

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Youth Ocean Explorers Summer Program Launched On St. Croix

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For the first time, students from St. Croix will have an opportunity to participate in the popular Youth Ocean Explorers (YOE) program this summer, the University of the Virgin Islands has announced.

Based at UVI, YOE is a marine science-based summer enrichment opportunity that aims to increase students' interest and engagement in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the ocean sciences, according to the release. The program has been conducted on the UVI St. Thomas Campus for three years.

With funding from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, the program will make its debut on St. Croix from July 8-12, 2019 and July 22-26, 2019.



During two fun interactive and hands-on one-week sessions, students from grades seven to twelve who are registered for the St. Croix program can expect to learn about the various inhabitants of the ocean, the importance of coral reefs, threats to the island's marine ecosystems, and actions that can be taken to help reduce those environmental threats.

"Some activities involve geocaching, where the students do a scavenger hunt kind of activity, and it allows them to hunt for the information. "Instead of us lecturing the kids, it's more fun, it's more engaging, it's more hands-on. I think that, by far, is what sets our program apart," said Howard Forbes Jr., who serves as the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service coordinator for St. Thomas and St. John.

YOE's unique format allows students to learn in non-traditional settings such as the outdoors and marine environment, and to use problem-solving and critical thinking skills to learn about selected topics.

The program's emphasis on the diverse, fragile ocean environment has left a strong impression with former students.



Destin Ogarro said: "This program helped me by teaching me about the inhabitants of the ocean, various habitats in the ocean, and how temperature changes in the water can affect corals." "I learned more about the marine environment and how we need to help it and stop polluting the ocean. And I can spread the word to my family and friends to use less plastic," said Keziah Bellew.

Students from the St. Thomas program also have benefited from being exposed to new ideas and understanding of scientists and what they do.

"I now see myself more as a scientist. I actually plan on going to college and studying marine biology to make the world a better place," said Maura-Monee Richardson.



The Youth Ocean Explorers program in St. Thomas is part of Supporting Emerging Aquatic Scientists (or SEAS) Your Tomorrow, which fosters curiosity, instills stewardship, and forges and strengthens educational pathways for Virgin Islands youth to explore and secure careers in marine science.

Students interested in participating in the St. Croix program should have some prior experience with swimming. Additional information and registration details are available at: <http://vimas.uvi.edu> or see this direct Link: [https://www.uvi.edu/community/virgin-islands-marine-advisory-service/st thomas/vimas_youth_ocean_stx.aspx](https://www.uvi.edu/community/virgin-islands-marine-advisory-service/st%20thomas/vimas_youth_ocean_stx.aspx)

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