin Islands National Park, celebrates 30 years with the National Park Service. He started his career as a lifeguard, held several positions at VINP and spent five years at George Washington Memorial Parkway. Paul even once served as a Friends Board member. Congratulations to Paul.

### ***Intern wanted***

Are you interested in spending the summer on St. John working for Friends? Friends has an internship

available, June through August. If interested, please send letters of inquiry by email to Becky Bremser, Program Manager at [intern@friendsvinp.org](mailto:intern@friendsvinp.org).

### ***Toussaint* by Carabana**

The play is a hit! Friends is sponsoring a weekly performance at Cinnamon Bay amphitheater by the local theatre group, Carabana Ensemble, and the seats are full. This year's performance - *Toussaint: The Black Liberator* depicts the life and times of Haitian slave liberator Toussaint L'Overture.

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## **Hassel Island Comes Alive**

February marked the start of the Friends' clean up and preservation of Hassel Island. The first project is at Creque Marine Railway where youth and adult volunteers will remove brush to expose the remarkable history of the site.

Youth volunteers and sponsors are the backbone of this project. Already, numerous Virgin Islands businesses have contributed services and materials to the project. "We feel fortunate to be leading a project that is so welcomed by the community," says Friends' President Joe Kessler. "So far, more than \$60,000 of goods and services have been donated."

For the first few weeks students from the Anti-litter and Beautification Commission's Saturday Program will work at Hassel Island. Volunteers are being trained to clear debris and apply preservation techniques to historic machinery at the site. They will also benefit from the social experience of teamwork and be educated about the cultural history of the island.

Water Island Ferry provides transportation to and from Hassel Island; lunches were donated by Frenchtown Deli and Merchant's Market; and tools from Reliable Rentals of St. Croix, and Island Block. Other sponsors include: Hook Line and Sinker, MSI Building Supplies, DeSigns, Budget Marine, Chi-co's Distributing and Crown Mountain Water.

Kessler says, "Our members are dedicated to protecting and preserving the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park. Hassel Island is part of the Park and a great place to focus on cultural preservation."

Creque Marine Railway is the initial site of interest to the Friends due to its definable boundaries and manageability as a site for clean

up and preservation within a 12 to 18-month period.

When this first phase is completed, the site will be clear of trash and vegetation and ready to open for visitors. Specifically:

- A path will lead from the dock to the water's edge of the railway floor.
- The flagstones of the railway floor will be free of vegetation and the Steam House will be clearly seen from the harbor.
- Machinery along the railway will be preserved and accessible for viewing.
- A pathway will circumnavigate the Steam House.
- Interpretive materials will educate visitors about the history and significance of the site.

"This is just the beginning. People on St. Thomas will be able to see our progress and will literally watch Hassel Island come alive again," remarks Kessler.

Virgin Islands National Park will soon embark on a planning effort to determine priority activities and improvements needed for the island. Those plans will lay out the longer-term intentions for opening up Hassel Island as a visitor attraction.



*Youth groups from Anti-litter and Beautification help on Saturdays,*

*removing debris from Hassel Island while looking back on St. Thomas.*



*With tools donated by St. Thomas and St. Croix businesses, youth work to clear Creque Marine Railway with help from Project Manager Harmon Killebrew.*

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## **Volunteers Honored at Annual Meeting**

Over 120 members turned out for the Friends' 2002 Annual Meeting. After greetings from Chairman John Fuller, President Joe Kessler expressed his excitement about Friends' activities and shared successes from the past year.

Superintendent John King presented a long and impressive list of

accomplishments, several made in partnership with the Friends.

Former Director of the National Park Service Robert Stanton topped off the meeting. Mr. Stanton shared his personal perspective on the values and benefits of our National Parks. He reiterated the importance of public/private partnerships and the strength of projects that flow from them.



*Former Director of the National Park Service, Robert Stanton shares his insights.*

**Volunteer of the Year for 2001** is shared by two shining stars-Venus Green and Elizabeth Ban.

Elizabeth spent many warm summer days at VIERS with eco-campers, scouting locations for the Park video and researching Caribbean-mooring programs. She also rewrote the Friends' brochure and researched grant possibilities.

Venus worked in many different Park departments for more than six months. Her dedication was proven by her daily commute from St. Thomas to help with swim classes, the Visitor Center desk, Reef Bay hikes and the Park's web site.

**Thank You Volunteers!**



*Joe Kessler presents Elizabeth with the Volunteer of the Year plaque.*

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## **New Development Director**

The Friends is pleased to announce that Kim Wesselhoft Lyons has joined the Friends as our new Development Director. She began on March 20<sup>th</sup>. While we are sorry to see Trudy leave, we are excited to have Kim on board.

Kim comes to us with rich experience in public relations, marketing, advertising, fundraising and management in both the public and private sectors. She held professional positions with AT&T of Virgin Islands, Greengage Associates in New York and in the mid-90s owned the popular Cruz Bay restaurant The Purple Door.

Kim recently returned home to St. John with her daughter, Savannah, after several years in New York and travels in Europe and Africa.

Please help us welcome Kim as part of the Friends team. She is looking forward to meeting our members and working with you to preserve our special spot in the Caribbean.

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## **Exciting Volunteer Opportunities at Annaberg**

*By Kent and Paula Savel*

If you are interested in the fascinating history of St. John and

Annaberg Plantation and enjoy meeting people, a new opportunity for volunteering at Annaberg might be just what you are looking for.

We are part-time St. John residents and long time members and volunteers of the Friends. This year we participated in a pilot program to bring alive the history of this amazing site to visitors.

We have been acting as *docents*, offering guided tours and being available to answer questions from visitors at Annaberg. We have found the experience to be both personally rewarding and a lot of fun; the setting alone is enough to bring us back day after day.

Visitors really appreciate having someone on site to assist them in their understanding of the history of Annaberg and the workings of the sugar factory.

If this sounds like something you would enjoy, we urge to join us as docents at Annaberg. For more information, please contact the Friends office.



*Annaberg Plantation Ruins*

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## **Travel Opportunity for Friends' Members**

The Friends and the National Park Trust (NPT) have collaborated for some time on several projects. The NPT recently initiated a travel program called *Park Educational Travel* that offers guided adventures to national parks in the United States and abroad. The

next trips are to Alaska and Costa Rica.

You, as a member of the Friends, are eligible for the program. If you would like to explore this membership benefit, get further information from NPT's website at

<http://www.parktrust.org/travel/index.html>

Should you decide to participate, please mention that you are a member of the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. Happy travels!

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## ***Look Out Oregon***

When Jim Owens and Trudy Toliver arrived on St. John in October 1999 as volunteers for the Park - we all knew it was for a short period. As with many folks, the beauty and the people of St. John captured their hearts.

Jim and Trudy originally came here intending to volunteer their professional services for only six months. Then they were offered paying positions. Now, 2½ years later, Friends and the Park will miss their contributions.

Jim held the much-needed Acting Park Planner position fully funded by the Friends. In this capacity, he initiated and implemented several planning efforts that proactively address management of Park resources.

Some of his accomplishments included the creation of the Commercial Services Plan, the Vessel Management Plan, and the Gateway Community Planning Council. His bent toward citizen involvement in planning processes improved the Park's relations within the community.

Trudy has served as the Friends' first Development Director and launched our organization into a more professional fundraising world. She made several sustaining contributions to the organization.

She was responsible for the implementation of the Friends of the Park license plates, which has raised over \$60,000 thus far. She also helped produce an inspirational video about the Park, established donor tracking software, and helped increase membership by over 65% in the past two years.

Jim and Trudy's skills in their professional lives will not be the only

things that are missed. Their community dedication and daily friendship will be missed as well.



*Jim Owens and Trudy Toliver*

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## **President's Message**

*By Joe Kessler*

The past several months have been the most interesting of my short tenure here. What has made it fascinating is getting to know many of you and learning which aspects of our mission and activities are important to you. Having your ideas and thoughts are critical to us as we plan our future. Your contribution of volunteer time enriches your experience and is a tremendous benefit for the Park. And, your financial donations are vital for the health and well being of our Park.

Your support demonstrates the confidence you have in the Friends to make a difference on St. John and in the Virgin Islands National Park.

I promise to do my best to ensure that the Friends continue to meet, or exceed, your expectations and that we remain worthy of your confidence. Please continue to help us as we seek to make Virgin Islands National Park a model of natural resource protection and cultural preservation.



*Brown Pelicans*



**Do you shop on the internet? Now you can help support Friends while you shop.**

Here's a painless way to help Friends. Now you can help Friends when you purchase from stores on the Internet! Yes, ShopsThatGive.com will donate up to 25% of your purchase price to Friends of VI National Park whenever you start your shopping at [www.ShopsThatGive.com](http://www.ShopsThatGive.com). · It's Free and Easy · Prices are not increased, many are discounted · It helps Friends · America's favorite stores, with new additions every month

How it works · Always go to [www.ShopsThatGive.com](http://www.ShopsThatGive.com) to begin your shopping · Follow the easy instructions to join ShopsThatGive.com · Shop your favorite stores

That's all. You buy what you want; We receive a donation.

And don't forget our online boutique.



*Some of the items you can buy online which support Friends' programs*