

VIMS Marine Science Day attracts large crowd, educates public

By Erin Kelly

(May 21, 2013) The Virginia Institute of Marine Science welcomed a large and enthusiastic crowd to its 11th annual Marine Science Day open house in Gloucester Point on May 18th.

This year's event, which was themed around oysters, offered visitors a behind-the-scenes look at how VIMS research helps empower Virginians to protect and restore the coastal environment and its marine life.

Guests spent the day learning about oysters and the pivotal role they play in the health of Chesapeake Bay and other coastal ecosystems. The younger visitors enjoyed educational oyster-based crafts and other activities such as mollusk tic-tac-toe and the Parade of Marine Life.

Susan Maples, VIMS' Public Outreach Coordinator, estimates that more than 2,000 guests spent their Saturday learning how VIMS scientists help the Bay and ocean, including efforts to restore oysters, manage blue crabs, conserve biodiversity, monitor fish populations and water quality, find and remove "ghost" crab pots from the Bay and its tributaries.

This year, for the first time, a social media contest offered attendees the opportunity to provide feedback and share their favorite moments and photographs. Visitors took to their Facebook and Twitter accounts throughout the day, posting photos and tagging tweets with the official hashtag of MSD 2013—#MarineScienceDay.

"I learned more about my local area today than I have in five years," tweeted Janet Flora Corso. "You know it's good if the kids say they had fun while learning!" A slew of other tweets and Facebook posts featured pictures of visitors seining in the York River and learning about oyster restoration in the VIMS oyster hatchery.

The Facebook user whose photo is deemed best by the VIMS Communications staff will be the lucky winner of a VIMS T-shirt, as will a randomly selected Twitter user who used the hashtag to share their MSD experiences. Announcement of the winners is expected by May 22nd. Photos from the "Wacky Science Photo Booth"—in which visitors were promised transport to a mysterious setting—will be available by Tuesday, May 28 at the latest.

Parade of Marine Life

Adults and children from around the Tidewater area didn't let the threat of rain deter them from the annual Parade of Marine Life. The parade was moved indoors into in McHugh Auditorium, where participants showed



Post-doctoral researcher Dr. Peter Konstantinidis (L) describes a pair of sharks from VIMS' Ichthyology collection to visitors during Marine Science Day.

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off their handmade costumes portraying oysters, jellyfish, seahorses, an electric torpedo ray, a vampire squid, and many other marine creatures.

Winners of this year's awards for best Parade costumes were:

- Brother and sister duo Nicole and Jefferey Kogan, who won "Best of Parade" for their blue crab and "ghost" crab costumes.
- Brownie Troop 1309 won "Best Group Costume" for their colorful seahorse outfits.
- Elizabeth Reilly took the prize for "Most Original Use of Materials" for her jellyfish costume created using a straw hat and various fabrics for the tentacles.
- Isabelle Frivance won the "Best Representation of a Plant or Animal" award for her spot-on depiction of the event's theme—the oyster.
- Rauri Kilduff was awarded the "Most Original Plant or Animal" ribbon for his unique electric torpedo ray costume.
- Rhiannon Kilduff, who received an honorable mention for her vampire squid costume.
- Finny Kilduff, who received an honorable mention for his marine iguana costume.
- Alexis Draheim, who accepted an honorable mention for her ocean costume.



Artwork Winner: VIMS Public Outreach Coordinator Susan Maples (R) presents Lauren Gregg of Gloucester (L) with a framed copy of the winning entry she submitted to VIMS' annual Marine Science Day logo contest. Lauren's design decorated the back of every T-shirt, publication, and advertisement for the event. Photo by Erin Kelly.

Sponsors

During a volunteer appreciation reception following the festivities, VIMS Dean and Director John Wells sent a special thank you to this year's sponsors of Marine Science Day, who along with the faculty, staff, students, and volunteers make this annual event possible.

This year's sponsors were the Christopher Wren Association for Lifelong Learning; Dominion Power; Owens Foundation; Wanchese Fish Company; Phillips Energy, Inc.; Colonial Virginia Bank; Green Planters Landscape and Garden Center; Luck Stone; Industrial Resource Technologies; Chesapeake Bank; Bobby's Auto Service Center; Rappahannock Concrete; John & Julie Dayton; Martin, Ingles & Hensley; Teagle Insurance Agency; and Point Auto Care.

VIMS, one of the leading marine centers in the U.S., provides research, education, and advisory service to help protect and restore Chesapeake Bay and coastal waters. The Institute offers Master's and Ph.D. degrees through its School of Marine Science, part of the College of William and Mary.

A full list of VIMS' ongoing and upcoming summer outreach events are available on the "Public Programs" section of the VIMS website.