

VIERS Celebrates 45 Years of Research and Resources

Special to St. John Tradewinds

On Sunday, December 4, more than three dozen people joined together in Lameshur Bay to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station.

For the past 14 years, Clean Islands International has operated VIERS for the University of the Virgin Islands. In that time, they have improved both the facility and education programs, focusing on sustainability.

Randy Brown, who is executive director of Clean Islands International and has served as VIERS Administrator since 1997, welcomed everyone attending. He introduced Allan Hunt, who serves as president of the board of directors of Clean Islands and lives in Bermuda.

"While we celebrate VIERS long history today, Clean Islands is excited about the future," said Hunt. "In the past six years that I have been coming to VIERS, I am impressed by not only the physical changes but in how active VIERS has become in the community."

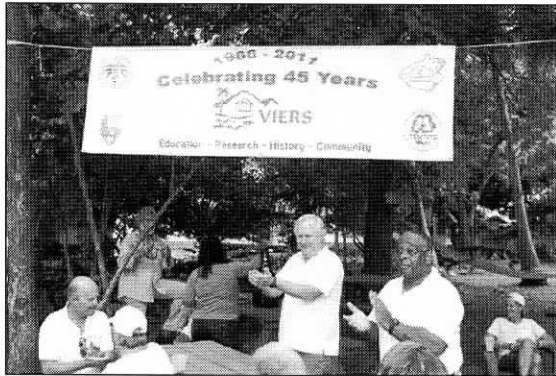
VIERS was established as a biology field station by UVI and the NPS on November 1, 1966. While several sites within the VI. National Park were considered, VIERS was originally housed in the bay rum ruins at Little Lameshur Bay.

VIERS moved to its present location after the conclusion of Project Tektite I in 1969. The facility, which now consists of 22 buildings, served as Tektite's basecamp which was built by the Navy's Seabees in 1968.

VINP Superintendent Mark Hardgrove congratulated Clean Islands on developing the facility as a model for environmental practices.

"They take what the National Park Service is all about and deliver it," said Hardgrove. "Between the park and the university, you've had to endure bureaucracy beyond your wildest imagination."

Brown replied that he was actually grateful for the relationships between all of the partners and several community groups such as



St. John Tradewinds News Photo

Clean Islands International executive director Randy Brown, above standing at center, celebrates the 45th anniversary of VIERS with supporters.

Friends of the National Park and the St. John Rotary.

Brown then jokingly stated that he looked forward to the Park doing something soon about all of the potholes on Lameshur Road, which has been an ongoing problem for 45 years.

Speaking on behalf of the University of the Virgin Islands was Patrice Johnson, UVI's Public Relations Director. She congratulated VIERS on its longevity.

"I know firsthand what good work has been going on here since my daughter comes to summer camp," said Johnson.

"Even while the Seabees were still building the cabins, St. John students were visiting VIERS," said Brown.

In 1992, UVI changed the name of VIERS from Ecological Research to Environmental Resource to further enhance its commitment to education as well as research.

VIERS hosts summer eco-camps sponsored by Friends of VINP.

"Of all of our activities, our youth education programs are probably the most important," said Joe Kessler, Friends president.

David Knight, president of the St. John Historical Society, spoke briefly about visiting VIERS during Project Tektite and in the early

1970s.

"We often forget that VIERS is more than what happened here with the Tektite projects," said Knight.

He presented Brown with one of the society's books which has several articles about Lameshur Bay and Project Tektite to the VIERS library.

In addition to the presentations, tours of the Tektite Underwater Habitat Museum, the VIERS cabins and the newly expanded solar energy system were provided.

Brown also introduced Randy Fish, who is replacing Jamie Irving, who served as VIERS manager for the past four years.

While rain on the north side of the island may have discouraged some potential attendees, most of the event was hosted outdoors. A light rain moved the event indoors where participants enjoyed a bountiful vegetarian lunch prepared primarily by Randy Fish and Jamie Irving.

Irving also made and decorated the anniversary cake. Captain Phil Chalker won the door prize of a VIERS T-shirt.

"This is just great," said Chalker. "I have never won anything in my whole life. I was going to get a VIERS T-shirt today and now I have one."

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"I Believe" Brunch With Santa



Join us this Sunday Dec. 18 for a special Holiday Brunch. The elves have been planning this one for a while and expect a visit from Santa himself! There will be prizes & surprises for all the children and a fabulous brunch for all!

Brunch Served 10-4
Visit with Santa 10:30-Noon

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~ Special appearance
by Pyros of the Caribbean

~ Booty shakin' starts @ 9PM!

