



Friends First Annual Power Swim a Success!

On May 30, 2004, 142 swimmers took to the waters off St. John's beautiful North Shore to participate in the first annual Friends Beach-to-Beach Power Swim to raise money for the National Park's summer Learn to Swim program for local children, and other park projects.

The event attracted top athletes like Jose Colman-Davis and Alberto Gonzalez from Puerto Rico, as well as many young athletes from the St. Croix Dolphin's swim team. In fact, 14 year-old Dolphin team member, Branden Whitehurst took top honors on the long course from Maho Bay to Hawksnest Bay with a time of 1:21:15. Whitehurst's sister, Keri, placed first overall on the short course from Maho Bay to Cinnamon Bay with a time of 21:09.

A complete list of race results can be found on the Friends website at www.friendsvinp.org/swim.

First place finishers in the long and short course unassisted categories each received a two night stay at a local hotel, including Caneel Bay Resort, Gallows Point Resort, Westin, and Frenchman's Reef. The top three finishers in each category received a beautiful hand blown glass trophy made by artist Eric Burton and donated by Maho Bay Camps. Endurance Sports provided gift certificates for the top two finishers in the long and short courses-unassisted. And chef Ted at T'age will host a private tasting for the first place relay team-unassisted.

"The safety of the swimmers was paramount in planning this event," said Joe Kessler, Friends' president, "and we are thankful that everyone made it back to shore without incident or injury." A fleet of kayaks, manned by experienced kayakers, provided swimmers with a first line of defense in the event there was an emergency. In addition, three power boats; Sadie Sea, Ocean Quest, and Sun Tiger were staffed



Thank you!

Thanks to every sponsor, volunteer & participant for making the first annual

FRIENDS ST. JOHN BEACH-TO-BEACH POWER SWIM

a resounding success!

				
				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arawak Expeditions Budget Marine C4th Custom Embroidery Caneel Bay Resort Coca Cola Connections Cooper & Associates Coral Bay Yacht Club Cost-u-Less Gallows Point Resort Hammer Gel Island Marine Kids & the Sea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maho Bay Watersports Maui Jim Pirate Radio Sadie Sea St. John Amateur Radio Club St. John Ice St. John Radio St. John Rescue St. John Yacht Club St. Thomas Yacht Club Starfish Market Sting Ez T'age Westin Resort St. John Wind 'n Surfing Adventures
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with members from St. John Rescue and a certified rescue diver was aboard each boat, ready to assist a distressed swimmer. "Swimmers were guided along by kayaks and the route was well marked," commented Suzy Degazon, Hawaiian Tropic sponsored Ultra Triathlete.

This event was made possible with generous donations by sponsors: R&I Patton Goldsmithing, Mongoose Junction Merchants Association, Scotia Bank, UBS Financial Services, Madison Associates, Hawaiian Tropic, American Paradise Real Estate, Maho Bay Camps, Holiday Homes, and Endurance Sports, along with many other local merchants. Another key component in making the day a success was the dedicated team of volunteers who joined the Friends' staff at the crack of dawn on the beaches to prepare for the race. Their hard work was critical in assisting the Friends in laying the groundwork for a premier sporting event in the United States Virgin Islands.

Funds raised at this event will, among other projects, be used to purchase instructional equipment for the swim program, directed by Park Ranger Laurel Trager. Lessons are provided free to local children, and are held at Trunk Bay every Wednesday, beginning June–August.

• TIDINGS NOTES •



Welcome Chris!

The Friends is proud to announce Chris Cleveland as the new summer intern for 2004! Chris has been selected for a nine-week position assisting the Friends staff with a variety of programs including our Summer Eco-Camps and SCA Trail

Crews. Chris comes from upstate New York where he worked as a camp counselor and sailing instructor and also took classes in theater and ceramics. He is a talented writer and an enthusiastic volunteer. Chris will be studying at Warren Wilson College starting this fall. Glad to have you on board!

Carabana Ensemble

April 29th marked the last performance of *Nenie Myrah* at the Cinnamon Bay amphitheater. Carla Sewer, the star solo performer, did an outstanding job enlightening the crowd about St. John's well-known herbalist and healthcare provider, Myrah Keating Smith. A big thanks to Clarence Cuthbertson for once again writing and directing an extraordinarily educational play that was shared with many students, residents and tourists alike.

2004 Summer Eco-Camps!

Sign up your kids early because availability won't last long! The Friends is again sponsoring overnight camps for students ages 8 – 14 at Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station (VIERS). Five camps will be held during the month of July: 9–11, 12–14, 16–18, 23–25, and 26–28. Call VIERS to register, (340) 776-6721.

The Next Tidings...

Due to a change in schedule, the Friends will not be issuing a fall newsletter this year. Not to fear, the next Tidings will arrive in your mailbox by early December, and will be an 8-page issue like last year. Keep an eye out for information on our winter seminars, 2005 Annual Meeting and March Gala event!

Living Art



Steve Simonsen's book, *Living Art* is selling out fast so buy your copy (or another copy) today! This beautifully bound, 200-page coffee table book with 182 stunning photographs is an exquisite photographic essay that will serve as an eloquent record of St. John's natural beauty.

When purchased from the Friends,

a portion of the price may be considered a tax-deductible contribution that will help preserve the very natural beauty celebrated in this book. Order your copies either by phone (340)779-4940, through our website www.friendsvinp.org/store/book.htm, or come by our office in Mongoose Junction.

From the Superintendent



Greetings Friends of Virgin Islands National Park,

In the summer of 2001, a Business Plan for the Virgin Islands National Park was developed. Prior to this point, the Park had struggled in presenting a clearly defined perspective regarding fiscal status, operational needs, professional standards, and the manner in which the Park would identify certain strategies to secure fund-

ing to meet the needs of the Park. It really did not occur to me until several weeks ago that perhaps the most important role of the Business Plan was to aid the Park in building public trust. This document was an initiative devised as a result of a joint venture between the National Park Service, National Parks Conservation Association and a variety of other organizations. It placed VINP in the position of presenting a very clear picture of the financial management capabilities of the Park to the general public and all of our stakeholders.

Utilizing the Business Plan, the Park developed financial strategies that would address shortfalls in its base budget allocations. Those strategies are short/long-term and represent a rather broad approach to attacking some of the financial issues facing the Park. One of the strategies that the Park employed was to increase volunteerism.

The Park joined forces with the Friends to develop a broad-base volunteer program. Currently, volunteers work in Park programs providing assistance ranging from interpretation of historic features to cataloging of books in the Park's library. But, perhaps, one of the most effective and cost-saving strategies has been the College Internship Program. Archeology students assist the Park archeologist with the cataloging and data entry of artifacts in the computer data collection system. They also aid the Park archeologist in archeological excavations that are essential when conducting environmental compliance work. The interns reside in tents at Cinnamon Bay in the VI National Park, which were made possible due to acquisitions of the tents by the Friends. Again, a tremendous cost-savings to the Park, and the students gain an invaluable experience.

As you may discern, the Park cannot wait and depend solely upon Congressional appropriations to address the financial shortfall. The Park must and will continue to use the Business Plan Initiative strategies to find ways to maintain a high-level of professional operational standards that will place VINP in a position to meet the mission of the Park. As Superintendent, I am confident that with the continued support of the Friends, we will undoubtedly achieve this objective.

John H. King Scholarship Recipient

Makeda Okolo grew up on St. Croix and graduated from the St. Croix Educational Complex in June of 2002. She attends American University in Washington D.C. and is pursuing a degree in International Studies with a focus on Environmental Policy. With a 3.38 GPA, she ranks in the top 10% of her class, making her the ideal recipient for the Friends' John H. King Scholarship Program. This \$1,000 scholarship is awarded every year to a Virgin Islands student who has graduated from high school in the USVI, is pursuing a degree in biology, resource management or environmental studies, and has attained a 3.0 average. Makeda is a very mature and exceptional young lady, who possesses strong leadership skills and initiative. She is working in Delegate Christensen's office during the summer months, and even plans to study abroad in South Africa next semester! The Friends is quite honored to award Makeda with this academic scholarship!



A Tribute to Ms. Felicia

Ms. Felicia Cains Martin passed away in April while at home. She was 85 years old. Ms. Felicia was best known by St. John residents and visitors as an important culture bearer and one of the few remaining traditional craft weavers on the island. She was employed by Virgin Islands National Park for more than 10 years as a cultural demonstrator, and could be found most days deftly weaving her beautiful baskets from the local hoop vine at the Annaberg plantation ruins. She was also known for her great knowledge of bush medicine, and collaborated with the University of the Virgin Islands to publish the book *Medicinal Plants of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John*.

Ms. Felicia's favorite pastimes included reading the Bible and spending time with her eleven grandchildren. St. John suffers a tremendous loss with her passing, she was truly a community icon and will be missed.

A New Approach to Preserving Historic Structures by Ken Wild

This year the Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park made it possible to begin preserving, in 3-D cyberspace, significant historic structures that may very soon become unrecognizable piles of rocks. Within Virgin Islands National Park there are upwards of five hundred historic structures associated with 18th and 19th century plantations, forts, military barracks, powder magazines, marine railways, aqueducts, bridges, coaling stations, dockyards, schools, cemeteries and leprosy colonies, to name a few, that are threatened and are rapidly being lost to vegetation degradation. As a result, identifiable historic structures such as sugar factories, slave quarters, gravesites, bake ovens, wells, warehouses and great houses, are being reduced to piles of rocks.

Since Virgin Islands National Park constitutes two-thirds of the island of St. John, plus Hassel Island, it essentially preserves the remains of the most complete representations of the Napoleonic Era in the United States, the Danish Colonial Period, and post-emancipation structures. However, over ninety percent of these historic buildings are overgrown by tropical forest. Most of these threatened sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Presently, it appears economically unachievable to physically preserve the hundreds of significant historic structures that are threatened. However, the NPS is mandated to preserve significant cultural heritage sites for future generations. Therefore, a project was conceived that could possibly take advantage of advances in computer applications.

The approach envisioned the use of the most up-to-date technology developed to accurately 3-D model individual structures, and along with a spatial approach, orient each building on the 3-dimensional landscape as calculated at each site.

With the help of a leading company in computer modeling, an academic institution was found that would donate the hours and technological skills essential to such an ambitious undertaking. Thus, with the financial aid provided by the Friends, the Park was able to enlist the help of the Engineering Department of the University of Maine and their generous offer to dedicate and donate a complete semester class to help preserve historic structures through a 3D modeling and spatial approach.

The funding allowed the students and professors to complete the on-site data gathering necessary to undertake the course and the Park's preservation goals. As a result, the first historic structure (the watermill tower at Leinster Bay Plantation, that is subject to collapse at anytime), was preserved in a 3-D model and the geographical data has placed the majority of the plantation's buildings on a 3-dimensional map in a geographical information system. There is much more to do, but with the Friends support, we have begun to draw attention to a resource that is rapidly disappearing.

Recycled Art Contest Receives a Big Applause

Tuesday, April 27th Friends of the Park and Virgin Islands National Park held a Recycled Art Contest at the St. John School of the Arts for 1st-5th graders in celebration of Earth Day. Classes were given two weeks to create a sculpture, diorama, poster, etc. out of materials that would otherwise be thrown away, or perform a skit, song, or poem that encompassed a recycling or Earth Day theme.



Eleven pieces of art and two performances were displayed before six judges: Sis Frank, Andromeda Childs, Paul Jones, Vernon Lake, Mary Blazine and Joe Kessler. Pieces of art included musical instruments made of cans and milk jugs, a "Mother Earth" quilt, and an eight-armed "Eco-trashopus". One class performed a skit and sang "The Island Recycle Mash" to the tune from "The Monster Mash". Everyone was all smiles.

The first place winner of the Recycled Art Contest was Guy Benjamin's 4th grade class, who performed a song and dance about recycling and keeping St. John clean. Four girls sang a rap song to a choreographed dance, while the rest of the class played recycled instruments. Everyone enjoyed it so much they performed it a second time! Ms. Remington's class will get to stay overnight at VIERS (Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station) for doing such a great job!

Pine Peace's 5th grade class will spend a day golfing at Pastory Gardens for making their "Recycled Circus". An old bicycle wheel and umbrella were used to make a ferris wheel and other carnival rides. And third place went to Ms. Powell's 1st grade class at Sprauve School for making a "Can-niverous" Shark — a large shark made of tin cans! Her class will enjoy a classroom pizza party thanks to Ronnie's Pizza N' Mo.

Thank you to all the judges who participated, and thanks to the St. John School of the Arts for allowing us to use their space for this great event. Also, a special thank you to VIERS, Pastory Gardens and Ronnie's Pizza for contributing the prizes that make these contests so worthwhile for the kids.

Upcoming Friends Events!

Explore St. John by Kayak! Arawak Expeditions will again this year offer a kayak expedition package around St. John. This fall, Oct. 4–8th, Arawak will lead a small group of 10–12 kayakers and two guides on a St. John adventure. Leaving Cruz Bay, the tour will circumnavigate the island, and include stops at the beautiful white sand beaches in VI National Park on St. John's north shore. Kayakers will also enjoy the quieter side of St. John, while exploring secluded beaches and coves of the island's south shore. Along the way, participants will also be treated to exclusive presentations by National Park Service rangers, which will include a private viewing of artifacts discovered at the archeological dig sites at Cinnamon and Trunk Bays, along with a presentation by park archeologist Ken Wild. Space is very limited, please sign up soon if you would like to join us for this special trip. The cost of this adventure is \$995.00.

Friends Family Fish Fry is back

... and with a new twist! On December 12, 2004, the Friends will host its second Fish Fry, however, in support of park efforts to maintain reef fish populations and increase awareness of fisheries management, Friends will host the 2nd annual Fishless Fry! Join us at Oppenheimer Beach as we lime away the afternoon feasting on BBQ, while enjoying cool local sounds, and dancing in the sand. Shuttle service will be available for a nominal fee from the National Park Service parking lot next to Mongoose Junction.

Gala 2005!

We are planning a gala event for March 2005. The exciting plans will be announced in the Winter newsletter ... stayed tuned.

President's Message

By Joe Kessler

Several weeks ago I had the pleasure and the privilege to meet Mr. Laurance S. Rockefeller. We spoke of St. John, Virgin Islands National Park and the people that he remembers here. It was a touching and heart-warming discussion; these are people and places he cares about deeply.

Meeting Mr. Rockefeller was also a poignant reminder that Virgin Islands National Park was born in philanthropy, and philanthropy continues to play a key role in the well-being of the Park—thanks to you, our 3,000 current members, and the 3,000, or so, former members. Your thoughtful generosity has been extremely important in the preservation and protection of this Park's exceptional resources.

VI National Park continues to be threatened by irresponsible development in and around the Park; and, is challenged to manage the ever-increasing numbers of visitors in the limited confines of the Park. And if these external threats are not difficult enough, our Park, and national parks throughout the country, are in trouble due to chronic underfunding and stagnant or declining budgets. VINP struggles under more than a 30% shortfall in funding for basic operations. Critical positions remain vacant or replacements are delayed in an effort to stretch limited

budgets. In particular, interpretive and resource protection functions suffer from lack of funded positions. Other than at the Visitor Center or during a scheduled interpretive event, when was the last time you saw a ranger in the Park?

In this environment where parks are struggling for survival, philanthropy is more important than ever. However, it is important to understand that Friends' support to the Park, from your donations or other sources, does not supplement the Park's operational funding. Friends' support helps create a margin of excellence as we work towards fulfilling our vision of helping VI National Park be a model of resource protection and cultural preservation.

Mr. Rockefeller gifted the land that became VI National Park and our job is to assist the Park to overcome the threats and challenges that it faces. You can help in two important ways: 1) Please contact your congressional representatives and urge them to provide the funding needed so that our park, and all of the nation's national parks, achieve a margin of excellence rather than struggle for survival. 2) Please continue to keep VINP as one of your philanthropic priorities. I recently sent you a letter requesting your financial support. If you have not already responded, please do so now. **Together we can make a difference!**



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