



St. Croix finalists (left to right) Kevin Hensley, Kieran Locke, and Josh Laban

## Virgin Islands National Team Swimmers Dominate Friends' Beach-to-Beach Power Swim

On Sunday, May 29th, a swimmer from the Virgin Islands National Team shattered last year's time on the long course at the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park 2nd Annual Beach-to-Beach Power Swim. Kieran Locke, 21, of St. Croix took first place with a time of 1:11:41 on the 3-1/2 mile course from Maho Bay to Hawksnest Bay. Other National Team swimmers included Josh Laban, 22, from St. Croix and Locke's brother Morgan. They took 2nd and 3rd places with times of 1:11:41 and 1:14:46, well below last year's winning time of 1:21:15, set by 14 year-old Brandon Whitehurst from St. Croix. St. John's own Kathy Laseter placed 1st overall in the women's division with an outstanding time of 1:44:15.

This open water event along St. John's beautiful north shore drew a field of over 125 swimmers from all three Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the States. In order to make this event accessible and challenging for all levels of swimmers, participants could choose from four different events in which to compete, and could also choose to compete in a special "assisted" category, using snorkel, mask, fins and exposure suits. Other courses included a short course from Maho Bay to Cinnamon Bay, a distance of about 1mile, and an intermediate course from Maho Bay to Trunk Bay, a distance of about 2-1/4 miles.

While the turnout was slightly less than last year's 142 swimmers, we are still very pleased with the number of swimmers that participated and look forward to growing this event in years to come. It's a great event and a wonderful way to celebrate the waters and beaches of Virgin Islands National Park, two of the Park's most spectacular features.

There are many businesses and people that make an event like this possible. We truly appreciate and thank our major sponsors American Paradise Real Estate, Maho Bay Camps, Hawaiian Tropic, St. John Insurance Agency, Mongoose Junction, Topa, Alfredo's Landscaping, and Theodore Tunick & Co., and the many, many other businesses that have contributed time, money, product and effort. Thank you all for your tremendous support! We could not hold this event without your assistance. And a special thank you to Mo Chabuz and Skinny Legs for hosting the awards ceremony and BBQ at Oppenheimer Beach this year. The beach party was great fun, and a lot of hungry people got fed!

In addition to the financial support, it requires a squad of volunteers to staff this event to ensure swimmers safety and enjoyment. More than 75 people volunteered their time to staff the start and finish lines at the beaches, the water stations and safety boats, the kayaks, rescue divers, SAG wagon drivers, and the list goes on; so many people gave their time to ensure the swim went off safely and that everyone had a good time. We can't thank them enough for their invaluable contributions.

The funds raised at this event will go to support the National Park Service's summer Learn to Swim program, annual REEF Fish Count, and other important projects/programs that serve to protect and preserve Virgin Islands National Park.

A complete list of race results can be found on the Friends website at [www.friendsvinp.org/swim](http://www.friendsvinp.org/swim).



Reg. Director Pat Hooks, Sen Craig Thomas, Superintendent Art Frederick, NPS Director Fran Mainella, and Joe Kessler

## Dignitaries Visit VI National Park

Virgin Islands National Park was honored by a visit in early May by Sen. Craig Thomas (R-WY), NPS Director Fran Mainella, NPS Associate Director Chris Jarvi, NPS Southeast Regional Director Patricia Hooks and National Park Foundation Board Member Jonathan Nelson. Sen. Thomas is the Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks so we were especially pleased that he chose to visit this

*Continued on Page 3*



## From the Superintendent

### *Greetings Friends of Virgin Islands Park!*

Several months ago, the National Park Foundation had scheduled their annual Board Meeting to be held on St. John. Virgin Islands National Park and the Friends were to serve as hosts. This was an excellent opportunity to showcase the park, but at the last moment, the Board Meeting was cancelled. However, several of the members continued with their plans to attend. Included in the group was NPS Director Fran Mainella, Associate Director for Partnerships, Interpretation and Education, Chris Jarvi and Southeast Regional Director Pat Hooks made the trip. They all arrived the weekend of May 6-8, along with Senator Craig Thomas from Wyoming.

Sen. Thomas is the Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks and it was an honor to have him visit VINP. I was privileged to tour the Park with him and was accompanied by Chris Jarvi and Pat Hooks. We visited all of the sites along Northshore Road. He was impressed with the new Hawksnest Bay Pavilion, where he was able to observe how the Fee Recreation Enhancement funds are being

spent. Incidentally, Sen. Thomas played a key role in sponsoring the Fee Recreation Enhancement legislation. He was also able to witness our fee collection operation at Trunk Bay where he spoke with some visitors and the lifeguards. He thoroughly enjoyed himself at Annaberg Ruins where a Park Ranger gave him a tour and he observed some of the cultural demonstrations.

The following day, Friends' President Joe Kessler, Chief Ranger Steve Clark, Marine Biologists Jeff Miller, Tom Kelly and I toured the Park via boat with our visiting guests. We advised them on many of the issues the Park is encountering ranging from degradation of the coral reefs to illegal alien activity. We were able to stop at each of the bays along the north shore and provide them with information regarding many of the threats facing the Park. We also spoke about some of the successes of the Park such as the Mooring Program. Joe Kessler did a great job of informing the group about the program and the role that the Friends played in making that program the success it is today.

As Superintendent, I was extremely pleased with the level of professionalism displayed by Park staff and Friends' President during our Washington D.C. guests' visit to VINP.

Art Frederick, VINP Superintendent

## • TIDINGS NOTES •

### **Arona**

This year's Carabana Ensemble theater performance, Arona, was a smashing hit! The play was about the life and times of Arona Petersen, cultural bearer from St. Thomas who wrote the well-known book *Herbs and Proverbs*. This monodrama performed by Christina Harpe, ran weekly for 14 weeks at the Cinnamon Bay amphitheater. Thanks to sponsor Tropico Management on St. Croix, admission was free to all.



### **2005 Scholarship Recipient**

For the second year in a row, the Friends is proud to announce Makeda Okolo as the recipient of the John H. King Scholarship Program. Makeda is an outstanding student at American University in Washington, D.C. who studied abroad last fall semester in South Africa. She grew up in St. Croix and spent the past two summers working in Delegate Christiansen's office. Congratulations again Makeda!

### **VIERS Summer Eco-Camps**

Summer Eco-Camps are almost here! The Friends is once again sponsoring environmentally-focused summer camps for children ages 8-16. These 3 day/2 night camps take place at the VI Environmental Resource Station at Lameshur Bay, and introduce kids to the wonders of our island's ecosystems. Dates are as follows: July 8-10, July 15-17, July 18-20, and July 29-31. Eco-Camps are free of charge to U.S. Virgin Islands students. Please call Katie at VIERS to register (340) 776-6721.

### **SCA Summer Trail Crew**

From June 17-July 16 an ambitious crew of young environmentalists will be working in the Virgin Islands National Park under the auspices of the Student Conservation Association (SCA). Beginning June 17th through July 16th, this year's 9-person crew is made up of 3 students from St. Croix, 2 from St. Thomas, and 4 from the States. Participants will have the opportunity to work closely with National

Park employees while repairing hiking trails and restoring wildlife habitats in the Park.

### **New Administrative Assistant on board!**

The Friends has a new part-time Administrative Assistant, Arlington Tyrell (known to all his friends and co-workers as "Ali"), taking over for Valerie who has moved on to a full-time position with the St. John School. Ali is native to St. John and moved to Virginia when he was 15, lived in California for 2 years, and Texas for 1-1/2 years. After returning home from the U.S., he was employed at Scotia Bank as a teller and later as a Personal Banking Assistant. Ali is well-known on St. John for his kind personality and humbling patience. He is happy to have the opportunity to work for the Friends in that it fulfills his interest in environmental and cultural preservation. "We are truly blessed to be surrounded by so much beauty on St. John," he says.

### **Tides are a Changing...**

The Friends organization is experiencing a lot of change right now. Emily Burton, Program Manager since July 2002, will be leaving St. John this summer to pursue grad school at the College of Charleston, S.C. She has long been waiting to take this next step in her career, and is very excited to begin the 2-year program to achieve a Masters in Environmental Studies (MES) degree with focus on marine science and conservation.

"I hope to return and apply my studies for the betterment of St. John, but I cannot guarantee where the road ahead will take me", says Emily. "I've really enjoyed living here and feel I've made life-long friends. St. John will stay forever in my heart".

The Friends is happy to have found local resident Kristen Maize to fill the Program Manager position. Kristin recently graduated from the University of San Diego, CA where she earned a bachelor's degree in environmental studies. She grew up on St. John, and has lots of passion for her home and it's fragile ecosystems. She is very excited to begin working for the Friends and will be a great asset to the team.



*sdfjklfdjosjioemklcdmlmkld cxmziko cklfdc  
cxnjkcxczklcxznjosdhjioenklzxc bhjzfhuidhfids*

## A Heartfelt Tribute to Laurance S. Rockefeller

On April 2, 2005, champagne glasses were held high in thanks and tribute to a man who led America's conservation movement for decades and helped to protect and preserve some of our nation's most precious treasures, Laurance S. Rockefeller.

Dr. Jerome and Elizabeth Levy, along with Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, hosted an elegant evening in the Levy's new villa *Kismet* on Maria Bluff. This exquisitely decorated luxury villa was an enchanting setting for such a special event.

Julie Van Pelt from East West Catering created and produced an incredible dining experience with her fusion cuisine, and organized some of St. John's finest restaurants including Tage, Stone Terrace, and Voyages to provide gala guests with incredible epicurean delights.

"I want to thank the many people that were involved in putting together this event. It was an occasion to celebrate and recognize Laurance Rockefeller and thank him for his conservation efforts. While creating VI National Park was only one of the many visionary things that Laurance Rockefeller did in his lifetime, it is what we are most indebted to Mr. Rockefeller for as residents of the Virgin Islands. It has had a profound impact on this island and all of the Virgin Islands. We will continue to thank Mr. Rockefeller daily for what he has done," said Friends president Joe Kessler.

Laurance Rockefeller acquired the initial 5,000 acres on St. John that was turned over to the federal government on December 1, 1956, at the dedication of Virgin Islands National Park.

To honor the memory of Laurance Rockefeller and his legacy, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park has established the Laurance S. Rockefeller Memorial Fund, which will fund natural resource protection projects in Virgin Islands National Park. Raffle ticket proceeds and donations from the gala provided the seed money for this fund.

## 2005 Seminar Series

The Friends would like to thank everyone who helped to make our 2005 Seminar Series a great success! Nearly 400 people attended the 22 seminars, 72% over-all capacity, raising over \$16,000 that will help support environmental and cultural programs in the Park.

New seminars this year included *Laurance Rockefeller and Caneel Bay*, *The Ruins of North Shore*, *Traditional Basket Weaving*, and *Full Moon Hike to Ram Head*. All were very well-attended. Recurring seminars which continue to draw in crowds are Rafe Boulon's Coastal Ecology, Steve Simonsen's *Tropical Photography*, Ken Wild's *Archaeology Boat Trip* and Guy Benjamin's *St. John in the Early 1900s*.

Special thanks to: Steve Simonsen, Dr. Gary Ray, Ken Wild, Laurel Brannick, David Knight, Guy Benjamin, Glen Speer, Michael Milne, Jeff Miller, Eddie Bruce, Kelley Hunter, Rafe Boulon, Chuck Pishko, Caroline Rogers, Earl Thomas, Dale Clave, Carrie Stengel, Rob Waara, Don Near, Lucy Portlock, Arawak Expeditions, Low Key Watersports, *Sadie Sea*, *Allura*, *Jolly Mon*, VIERS, Thunderhawk Trail Guides, Ms. Vie's Snack Shack, Caneel Bay and Maho Bay Camps. We couldn't have done it without all of you!

Help to make next year's series even more successful! Planning starts in the early fall, so if you have any suggestions for changes or additions, please call us. We would be happy to accommodate your interests and skill-building desires.

## Dignitaries Visit VI National Park

*Continued from Page 1*

park. The Friends hosted the delegation on a boat trip along the north shore of St. John. Friends president, Joe Kessler, along with Superintendent Art Frederick and senior park staff had the opportunity to share the wonders and challenges of VI National Park with the senator and the senior NPS officials.

The Friends also provided an opportunity for the delegation to meet members of our Board and Advisory Council as well as other local notables at a reception hosted at Caneel Bay Resort. We are sure that the visitors had an informative and enjoyable visit to VI National Park and St. John, and hope that this will benefit the park in the future.



### Living Art 2nd Printing Now Available

It's amazing that the first 5000 copies of *Living Art*, Steve Simonsen's award-winning photographic essay of St. John that celebrates the amazing natural beauty of the island in 182 spectacular photos, has already sold out. But don't worry; the 2nd printing — with improved readability — is now available.

And, award winning it is. Steve Simonsen and *Living Art* recently won the AD Council of the Virgin Islands' 2005 Gold ADDY Award for "Best Publication Design". Congratulations Steve!

The Friends is proud to have financed the publication of *Living Art* and I urge you to get your copy (or another one) now. The book is available from fine shops on St. John and St. Thomas or directly from Steve Simonsen or the Friends. 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 by this book. Order your copies either by phone (340-779-4940), through our website ([www.friendsvinp.org/store/book.htm](http://www.friendsvinp.org/store/book.htm)), or come by our office in Mongoose Junction.

**Friends  
Mission**

*The Friends of Virgin Islands National Park is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promotes the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure.*

## Upcoming Friends Events!

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the upcoming Friend's events:

### 3rd Annual Friends Family BBQ

Feast on traditional BBQ fare at this 3rd annual family event hosted by the Friends. There will be interesting displays about the diverse marine and terrestrial eco-systems found on St. John, and fun environmental games for the kids, like the ever-popular Marine Jeopardy and Queen Termite games. There will also be craft demonstrations and live music to dance to in the sand. Please plan to join us this Fall. Watch our website for details!

### Exclusive Benefit for the Friends!

**Arawak Expeditions** will again this year offer a kayak expedition package around St. John. This fall, October 3–7th, Arawak will lead a small group of 10–12 kayakers and 2 guides on a St. John adventure. Leaving Cruz Bay, the tour will completely circumnavigate the island,

and include stops at the beautiful white sand beaches in Virgin Islands 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.

**Call the Friends (340) 779-4940, or visit our website for more information on these events.**

## President's Message *By Joe Kessler*



The Friends have had an incredibly active and busy time since the last issue of Tidings was sent to you. This period was bracketed by two important and very successful special events: a gala honoring the vision of Laurance Rockefeller and the 2nd annual Beach-to-Beach Power Swim celebrating the beaches and waters of Virgin Islands National Park.

At long last, we were also able to complete an additional phase of the Resource Protection Mooring Project in the Coral Reef National Monument — this phase being the installation of 54 storm mooring slots in Hurricane Hole. This was completed in March, well in time for the approaching hurricane season. These storm-mooring slots will be managed and assigned by VI National Park as part of their hurricane preparedness plans. Another 46 mooring slots will be installed next winter, once additional funding is secured.

We also had a very successful seminar series, arguably the best one yet, which you will read about inside. Carabana Ensemble Theater continued to entertain and educate us about cultural icons of the Virgin

Islands, this year focusing on the life and times of Arona Petersen, a St. Thomas herbalist. And on-going projects, such as the Archeology program, Annaberg Cultural History program, and the Park Study Grants program all had their own successes. Lastly, we worked hard preparing for this summer's projects, especially the SCA Trail Crew and Summer Eco-Camps. The SCA crew will involve five young Virgin Islanders and four students from the mainland US to repair hiking trails in the Park. The Summer Eco-Camp program will provide an opportunity for 100 young Virgin Islanders to experience three days in VI National Park at VIERS learning about marine and terrestrial eco-systems.

As you can see, we have accomplished a lot and achieved some notable successes. But, none of the above would have been possible with your support. The Power Swim alone required the efforts of about 50 sponsors and donors and more than 80 volunteers to make it a safe, challenging and enjoyable event. So, **Thank You** once again for your continued support. It is you that give us strength by your numbers and sustenance by your contributions — both financial and in volunteer time. Please continue to keep VI National Park as one of your philanthropic priorities — **our Park needs you, now more than ever!**

Friends of   
**VIRGIN ISLANDS  
NATIONAL PARK**

P.O. Box 811  
St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands 00831  
Phone: 340-779-4940 • Fax: 340-693-9973  
[www.friendsvinp.org](http://www.friendsvinp.org)

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
CRUZ BAY, VI 00831  
PERMIT NO. 07