

Welcome to Friends Tidings!

Welcome to **Friends Tidings**, the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. While this newsletter is normally reserved for Friends members, this edition (and future winter editions) is being shared with the entire St. John community to increase understanding of the Friends and of VI National Park. Friends members will note that this edition is twice as big as usual, since there is so much going on and being planned. We hope that all readers enjoy this edition and find it informative and useful. We also hope that non-members reading **Friends Tidings** will consider joining us in our quest to make Virgin Islands National Park a model of natural resource protection and cultural preservation while promoting the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure. Membership information is inside.



Angie Gorneau, new manager of Friends of the Park Store.

## Maho Bay is Saved

Great News indeed for all who love Virgin Islands National Park and in particular the Maho Bay area. The Trust for Public Land recently completed the purchase of six of the remaining seven shares of Estate Maho Bay, the 419-acre parcel that roughly encompasses all of the land inland from big Maho Beach to the ridges of the surrounding hills. Huge kudos are due to TPL, and especially John Garrison, for their commitment, perseverance and dedication to preserving Estate Maho Bay. We would also like to thank the donors that are making this project a reality, and the six Marsh heirs for their vision and dedication to preserving this very special place.



The penultimate step in preserving this land was taken when the federal court ruled on the partition of the property between the National Park Service (3 shares), Trust for Public Land (7 shares – they purchased one other share in 2004) and the Nelson family (1 share), who decided not to participate in this preservation effort. The final approval rests with the territorial court and is expected shortly.

As it now stands, about 328 acres (78%) of the total parcel will eventually become part of VI National Park and be totally protected. Thirty-six acres (6-acres each) will remain with each of the heirs as part of their settlement, 38 acres will go to the Nelsons, and TPL will hold 19 acres in reserve. The land held by the 6 heirs and TPL carries

*Continued on Page 6*

## Friends of the Park Store Now Open!

November 23rd Friends of VI National Park celebrated the opening of our new retail venture Friends of the Park Store with a grand opening party. Party goes mingled, sipped champagne, and perused a variety of unique and exciting products on display. Everything from sustainable home decor items to educational gifts, local crafts, t-shirts, and souvenir items. Many of the carefully chosen products are made from recycled materials and renewable resources; the concept of sustainability predominant throughout the store.

Stop in and check out Friends of the Park Store located in Mongoose Junction (street level next to Hurricane Alley). It is also a convenient place to find out what we are up to; information is available on events, seminars and current projects, or if you would like to renew your membership, it can all be done in our new store!

**Friends' Mission:**

*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.*

## • TIDINGS NOTES •

### 990 Pounds of Debris Removed



2007 Coastweeks ended October 6th leaving St. John's coastal shores and trails cleaner. Friends of VI National Park is proud to support VI Coastweeks on St. John; but we are even more proud of everyone who participated in this year's cleanup. Almost 100 volunteers pitched in and removed over 990 pounds of debris from 14 of our island's beaches and trails. Friends would like to thank all of those who participated in cleaning our coastal shores, especially those who adopted beaches and helped organize the cleanups: Cid Hamling, Coral Bay Community Council, Fraser Drummond, Ms. Jill's 4th grade class from Giffit Hill School, Ms. Burke's 4th grade class from Guy Benjamin Elementary, Holiday Homes, Ms. Mortinson's 5th grade class from Julius E. Sprauve School, Laurel Brannick, Maho Bay Camps, Mindy Michtner, Skinny Legs, St. John Phone Book & St. John Land Sharks, and St. John Rotary.

It's never too late to celebrate VI Coastweeks; to find out how you can help contact Kristen at the Friends, (340) 779-4940.

### Friends' 2008 Annual Meeting

Please join us for the Friends 2008 Annual Meeting. We are honored to have Governor John deJongh, as this year's keynote speaker. Also on the program are V.I. National Park's superintendent Mark Hardgrove, to give the State of the Park address and Friends president Joe Kessler, who will present the Friends Annual Report.

The meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 27, 2007 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Tree Lizard Restaurant at Cinnamon Bay. Light snacks and beverages will be provided, and there will be a shuttle service from the National Park maintenance parking lot near Mongoose Junction. Please call to confirm your attendance, (340) 779-4940.

### Park Study Grants

Each fall season as St. John's children return to school, the Friends accepts applications for our Park Study Grants program. Small grants of up to \$500 are awarded to St. John teachers to encourage the utilization of V.I. National Park as a "living classroom." Activities supported by the grants are designed to incorporate the Park in classroom lesson plans, and generally focus on science, local history, culture, crafts, ecology, or conservation. This program is a great way to teach our students about the amazing resources right in their "backyard." For an application or more information contact Kristen at the Friends, (340) 779-4940.

## From the Superintendent



### Greetings Friends of VI National Park!

I hope that this year was as good for each of you as it was for our continued partnership between the NPS and Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. Much has been accomplished over the past year thanks to your continued support and the fine work of the Friends's Board of Directors, President, and professional staff. The most recent example of the Friends's efforts was to rally the community to remove debris and trash from the

Park's beaches and coastal shores, helping to protect marine species and habitats while collecting valuable information on the amount and type of debris found.

This is the time of year that the NPS formulates our five year funding strategies for our numerous project accounts for both cultural and natural resources. Recently we hosted visits from the highest levels of the southeast region's cultural and natural resource management leadership in an effort to highlight backlogged work for both of our NPS units (VI National Park & Coral Reef National Monument). Now that we have the Southeast Region office's support and understanding of the needs of VI National Park, the park management team is hard at work updating our project statements helping us become more competitive within the NPS for project funding. We hope to realize changes in our project funding as early as this fiscal year on some of our emergency stabilization projects for cultural resources.

In closing, I want to thank each of you for your support of the Friends organization, and your continued support of Virgin Islands National Park.

Together we can preserve and protect these valuable resources for future generations while working and planning along with our communities. I look forward to another productive and successful year. Seasons greetings and happy New Year from the NPS.

Mark Hardgrove, Superintendent

**NOW IN STOCK!**

Friends of  
**VIRGIN ISLANDS  
NATIONAL PARK**  
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**The Establishment  
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National Park**

A film by  
**Bruce Schoonover,  
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Featuring never  
before seen photos  
& rare home movie  
footage from  
the 1950s.

Quantities are limited. Purchase your DVD today at Friends of the Park Store in Mongoose Junction, purchase it on-line at [www.friendsvinp.org](http://www.friendsvinp.org), or call us at (340) 779-4940 to order your copy. DVD's are \$20 or \$18 for Friends members.

# Friends 2008 Seminar Series

Interested in learning more about St. John's natural and cultural wonders from the experts? Would you like to have a marine biology lesson while sailing, kayak through mangrove lagoons, or learn to weave a bag out of recycled materials? Now you can! Friends of the Park offers a variety of educational seminars every year to increase public awareness and enjoyment of the Park!

Experts in these disciplines volunteer their time to Friends of Virgin Islands National Park as a fundraising effort. Field seminars range in price from \$20-\$75 for members, \$25-\$85 for non-members and last from two to six hours. All proceeds are a donation to the Friends. Call 779-4940 to pre-register, space is limited.

<b>JANUARY</b>	
Jan. 16, Wed.	– <b>Reptile Hike</b> – Search for reptiles along the Reef Bay Trail with reptile expert Dr. Renata Platenberg, and enjoy a boat ride around St. John's south shore back to Cruz Bay.
Jan. 19, Sat.	– <b>Green Building House Tour</b> – Tour beautiful island homes exhibiting components of alternative, eco-friendly building/living with St. John builder and one of the founders of Island Green Building Association (IGBA), Doug White. Part of the proceeds goes to support IGBA.
Jan. 23, Wed.	– <b>Full Moon Hike</b> – Hike to the top of Ram Head and explore the southernmost point of St. John with park ranger Don Near. Learn about the fascinating natural and cultural history that exists there.
Jan. 26, Sat.	– <b>Archaeology Boat Trip I</b> – Set a course through prehistory with park archaeologist Ken Wild while visiting St. John's shores by boat.
Jan. 27, Sun.	– <b>Marine Biology Boat Trip I</b> – Snorkel the underwater treasures of St. John's reefs with a NPS marine biologist aboard the classic power boat, <i>Cinnamon Bay</i> .
Jan. 30, Wed.	– <b>Beach Cat Adventure Sail</b> – Enjoy a wet and thrilling ride aboard a Hobie Getaway, as you sail to Congo and Lovango Cays and discover the history and ecology of the area from nature guide Han Wingrond.
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	
Feb. 2, Sat.	– <b>Native Plant Hike</b> – Hike with Dr. Gary Ray, botanist and plant ecologist, on the Cinnamon Bay Trail and learn about St. John's rich and fascinating communities of native plants.
Feb. 3, Sun.	– <b>Eco Weaving</b> – Learn to make lovely woven bags from discarded plastic grocery bags with teacher and artist, Idalia Scimeca.
Feb. 9, Sat.	– <b>Coastal Ecology</b> – Circumnavigate St. John with VINP's Chief of Resource Management Rafe Boulon, and learn about the mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs that fringe our island's coastlines.
Feb. 16, Sat.	– <b>Afro-Caribbean Drumming</b> – Join master drummer Eddie Bruce and learn basic entertainment and ritual drumming techniques of West African and Afro-Caribbean cultures.
Feb. 17, Sun.	– <b>A Glimpse into St. John's Past</b> – Travel to back time with Guy Benjamin as he shares memories of his youth in the early 1900s when only a couple hundred homes existed on St. John and donkeys were still the mode of transportation.
Feb. 23, Sat.	– <b>Archaeology Boat Trip II</b> – Set a course through prehistory with Park Archaeologist Ken Wild while visiting bays along St. John.
Feb. 24, Sun.	– <b>Pastels Workshop I</b> – Learn the technique of pastels as you create tropical landscapes at Caneel Bay under the instruction of renowned local artist Livy Hitchcock.
Feb. 27, Wed.	– <b>Seed Bead Jewelry</b> – Join park ranger Deanna Somerville and learn to make necklaces out of collected island treasures- seeds from local plants.

<b>MARCH</b>	
Mar. 1, Sat.	– <b>Kayak the Mangroves of Hurricane Hole</b> – Kayak with Arawak Expeditions through the Coral Reef Nat'l Monument, stopping to snorkel in the mangroves and seagrass beds.
Mar. 2, Sun.	– <b>Botanical Hike</b> – Local botanist Eleanor Gibney will lead you on a botany hike on an old estate road through the recently preserved Estate Maho Bay. Explore this lush terrain, learning about St. John's native plants.
Mar. 8, Sat.	– <b>Stars and Their Stories</b> – Relax lie back and let astrol- oger and mythologist Kelley Hunter guide you through the constellations of the night sky.
Mar. 9, Sun.	– <b>Pastels Workshop II</b> – Learn the technique of pastels as you create tropical landscapes at Caneel Bay under the instruction of renowned local artist Livy Hitchcock.
Mar. 15, Sat.	– <b>Sea Turtle Sail</b> – Sail the <i>Castaway Girl II</i> to Buck Island, St. Thomas with park ranger and turtle special- ist, Christy Loomis, and swim with the many green and hawksbill turtles that make Buck Island their home year round.
Mar. 16, Sun.	– <b>Marine Biology Sail II</b> – Snorkel the underwater trea- sures of St. John's reefs with a NPS marine biologist aboard the catamaran, <i>Calypso</i> .
Mar. 22, Sat.	– <b>Coral Reef Boat Tour</b> – Snorkel areas along St. John shoreline with USGS marine ecologist Caroline Rogers and learn about the corals found in VI waters.
Mar. 29, Sat.	– <b>VINP Archive Tour and Slideshow</b> – Join VINP museum curator, Susanna Pershern, on a private tour through the Park's archives stored in the Bally Building, and a slideshow of historic, and rarely seen images.
<b>APRIL</b>	
Apr. 5, Sat.	– <b>Day Out East</b> – Join NPS ranger, Laurel Brannick, on a hike and snorkel off Yawzi Point, followed by lunch at VIERS in Lameshur Bay.
Apr. 6, Sun.	– <b>Traditional West Indian Cooking</b> – With the help of Ms. Joyce Sprauve you will learn hands-on how to pre- pare some traditional West Indians dishes, such as roti, pate, and johnny cake.
Apr. 9, Wed.	– <b>Snorkel Tour</b> – Snorkel the reefs off Caneel Bay with snorkel guide Lucile Portlock, and have someone on hand to familiarize you with St. John's marine creatures.
Apr. 12, Sat.	– <b>Garden Workshop</b> – Garden with Irene Patton, and take part in a basic, hands-on gardening discussion on the plea- sures and challenges of gardening in the semi-arid climate of St. John.

• Please tear out this page and save it to use as a reminder •

## Update on the Park Land for a School Issue

St. John has long desired a new school that would replace the current schools in Cruz Bay and Coral Bay, and would also include a high school so that high school age children on St. John would not have to travel to St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands government has sought VI National Park land to locate such a school. In 2003, the NPS offered to swap/exchange land with the territory for a site they identified in the Park, near Catherineberg, that would be suitable for a school.

In response to opposition to the swap within the community, Delegate to Congress Christensen proposed legislation that would allow the National Park Service to provide the land via a long-term lease. This legislation, known as "Virgin Islands National Park School Lease Act" (HR 53), was recently passed by the House of Representatives and has moved on to the Senate.

The Friends remains concerned about HR 53 because it would reduce the resources of VI National Park, and set a precedent that would open the door to future demands on this park as well as threaten national parks throughout the country.

The Friends recognizes the urgent need for the new school and is firm in our support of using the site designated within the Park, however, we continue to believe that a land exchange, or swap, is the best alternative. We have called upon all parties involved, both governmental and community-based, to remain open to other alternatives and work on other options simultaneously.

We firmly believe that we can achieve what is best for the children of St. John and what is good for the Park at the same time. These issues are not mutually exclusive!

## VI National Park brings St. John High Marks



The October/November edition of *National Geographic Traveler* magazine features a report on islands and archipelagos around the world and it ranks St. John second in the Caribbean, after Dominica. The report credits VI National Park as the reason for this high score:

*"St. John is the best in the Caribbean. Much of its natural environment has been saved by the Park Service and ecologically minded business people. Its long-term prospects, especially for the locals, will depend on good sustainable tourism management. The national park has saved this virgin from being tired like St. Thomas. There's almost no trash along the roads, you can hike for a couple of miles without coming across structures, and there are fabulous bays reachable only on foot (or boat); snorkeling is outstanding".*

## Join a Volunteer Work Party

Help maintain Park trails and ruins, remove debris from beaches and coastlines, and assist with general maintenance projects in VI National Park. Work projects will vary weekly and volunteers of all skill levels are welcome. This volunteer program runs November through April. If you are interested in helping out, simply show up any Thursday or Saturday at the National Park maintenance parking lot at 8:00 am. Be sure to bring sufficient water, a snack, and wear "brush appropriate attire," such as long pants and shirt, sturdy closed-toed shoes, and gloves if you have them.

## Living Art



...the spectacular photographic essay of St. John, is the perfect gift from, or to, those who love St. John and Virgin Islands National Park. This 200-page coffee table book (now with improved readability), by renowned St. John photographer Steve Simonsen, celebrates the natural beauty of St. John in 182 stunning photographs.

A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF ALL BOOKS BENEFITS THE VI NATIONAL PARK AND HELPS TO PRESERVE THE SAME NATURAL BEAUTY THE BOOK CELEBRATES. PLEASE CALL OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR ORDERING INFORMATION, OR VISIT FRIENDS OF THE PARK STORE AT MONGOOSE JUNCTION TO PURCHASE A COPY.

## Join the Friends or Renew Your Membership Today!

Fill out the form below and return it to: Friends of V.I. National Park, P.O. Box 811, St. John, VI 00831  
Or join on-line at: [http://www.friendsvinp.org/new\\_stuff/joindirect.htm](http://www.friendsvinp.org/new_stuff/joindirect.htm)

New Member

Renewed Member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Check Enclosed

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Thank You!

The Friends was successful this year because of the generous support of many people, businesses and organizations whose donations, both in cash and in kind, contributed to helping protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of Virgin Islands National Park and promote the responsible enjoyment of this unique national treasure.

Recognition of donors would not be complete without first thanking Rosalie Stahl and Donald Sussman, whose visionary donations in the past fundamentally changed the Friends and our support of the Park. The impact of their contributions continues to be felt every day.

The Friends has more than 3,000 members, and your contributions, whether its annual dues, donations to special appeals, participating in our events, sponsoring individual projects or purchasing Friends' merchandise all help to enable us to support the Park. We are profoundly thankful for your support and are humbled by your generosity. We are especially grateful to the following individuals and organizations for their support this past fiscal year:

## Donors of \$10,000 or more:

Anonymous  
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## Donors of \$5,000 – \$9,999:

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## Donors of \$2,500 - \$4,999:

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Efrem Zimbalist III

Please let us know if we inadvertently omitted your name or placed you in the incorrect group.

(But, please note that the above includes donations made between October 2006 and September 2007) **Thanks!**



*St. Thomas high school students on seashore walk at Leinster Bay thanks to Transportation Grant Project.*

## Project Accomplishments for 2007

This has been a very busy and productive year with many important project accomplishments. Perhaps the most significant were the completion of the third phase of the Hurricane Hole Mooring Project and the School Transportation Grants Project. The Mooring Project, funded with the generous support of the Chesney Foundation and the Ocean Trust, added an additional 42 storm mooring berths in Hurricane Hole. This brings the total to 94 storm berths that provide safe and secure refuge from storms while protecting the mangrove forests that border the bays of Hurricane Hole. The School Transportation Grants Project, made possible by the generous support of Golden Eagle Financial LLC, facilitated visits by more than 500 school children on ranger-led activities in the Park such as the Reef Bay Trail hike, seashore walks at Leinster Bay, and visits to the Annanberg ruins.

Each year, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park receives a request list from the National Park Service for support of important projects and programs within Virgin Islands National Park. These projects are considered within the context of the Friends' mission, and if approved, a commitment is made to seek funding for approved projects and programs.

Friends of the Park also seeks funding for organizational initiatives, proposed by staff and board, which are considered to be important to fulfilling our mission to preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of the Park. In fiscal year 2007, Friends supported the Park with more than \$400,000 in program and project funding. With your help, we accomplished the following:

- Friends supported Archeology Research and Interns, providing critical archival functions of artifacts from the Cinnamon and Trunk Bay digs. A highlight this year was bringing in two Danish students who helped, after research of Danish records in Copenhagen, to identify additional plantations and ruins within the Park.
- We again supported the Folklife Festival, the most important cultural event taking place in the Park.

- The 2nd annual Earth Day Environmental Fair for children featured exhibits that focused on themes related to conservation and preservation, such as plants, animals, recycling, and solar energy. More than 400 St. John School children attended this event.
- Carabana Cultural Theater presented "Dear Peter/Dear Anna", a play depicting the love affair between Peter VonSholten, Governor to the Danish West Indies, and his mistress Anna Heegard. This production ran for almost 16 weeks during the beginning of 2007 at the Cinnamon Bay Amphitheater.
- Adopt-A-Beach/Trail Program remains a strong program, providing opportunities for volunteers to help us keep our beaches and trails clean.
- Park Study Grants provided nine small grants to teachers in St. John schools. These grants helped them utilize VI National Park as a "living classroom" by incorporating the Park into lesson plans and classroom activities, focusing on science, local history, culture, crafts, ecology, or conservation.
- The Friends, working in partnership with USGS, continued support for research on coral health.
- SCA Trail Crew opened up the L'Esperance Trail and improved the Europa, Johnny Horn Trail, and Lameshur Bay Trail. The effects of their work will reduce erosion and deterioration on park trails.
- It was again a banner year for the summer Eco-Camps. This summer 145 children attended this three-day, two-night environmental education camp experience at VIERS in VI National Park on St. John's south side. The camp teaches children about marine and terrestrial eco-systems.

Our ability to accomplish so much is due to your generous support. Your commitment to the Friends and your confidence in us to make a difference on St. John and in the Park both humbles and inspires us to carry out these challenging program plans. We are grateful for your support that allows us to continue our work preserving and protecting Virgin Islands National Park for future generations to enjoy as we have.

## Maho Bay is Saved

*(Continued from Page 1)*

significant development restrictions to help protect the environment and view shed, and be a model of responsible development of private land within a national park. Unfortunately, the land that will be retained by the Nelsons will only be subject to VI zoning laws and building codes.

Of course we would have preferred that all 419 acres went to the Park – this represents a significant accomplishment and when completed, will be the single largest land preservation acquisition since Laurance Rockefeller donated the land to establish the Park 50 years ago. This project may also serve as a model for future land preservation activities on St. John: given the cost of land on St. John, we will likely have to accept some (hopefully responsible) development within, or adjacent to, land acquired for preservation.

The Friends of VI National Park is very proud of the role that we played in the preservation of Estate Maho Bay. We are honored to have been a partner with TPL, who deserves the thanks of everyone, residents and visitors alike, who enjoy, and will enjoy in perpetuity the spectacular Maho Bay area.

More information on Estate Maho Bay will be posted on our website ([friendsvinp.org](http://friendsvinp.org)) shortly.

## Projects for 2008

Supporting projects and programs in the Park is a major component of the Friends' role as a private sector partner. With this in mind, the Board of Directors recently approved a very ambitious and challenging program plan for 2008 that will cost nearly \$600,000. As well as the new projects this year, there are also those that have become closely associated with the Friends that we will continue to support.

Each fall, the Superintendent submits a prioritized list of Park project needs to the Friends' Board of Directors. Given the limitations of federal funding for the Park, (it typically only meets about 70% of the Park's budget needs) Friends' funding is often the only way important natural resource, cultural resource, and environmental education programs can take place.

The Friends' Board carefully considers each project in the Park's support request. Those projects that are approved, along with Friends-initiated projects that the Board chooses to undertake, comprise our annual program plan. This year's plan includes the following projects:

### Natural Resource Protection

- Accessible Trails (\$90,000): A new and exciting program area for the Friends will be to assist the Park in making certain trails accessible to those with mobility difficulties – an obvious challenge given St. John's terrain.
- Adopt a Beach/Trail (\$1,000): Promote community participation in the Park by organizing civic, religious, school and business groups to "adopt" a beach or trail for periodic cleanups.
- Coral Reef Research (\$19,000): Support of two research projects studying different aspects of coral health of reefs around St. John.
- Resource Protection Moorings (\$90,000): Complete the final phase of this project and install an additional 30 storm refuge moorings in Hurricane Hole.
- SCA Trail Crews (\$36,000): Again sponsor a crew of budding conservationists in partnership with the Student Conservation Association to repair and upgrade priority trails within the Park. We will again build on our experience of fielding a crew of young Virgin Islanders.
- Water Quality Monitoring (\$11,500): Purchase and install a "Multi-parameter Water Quality Data Logger" at Lameshur.

### Cultural Preservation

- Annaberg Cultural Presentations (\$5,000): Continue ongoing support of the cultural presentation program at Annaberg Plantation and maintain a volunteer docent program at the site.
- Archeological Artifact Preservation (\$30,000): Assist in the preservation of the thousands of archeological artifacts uncovered in the archeological digs by supporting material purchases, intern stipends, and organizing volunteers.
- Archeology Museum Exhibits (\$180,000): Support the renovation of the archeology lab at Cinnamon Bay, including development and installation of museum quality exhibits and displays.
- Cultural Theater Presentation (\$10,600): Support weekly theater presentations from January through April at Cinnamon Bay Amphitheater. This year's presentation is "Back Time", a play telling the story of the oldest man in the Caribbean.

- Folklife Festival (\$12,000): Continuing support of the Park's premier cultural festival on St. John held during Black History Month (February).
- Hassel Island Restoration (\$16,000): Continuing effort to restore the Creque Marine Railway area to allow the site to be safely visited.

### Environmental Education

- Eco-camps (\$24,000): Again sponsor summer camps for Virgin Islands youth, enabling them to spend three days at VIERS learning about marine and terrestrial ecosystems.
- Parks as Living Classrooms (\$12,000): Provide small grants to teachers in St. John schools to creatively incorporate the Park in classroom studies. This will also include a fund to support transportation costs for students from St. John and St. Thomas to facilitate classes participating in VINP programs such as visits to historical sites, archeological digs, and the Reef Bay hike.
- Philanthropy and National Parks Exhibit (\$30,000): Complete the construction of an outdoor interpretive display about the role of philanthropy in national parks, using VINP as a case study.
- Scholarship Fund (\$2,000): Provide scholarships and summer internships for two Virgin Islanders to encourage study in fields related to natural resource management.

If you would like more information, or you would like to become involved in one of these projects, please come by the office or call. We invite members who are particularly interested in one of these projects to consider becoming a special sponsor of the project. Please contact Karen for more information, (340) 779-4940.



*Volunteers removing debris from Hassel Island's shoreline.*

## Hassel Island Community Cleanup Great Success

Saturday, December 8th, hundreds of volunteers from St. Thomas and St. John came together to remove debris from the shoreline of Hassel Island. This clean up marked the completion of the large scale debris removal effort that has been taking place on Hassel Island thanks to the planning and funding of a coalition of organizations and private parties, including VI National Park, The St. Thomas Historical Trust, Ricardo Charaff, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, and the VI Government.

To learn more about the on-going cleanup efforts on Hassel Island please contact the Friends, (340) 779-4940.

# Upcoming Friends Events!

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

## Earth Day Environmental Fair

Friends will again this year host an Earth Day Environmental Fair for school children at the National Park Ball Field on April 22, 2008. Children will visit with professionals in their environmental fields and, utilizing a hands-on approach, learn about plants, animals, recycling, and alternative energies, thus continuing to cultivate the next generation of conservation citizens throughout the school year.

## Earth Day Beach/Trail Clean-Up

In addition to the Environmental Fair, we will request that those who have adopted beaches and trails do their annual spring cleaning of their adopted locations on April 19 or 20th.

## Friends' Beach-to-Beach Power Swim

There is plenty of time to begin training for the Friends' 2008 Beach-to-Beach Power Swim! So, swimmers on your marks! This year's date is Sunday, May 25, 2008, Memorial Day weekend. Please make plans to join us and watch our website for details.

## President's Message *By Joe Kessler*



This past year has been a great year. Without a doubt, the hallmark of the year has been the success of saving Maho Bay. This was no small feat and we are very proud of having played an important role in making this happen. As you've read inside there have been lots of other accomplishments and challenges as well.

Clearly, we would not have been successful without you, the members of the Friends of VI National Park. You encourage us by your numbers and your participation, and you sustain us with your support.

When Maho Bay was under threat of development, nearly 1,000 Friends members wrote the Director of the NPS urging her to be steadfast in protecting this icon of VI National Park. This, along with the views expressed in local media, turned the tide of the developer's egregious plans and paved the way for TPL to purchase the land for preservation.

Hundreds of you come forward and volunteer thousands of hours of your time to assist the Park and the Friends. You are docents at Annaberg, and experts leading seminars. You help at the Visitors' Center, in the Park's and the Friends' offices, and you provide the critical manpower that has led to the success of our events such as the Earth Day Environmental Fair, Power Swim and our annual gala.

Last, but certainly not least, is your generous financial support in the form of dues, contributions to the annual campaign, support of particular projects of interest, and the purchase of Friends merchandise or other goods.

Together we have made a difference – **the Friends' success this year is your success!** It has been due to your participation and generous support. As we move into another year, with even more ambitious plans, I ask for your support by volunteering for the Park and the Friends, responding to our calls to action regarding threats to this park and continuing to keep the Friends, and VI National Park, as one of philanthropic priorities.

I wish you and your families the best for this holiday season and hope that 2008 is all that you want it to be. I also look forward to seeing you out in the Park.

Friends of   
**VIRGIN ISLANDS  
NATIONAL PARK**

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