

## V.I. RC&D Seeks 9-10 V.I. High School Students for Week-Long Georgia Conservation Camp



2009 Georgia Conservation camp chaperones & participants pose in front of their dorm.

The Virgin Islands Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. (V.I. RC&D) is seeking 9-10 Virgin Islands' high school students to attend the **2010 Natural Resources Conservation Workshop, all expenses paid!** The Workshop is a one-week camp to be held June 13-17, 2010, at Abraham Baldwin College in Tifton, Georgia. The conservation camp is usually only open to Georgia students. How-

ever, through the sponsorship of V.I. RC&D and the V.I. Urban Forestry Council, over 50 USVI students have participated in this valuable and unique learning experience since 2000.

High school students learn about soil, water, air, plants, minerals, and animals. Although the focus is on Georgia's natural resources, the students learn valuable lessons and can associate these same resources with their local environment. The camp employs classroom and field trip activities to help youth learn about the basic principles and wise use of natural resources.

Students get a taste of college life while spending the entire week on the Abraham Baldwin College campus. They also gain insight into careers through their counselors and instructors, professional personnel from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Georgia

Forestry Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and many private industries and organizations.

Student applicants must be between 15 & 18 years of age, but not a graduating senior at the time of the camp. Students must fill out a registration application package, provide copies of valid insurance and passport, and submit a one-page essay describing their interest in natural resources and/or agriculture and why they wish to participate in the conservation summer camp.

Teachers and parents are requested to encourage their students to apply before the March 31, 2010 deadline.

Funding for the camp is provided by a grant from the V.I. Department of Agriculture Urban & Community Forestry Assistance Program. For details or an application, contact the V.I. RC&D office at 340-692-9632 x.5 or visit [www.usvircd.org](http://www.usvircd.org).

## Nonpoint Source Pollution Conference Logo Contest

### Attention 7th & 8th Grade Teachers!

The 10<sup>th</sup> Virgin Islands Conference on Non Point Source Pollution will be held May 6-7, 2010 at the Wyndham Sugar Bay Beach Resort on St. Thomas.

The Conference Planning Committee invites 7th & 8th graders in the USVI to participate in a logo design contest in conjunction with this conference. This year's theme is *Changing Direction & Directing Change: Solutions 2 Nonpoint Pollution*. There will be only one winner for the entire territory. The winner will be awarded \$200 at the award luncheon ceremony on May 6, 2010. All transportation will be provided for the winner and a chaperone.

The logo will be judged on its consistency with the conference theme, creativity and neatness. The logo design should depict an image that conveys a message about Nonpoint Source Pollution throughout the territory. The image should fit on 8.5" x 11" paper, no larger. The image can be created in any medium. Contestants should clearly note

their school, grade and phone number on the back of their submission.

**Contest entries must be submitted no later than 4:00 p.m. Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup>**; the winner will be notified by March 15, 2010. St. Thomas-St. John entries must be submitted to the St. Thomas Coastal Zone Management office or scanned and emailed to: [heather.hitt@dpmr.gov.vi](mailto:heather.hitt@dpmr.gov.vi). St. Croix contest entries must be submitted to the UVI Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS) office or scanned and emailed to: [mtaylor@uvi.edu](mailto:mtaylor@uvi.edu).

Nonpoint source pollution is one of the most serious environmental problems we face today and one of the most difficult to control. Nonpoint source pollution in the VI results from rainwater running over land, picking up pollutants, and carrying them to our seas or our ground water. Nonpoint source pollution can be associated with construction and development, poor land clearing practices, agriculture, failing septic systems, vessel wastes, and marina operations.

### Upcoming Events

- ◇ February 13-15: St. Croix Agriculture & Food Fair, VI Agriculture Department Fair Grounds
- ◇ February 22-28: The Art of Mentoring, V.I. Sustainable Farm Institute, St. Croix
- ◇ April 16: St. Thomas Pro-Enviro Fair, UVI Golf Course
- ◇ April 20-21: St. Croix EcoFair, St. George Village Botanical Garden
- ◇ April 23: St. John Earth Day Fair, Cruz Bay
- ◇ April 24: St. John Reef Fest, Hawksnest Beach
- ◇ June 13-17: Natural Resources Conservation Workshop for Youth, Tifton, Georgia

### Share Your Stories with VINE!

Have a great story from a beach cleanup? Or maybe a poem about sea turtles? What about a great photo of one of our incomparable sunsets? Maybe you would like to publicize an upcoming event? If so, why not share it for all to read right here in *Straight from the Vine*? If so, please send it along to:

Julie Wright  
USDA Natural Resources Cons. Service  
5030 Anchor Way, Suite 2, Gallows Bay,  
Christiansted, VI 00820-4692  
340-692-9632 x.5/340-692-9607 (fax)  
[Julie.wright@pr.usda.gov](mailto:Julie.wright@pr.usda.gov)



The Environmental & Cultural Education Newsletter for the Virgin Islands Community

*Where can you learn to snorkel for FREE on St. Croix?*  
Read this month's "Straight from the Vine" to find out!

## Ready, Set, Go to the St. Croix Eco-Fair!

Earth Day is observed around the globe, and here in our little part of the world, we will once again celebrate with the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Earth Day EcoFair. The St. Croix Environmental Association, SEA, and the V.I. Waste Management Authority, VIWMA, organize this educational event. Mark your calendar; this year's EcoFair will take place on Tuesday, April 20 and Wednesday, April 21 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. daily. The St. George Village Botanical Garden will once again host the event on their lush grounds.

Since its origination, the EcoFair has exposed thousands of youths to critical environmental concepts, engaged students in hands-on activities, and provided valuable information to teachers. For students, the EcoFair is more than just a field trip loaded with neat presentations, demonstrations, and games. Attending youth also reflect on their knowledge and ideas about the environment, allowing them to be proactive citizens.

Last year, over 1,500 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders participated in the activities offered. This is a great opportunity for your agency to highlight the work you do and interact with teachers, students, and parents from most of our island's elementary schools. The activities at your booth should last approximately 20 minutes and be interactive. Participants visiting the EcoFair on Tuesday will be in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. On Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders will attend. Please note that all paper hand-

outs should be given to the teachers rather than the students.

Please contact Lynnea Roberts at 340-773-1989 or [lroberts.atsea@gmail.com](mailto:lroberts.atsea@gmail.com) for a registration form. Thank you in advance for contributing to this significant event!

## M is for March Marine Movies

SEA is excited to collaborate with Ziggy Livnat for marine outreach education in St. Croix schools. Ziggy is an independent, award-winning filmmaker who uses video experience to promote marine environmental protection. He is in the Caribbean Reef Etiquette public service announcement, commissioned by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Although Ziggy is exceptionally busy with the PSA project, he is determined to spread his message of environmental awareness to our island youth. He will visit as many schools as possible during the month of March. Lynnea Roberts, SEA Education Coordinator, will organize Ziggy's school visits and leave students with a project to complete. Expect to see many wonderful student projects at the 2010 Earth Day EcoFair. Examples of Ziggy's work can be seen at <http://www.forthesea.com>.



UVI's Don Bailey explains the science of aquaponics to students at the 2009 St. Croix EcoFair.



Students from Country Day School enjoy Ziggy Livnat's film *Learning to Sea*.

### VINE is:

- ◇ Coral World
- ◇ Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park
- ◇ HOVENSA
- ◇ Virgin Islands National Park
- ◇ The Nature Conservancy
- ◇ The Ocean Conservancy
- ◇ St. Croix Environmental Association
- ◇ St. George village Botanical Garden
- ◇ University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service
- ◇ University of the Virgin Islands Globe Program
- ◇ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ◇ US Environmental Protection Agency
- ◇ US Fish & Wildlife
- ◇ VI Department of Agriculture
- ◇ VI Department of Planning & Natural Resources
- ◇ VI Environmental Resource Station
- ◇ VI EPSCoR
- ◇ VI Marine Advisory Service
- ◇ VI Resource Conservation & Development Council
- ◇ VI Waste Management Authority

## Working to Improve Science Teaching in the V.I.



VINE Coordinator Dee Osinski (right) and SEA's Lynnea Roberts (left), experiment with "Mystery Putty" as Migdalia Roach (center) from DPNR-CZM looks on.

Standardized testing shows that most VI schools fall in the bottom fourth for total academic scores, including science, at the elementary-level. How do we improve the knowledge and interest of students in science? Many educators believe that science inquiry-based learning is the key. Using inquiry based curricula has been shown to develop independent and critical thinking skills, positive attitudes and curiosity toward science, and increased achievement in science. Because of this, a group of educators in VINE, with support from DPNR-CZM and SEA,

organized a science inquiry-based workshop for local teachers.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 35 local teachers attended a 2 day workshop at the Palms at Pelican Cove to learn how to better engage students in active science learning. The presenter, Scott Ragan, from the Science House at North Carolina State University, dazzled the group with a variety of activities as he guided them on how to actively engage the students. Marcia Taylor, informal educator at UVI, said "Even as educators, we were captivated by the simple science activities that he showed us. These activities are designed to pique curiosity and engage students in the investigative nature of science." In addition to engaging the group in his own activities, Mr. Ragan taught the educators how to modify their existing classroom activities to be more engaging, and therefore promote the students' natural curiosity and stimulate learning.

The last half day of the workshop was focused on training the trainer. VINE educators and some of the teachers were provided with materials and guidance on how to run science inquiry-based workshops for other teachers in the VI. VINE educators plan

on conducting workshops for local teachers in the near future. For more information on inquiry-based workshops, contact the VINE coordinator, Dee Osinski, at 340-778-7657 or dosinski@viwma.org.



Educators work in groups on a pendulum activity with VINE trainers.



## 2010 Year of Biodiversity Film Fest

Mark your calendars now and don't miss a single one of the magnificent films that will comprise SEA's **Year of Biodiversity Film Fest!** The core of the program will be seven of PBS's 'Exploring Planet Earth' series. Films will be shown in the Great Hall at UVI on the fourth Thursday of each month. The film fest begins with *State of the Planet*, narrated by Matt Damon, February 25th at 6:00 p.m.

These thought-provoking films explore the fragile relationship between people and the world they inhabit. Emmy Award-winning filmmakers Marilyn and Hal Weiner, in association with South Carolina ETV, produced the series.

A common thread runs throughout this PBS series — the necessity to achieve a balance between the needs of people and the needs of the environment. Loss

of farmland to urban development, the pollution of the Earth's rivers, inadequate housing and water resources for those living in the world's mega-cities — these are just some of the topics covered in Journey to Planet Earth. Don't worry, this is not a 'dooms day' film series. The filmmakers also portray current initiatives/success stories that alleviate the problems.

We will also show *Learning to Sea*, a stunning film that compares animal behaviors in the Caribbean and Red Seas. This film has won multiple international awards. Producer and film artist, Ziggy Livnat, will be on hand for discussion following this engaging film.

The Biodiversity Film Fest is sponsored by Marshall & Sterling Insurance and UVI-VIMAS. For details, please contact Lynnea Roberts at SEA at 340-773-1989.

## Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats!

That's the theme of the National Association of Conservation Districts' [NACD] 2010 Stewardship Program. NACD's National Stewardship Week will be officially celebrated April 25—May 2, 2010.

If your class or school is interested in participating in National Stewardship Week, NACD can provide you with a host of educational materials, an educator's guide, and community outreach materials. Visit their website at: [www.nacdnet.org/stewardship/2010](http://www.nacdnet.org/stewardship/2010) for more information or to purchase or download materials.



## Calling All Educators, Mentors, and Students of Nature: First Art of Mentoring in the Caribbean!

Acclaimed author and naturalist Jon Young will be in St. Croix February 22-28, 2010, to lead a transformational week-long program at the V.I. Sustainable Farm Institute.

**The Art of Mentoring** is a doorway to deep connection with nature, people and with ourselves. Jon's teachings revive hope in us that each person can make a significant impact on today's environmental and social problems. He has formed a successful model to create and facilitate a learning environment that enables us to step fully into our unique gifts and purpose. It is based on indigenous teachings from Native American people and other tribal cultures from around the world.

This event is a must for environmental educators, school teachers, parents, naturalists, community leaders, all local residents, island visitors, and members of

nature or cultural based organizations who desire a positive future for the coming generations!

- **Connect with Nature, Self & Community:** Immerse yourself in essential core routines to ground you in your senses and expand your awareness. Enjoy a learning community of people dedicated to learning about, teaching about and honoring the earth.
- **Transform Yourself and Others:** Profile the path of development and transformation of people toward greater awareness and appreciation of the natural world. Understand the role of brain patterning, and the natural flow of the human learning process. Create safe environments for students to follow their curiosity, grow, experiment and make mistakes.
- **Educate Holistically:** Understand the importance of heightened awareness

and how it relates to critical thinking and problem solving. Learn models for creating powerful effective experiences based on natural cycles, symbol & metaphor. Practice activities and games which draw people into nature. Explore how stories, song and other artistic expressions open a doorway to authentic growth.

For more information, contact Nate Olive at 706-534-5033, or visit [www.visfi.org/cms/index.php/programs/mentoring/](http://www.visfi.org/cms/index.php/programs/mentoring/) to register for the program.



## VI Sustainable Farm Honored by National Geographic



Nate Olive, Virgin Islands Sustainable Farm Institute Program Director, was honored recently as a top global innovator for the creation of the Natural Mentors program. This innovative program was developed to spark a cultural heritage renaissance in the Virgin Islands through youth mentorship. Delegations from around the world gathered at the National Geographic headquarters to honor the top ten global finalists and winners from the 2009 Geotourism

Challenge. Project partner, Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism (CHANT), was represented by Executive Director Frandelle Gerard, and US Congressional Delegate Donna Christensen's office showed strong support of heritage preservation and development in the Virgin Islands through the presence of Makeda Okolo. VISFI and CHANT are working together with this innovative program to actively engage youth with skills and knowledge that teach about St. Croix's heritage. For details, visit the VI Sustainable Farm website at [www.visfi.org](http://www.visfi.org).

## FREE Snorkel Clinics

The St. Croix Environmental Association (SEA) will once again offer FREE monthly snorkel clinics beginning in April 2010. In past years, VINE members have helped make these clinics a great success. SEA will need folks to help lead land and water activities. Please call Lynnea Roberts at 340-773-1989 to help with this popular island activity.



St. Croix youth prepare to learn to snorkel at Fort Frederick with SEA and VINE members.