

Celebrating 50 Years of VI National Park with a Message of Philanthropy

On Dec. 1, 2006 Virgin Islands National Park celebrated its 50th anniversary with much ado and fanfare. During the months leading up to the celebrations, we learned a lot about the establishment of VI National Park, and the visionary individuals who made it happen. The theme that emerged from this story became the focal point of our celebrations – private philanthropy and our National Parks.

VI National Park and many other national parks were either born and/or greatly expanded out of the generosity of private citizens, who understood and appreciated the value of these spectacular places. Our goal was to share this history, and remind all of us that it is incumbent upon us to care for these places that tell of our history and the American story.

The Dec. 1st celebrations began with a Commemorative Day program at the National Park ball field in Cruz Bay. A number of dignitaries were there to say a few words and honor our nation's 29th National Park. Local dignitaries included Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen, and St. John Island Administrator Julian Harley, who spoke on behalf of Governor Turnbull. Other dignitaries included southeast Deputy Regional Director Art Frederick, former Superintendent of VI National Park, who spoke with great fondness of our Park and of the citizens of St. John. Southeast Regional Director Patricia Hooks also spoke, along with newly appointed National Park Service Director and keynote speaker Mary Bomar. Ms. Bomar brought with her a video taped message from Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, who was unable to join us that day. Secretary Kempthorne's message amplified the vital role that private philanthropy played in the development of the park system, and the critical need for private philanthropy today.

The Department of Interior is preparing for the National Park Service's 100th anniversary, which will take place in 2016. During the Secretary's taped message, the crowd of 200 gathered at the ball field learned of the "Centennial Challenge", a new public-private partnership and fundraising challenge, which will seek to raise critical funding to support important projects and programs in our National Parks over the next 10 years.

Many local students took an active role in the celebration. JROTC and the JDPP Marching Band kicked-off ceremonies; and music and dance programs were performed by students of St. John School of the Arts and Lockhart Elementary School. The Love City Pan Dragons/ Youth Steel Orchestra, and Koko and the Sunshine Band also treated the crowd to lively traditional music. The new philanthropy exhibit and garden were "pre" grand-opened (as we have yet to finish the gardens)

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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.



From left to right: Rafe Boulon, Vin Cipolla, Catherine Light and Joe Kessler at Friends' 2007 Annual Meeting.

Friends' 2007 Annual Meeting

Mr. Vin Cipolla, president and C.E.O. of the National Park Foundation, the Congressionally chartered philanthropic partner of America's National Parks, presented the keynote address at the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park's 2007 Annual Meeting. Held Jan. 21st at T'ree Lizard's Restaurant at Cinnamon Bay, over 120 people turned out to hear Mr. Cipolla share his perspective on the role of philanthropy in the future of our nation's National Parks.

Business Accomplished at the Annual Meeting

Chairman of the Board since 1999, John Fuller stepped down and a new slate of Board officers was introduced. Fraser Drummond was elected chairman, Sam Hall was elected vice chairman, Harry Daniels will continue on as treasurer, and Maggie Day will remain secretary.

Friends of Virgin Islands National Park Update

Friends' president Joe Kessler gave an overview of the past year's program accomplishments, including the progress made in preserving Estate Maho Bay, which he considered "the single most significant achievement this past year and a huge accomplishment for the Park, the people of St. John and the millions of people who will visit and enjoy Maho Bay in the future." Other program highlights included a 50% increase in the number of young Virgin Islanders attending Friends' sponsored Eco-camps, and developing an exhibit and organizing events and programs in celebration of VI National Park's 50th anniversary.

Over \$400,000 will be invested in various projects and programs in the Park this year. Joe discussed the challenges the Friends face in

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• TIDINGS NOTES •

SCA Summer Trail Crew Opportunities

The Friends is seeking students from the Virgin Islands to participate in a month-long summer trail crew program in conjunction with the Student Conservation Association. This is a one of a kind opportunity to live and work in VI National Park maintaining hiking trails. Crew positions (ages 17–20) and crew leader positions (ages 21–25) are available. Call (340) 779-4940 for more information.

2007 Scholarship Program — a New Addition!

The Friends' annual Scholarship Program is once again being offered to Virgin Islanders at the university level in fields related to marine biology or natural resource management and protection. In addition, this year Friends is offering a scholarship for children of VINP staff at the university level. Priority will be given to students pursuing a degree related to the natural sciences. Both scholarships will be in the amount of \$1000 per academic year. Contact Kristen for an application and more information on eligibility requirements.

Seeking Summer Intern

If you or someone you know is interested in spending 8-10 weeks working for the Friends, please let us know! We're looking for an enthusiastic and creative student who is entering their junior or senior year of college and has a particular interest in environmental science, conservation, or environmental education. Accommodations at Maho Bay Camps and a modest stipend are provided. Please send resumes to intern@friendsvinp.org, or contact Kristen for more information at (340) 779-4940.

Eco-Camps!

Attention parents, Summer Eco-Camps are almost here! The Friends is again sponsoring environmental summer camps for children ages 8–16. These 3 day/2 night camps, which take place at VIERS in Lameshur Bay, will introduce kids to the wonders of our island's ecosystems. Eco-Camps are free of charge to U.S. Virgin Islands students. Please call VIERS to register (340) 776-6721.

An Introduction and Farewell to Acting VINP Superintendent



Arriving on St. John one day prior to the Friends Annual Meeting on Jan. 21st, Catherine Light had to jump right into her position as Acting Superintendent for VI National Park. Ms. Light temporarily left her post as Superintendent of Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site, and the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, for a 60-day detail as Acting Superintendent for VINP. Ms. Light's transition into VI National Park was helped along by the "amazing hospitality of the community and VINP staff. The warm welcome I received was wonderful," said Ms. Light. Her first impressions of VI National Park, in addition to the undeniable natural beauty, were of the island community, which (after only a short time on island) she viewed as a "small, tight-knit family, laid back and comfortable." She also commented on the support Friends provide to VINP. "Lots of parks don't have that kind of help or relationship with a Friends group. The Friends' support with projects in VINP is understated."

Due to circumstances that have arisen in her own parks, Ms. Light is being called back, thus cutting her detail as Acting Superintendent for VINP short. Before her departure, Ms. Light is trying to finalize details regarding TPL's purchase of Estate Maho Bay, and the partitioning of the estate between NPS, TPL, and the remaining 1/11th heir.

Ms. Light is disappointed to be leaving our Park sooner than expected. In her absence a new Acting Superintendent (either a current VINP staff member or someone from another park) will step in until the new Superintendent is chosen. The position for VINP Superintendent closed in December, and Ms. Light is confident that "the NPS is taking its time to make sure VINP gets a great Superintendent."

2007 Seminar Series Offering New & Exciting Activities

With 10 seminars already under our belt, the Friends' 2007 Seminar Series is off to a great start to what looks to be a very successful, educational, and enjoyable Series. Friends begins fielding seminar inquiries as early as July, so it is no wonder the seminars (which begin in January) fill up quickly. With such anticipation we work hard to meet participant expectations by keeping the Series fresh and imaginative.

New additions to this year's Series still to come: Language Melting Pot, Oil Painting Seminar, Garden Workshop, Enduring Eloquence, and Donkey Stories.

While regular favorites such as the Archeology Boat Trip and Botanical Hike have thrilled seminar goers, some of the new seminars have really generated a buzz. On Jan. 24th, participants overturned rocks and scanned the underbrush in search of some of St. John's less common and less visible inhabitants during the Reptile Hike with Dr. Renata Platenberg down the Reef Bay Trail. That same week, Ms. Joyce Sprauve hosted an Island Tea Time seminar, which was both educational and tasty.

Luckily, the Seminar Series runs until April 28th, so there are many seminars to come. However, keep in mind that seminars are filling up fast. Visit our website at www.friendsvinp.org for a seminar schedule, or call (340) 779-4940 to register today.

NOW IN STOCK!

Friends of
**VIRGIN ISLANDS
NATIONAL PARK**
presents

**The Establishment
of Virgin Islands
National Park**

A film by
**Bruce Schoonover,
Steve Simonsen &
William Stelzer**

Featuring never
before seen photos
& rare home movie
footage from
the 1950s.

Quantities are limited. Purchase your DVD today at Friends of V.I. National Park office in Mongoose Junction, purchase it on-line at www.friendsvinp.org, or call us at (340) 779-4940 to order your copy. DVD's are \$20 or \$18 for Friends members.

Celebrating 50 Years of VI National Park with a Message of Philanthropy

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St. John School of the Arts coral reef dancers.

by Ms. Christensen, Ms. Bomar and Art Frederick. This exhibit and garden were made possible in part with funding from the Laurance S. Rockefeller Fund and Glen Speer.

Later that evening, Friends ended this year-long celebration with a smashing gala, hosted by Caneel Bay at the Turtle Bay Estate House. The theme of private philanthropy continued as many distinguished guests joined us for this lovely evening, which included the premier of

“The Establishment of Virgin Islands National Park,” a documentary by Bruce Schoonover, Bill Stelzer and Steve Simonsen that tells the story of the vision and generosity of Laurance S. Rockefeller and others that ultimately formed VI National Park. As a commemorative gift, guests were presented with a copy of this DVD.

There was also an entertaining environmental lesson in the form of an original dance drama, written, choreographed and produced by dance instructor and performer Jude Woodcock called “The Life and Times of a Coral Reef.” Nine of our talented youth performed this drama, which demonstrated through dance, text and music the life cycle of the coral reef, from the beginning as a larval polyp, through a fully formed coral reef. Performers took the audience through the various hazards that impact corals, and demonstrated activities that can protect the reefs.

It is our hope that everyone who attended either one or both of the events on December 1st enjoyed themselves and left with a better understanding about their critical role as private philanthropists and caretakers of one of our nation’s treasured jewels, VI National Park.

Friends Funds 6 Park Study Grants for this School Year

The Park Study Grant Program is a Friends initiated and administered program, which awards grants to St. John teachers who seek to utilize VI National Park and its resources as tools to teach topics related to the natural sciences and cultural history. Through interactive learning, creative projects, and field trips designed by the teachers, activities supported by the program are intended to help students develop a greater appreciation of the Park, and a sense of stewardship for its natural and cultural resources. This year, Friends sponsored six Park Study Grants for the 2006–2007 school year.

Four of this year’s grants were awarded to teachers at Julius E. Sprauve School. Ms. Lecia Richmond’s 7th and 9th grade physical education classes will be taking part in the “Let’s Find a Way: Orienteering in the VINP” project, in which the students will learn orienteering skills such as map and compass reading, and then put these skills to the test on a treasure hunt in the Park.

Ms. Catherine Stull and Ms. Katie Munnely’s Transitional and Special Education classes will study VI marine life and then explore, photograph, and document marine life within Park waters, through this “Life in Our Ocean” project. Ms. Mary Tyler’s 4th grade class will learn and practice a number of cultural crafts; and both of Ms. Mary Jo Wilder’s 9th grade English classes will be able to read their own copy of “My Name is Not Angelica”, and then tour historical sites within the Park that relate to the story.

Guy H. Benjamin Elementary students in Ms. Lisa Penn’s 4th and 5th grades will create their own “Reef Bay Story Book,” after researching VI plants, animals, the Petroglyphs, and touring the Reef Bay Trail. Ms. Katie Zaytoun’s 3rd and 4th grade art classes at the Giff Hill School also plan to study archeology with their “Make Your Own Zemi” project. Students will learn about Taino Indians, and then make their own clay zemis.

The Friends is proud to support these Park Study Grant projects and applauds the effort of these teachers in creatively utilizing the Park and its resources to educate our youth. We are also grateful to Golden Eagle Financial for their generosity and support of this important program. We are still accepting grant applications; for information please stop by the Friends’ office or contact us at 779-4940.

Friends’ 2007 Annual Meeting

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2007, including increasing membership and volunteer opportunities, raising public awareness, and meeting an ambitious annual budget goal of \$790,000.

State of the Park Address

Virgin Islands National Park Chief of Resource Management, Rafe Boulon, recapped the Park’s accomplishments on behalf of VINP Acting Superintendent Catherine Light, who was in attendance, but had just arrived on island the day prior. Boulon optimistically stated that despite the changes in leadership and the lack of increase in funding, the Park has had a good year. In addition, Mr. Boulon touched on upcoming projects such as the continued improvement of the North Shore Road, continuing work on the GMP, moving forward with the NPS/territorial government land swap to relocate Julius E. Sprauve School, and the final installation of the Hurricane Mooring program.

Awards

Tribute was paid to **Glen Speer** for his considerable time and dedication to Friends’ events, as well as his tremendous effort in creating the new philanthropy exhibit and garden in honor of VI National Park’s 50th anniversary.

Also recognized for their volunteer efforts were **Frank Cummings** and **Anna Tuttle**, who both received the Park’s Volunteer of the Year awards.

This year, VINP Resource Management administrative assistant, **Jackie Smalls**, was awarded the Park Partnership award for embodying and supporting the spirit of partnership and collaboration that is essential to the relationship between VI National Park and the Friends. Jackie’s leadership was critical in the successful planning and implementation of the 50th anniversary celebrations.

Upcoming Friends Events!

Mark your calendars & plan to attend the upcoming Friend's events:

Earth Day Celebrations

The 2nd annual Earth Day Environmental Fair will be held on April 20th at the National Park Service ball field in Cruz Bay. This event was a tremendous success last year, and we are anticipating an even better event this year. While focused on school age children, this event will appeal to kids of all ages! There will be interesting displays and demonstrations about alternative energies, landscaping with native plants, mock archeology digs, and much more.

Earth Day is April 21, 2007! Help us celebrate our earth by cleaning your adopted beach! If you would like to adopt a beach or trail, or just lend a hand on the day of the clean-up, contact Kristen at 779-4940.

2007 Beach-to-Beach Power Swim

Planning has begun for the 4th annual Memorial Day weekend Beach-to-Beach Power Swim! Mark your calendars for May 27, 2007 and plan to join

us for this challenging open water swim in the pristine and protected waters of VI National Park. There are three courses to choose from, all of which start at Maho Bay Beach. Swim to Cinnamon Bay, swim to Trunk Bay, or go all the way to Hawksnest Bay!

Advance registration begins March 1st until May 14th, and is \$25 per participant. **New this year is a youth registration fee of \$15/\$25 late for swimmers 17 and under!** Swimmers can register on-line at our website www.friendsvinp.org, call us at the Friends' office, or stop into Connections on St. John, SCUBA on St. Croix, or at all three Caribbean Surf Company locations on St. Thomas. See our website for more details and course map.

Carabana Cultural Theater

Carabana Cultural Theater presents *Dear Anna/Dear Peter*, a story that depicts the love affair between Peter VonSholten, Governor of the Danish West Indies, and his free colored mistress of 20 years, Anna Haggard. This presentation will run every Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m. through April at the Cinnamon Bay amphitheater. Come see the story of this heart-warming relationship, which is believed to have played a significant role in the emancipation of enslaved people in the Danish West Indies.

President's Message By Joe Kessler



VI National Park celebrated its 50th anniversary this past December. As part of the celebration, the Friends produced a video entitled "The Establishment of Virgin Islands National Park" which tells the story of the people and events that lead up to the creation of the Park in 1956. The video masterfully uses film and photos from the 1940s and 1950s intertwined with current images and it is clear from the comparison of these images that St. John is much more lush today than it was 50 years ago – clearly 50 years of protection and preservation of the natural resources has paid off.

There is much to support our hope that VI National Park will remain the pristine gem that we cherish. However, the prognosis for the future is mixed. About 6,800 acres of land is under the direct control of the Park and nearly 400 acres will be added once Estate Maho Bay is acquired, however, the development of in-holdings and property adjacent to Park boundaries threatens both terrestrial and marine flora and fauna. Park waters are crystal clear and turtle grass beds are recovering as a result of Friends-financed mooring fields, but corals are declining due, in part, to silting from upland

runoff. There are about 600 historic structures in the Park ranging from walls and wells to great houses and windmills, but the Park is barely able to even catalogue these structures, let alone stabilize, repair, or maintain them – and they are deteriorating every year.

These are just some of the challenges that we face, but there are ways you can help:

- Use, and/or encourage others to use, responsible and sustainable building practices when building on St. John. Consult the Island Green Builders Assoc. (igba-stjohn.org) for more information and resources.
- Always be a good park citizen by doing your part to help protect its natural and cultural resources. Encourage friends, neighbors, and others that you encounter in the Park, to be good park citizens too.
- Friends members come from all 50 states. Contact your congressional representatives and tell them that national parks, especially VI National Park, is important to you and insist upon adequate funding for them.
- Continue to generously support the work of the Friends. Your support, both financial and as volunteers, is vitally important to help us confront these and other challenges.

Thank you for your support. See you in the Park.

Friends of 
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NATIONAL PARK**

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