



News Tips- 9/25/02

Students of the Sanctuary . . . This Friday marks the start of the fall series for the Sanctuary's longstanding education program, Coral Reef Classroom. Since 1991, more than 2,000 Monroe County students have participated in this Sanctuary-sponsored trip to the reef. The on-the-water classroom strives to demystify terms like 'water quality' and 'resource management,' teaches basic coral reef biology, and encourages students to learn more about the unique environment that surrounds them.

The day lasts from 9:30 in the morning until 2:00 in the afternoon. In the morning, students board Strike Zone Charters on Big Pine Key to snorkel the coral reef and conduct a plankton tow. When the boat returns, students sample water at the dock and run tests using basic water quality kits.

"Although we live in the middle of one of America's natural treasures, many local students haven't had an opportunity to snorkel the reef until Coral Reef Classroom," said Ivy Kelley, Coral Reef Classroom coordinator. "We present a lot of information in a short time and hope it sparks an interest in protecting the ecology that is the basis of our Keys economy."

Looking for a good feature story? Sneak out of the office for a day on the water and ride along. Available dates are: Friday, September 27th; Thursday, October 3rd; Friday, October 25th; and Friday, November 1st. **Contact:** [Ivy Kelley](#), 305.852.7717, ext. 36 or [Cheva Heck](#), 305.292.0311 or 305.304.0179 (cell).

Reef Medics to the rescue . . . The Sanctuary seeks volunteers to provide "first aid" to the coral reef. Funded with a grant from Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, the Reef Medics program will employ volunteers as observers, snorkelers and divers assisting with assessing, stabilizing, restoring and monitoring boat grounding sites.

"The Reef Medics will be a team of well-trained, highly motivated volunteers that can be mobilized on very short notice to get out to a boat grounding site, repair and stabilize damaged corals and monitor their progress," said Sanctuary damage assessment biologist Bill Goodwin. "These volunteers will really have the opportunity to see their actions make a difference as these restored sites recover over time."

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Mote Marine Laboratory and The Nature Conservancy are partners in the program. **Contact:** [Bill Goodwin](#) at 305.852.7717, ext.28 or [Cheva Heck](#) at 305.292.0311 or cell phone 305.304.0179 (cell)

Taking the temperature of our local waters . . . This week, Sanctuary biologist Harold Hudson plans to begin the annual exchange of 32 thermographs that have been gathering data in waters from Miami to west of Key West and Florida Bay over the past 12 years. The instruments record
(more)

(continued from previous page)

temperatures at the bottom of the water column every two hours, providing valuable data for researchers. “The Sanctuary makes this information available to all scientists studying the Florida Keys,” said Hudson. “Historical data about ocean temperatures can provide important clues to researchers looking at phenomena such as coral bleaching or coral disease.”

Thermograph locations include under bridges and in tidal passes, as well the offshore reefs and Florida Bay. **Contact:** [Harold Hudson](#) at 305.852.7717, ext. 29 or [Cheva Heck](#) at 305.292.0311 or 305.304.0179 (cell).

<http://www.fknms.nos.noaa.gov>