



Report on ScubaJam Virginia

Prepared October 5, 2010

Over Labor Day weekend, September 3-6, 2010, a group of interested divers representing dive shops and scouting units across in the mid-Atlantic region created and hosted a unique event designed to provide a diving adventure and celebration for certified youth dives. The event was held at Lake Rawlings at Rawlings Virginia.

In order to provide maximum freedom for youth and also a safe and supportive environment, participants were required to register with their Scout Troop or Venture Crew or to sign on to one of the participating BSA Troops or Venture Crews. The event itself was designed for boys and girls ages 12-20.

There were games and challenges, but the event wasn't focused on training, but rather providing an opportunity for youth to have a fun weekend diving with their friends. There were prizes and awards provided by generous manufacturers, travel providers, certification agencies and other scuba industry stakeholders, but the emphasis wasn't on competition but on improving skills, good buddy procedures and safe diving practices.

Some 35 youth and 13 volunteer leaders joined some 18 volunteer staff and exhibitors to provide a terrific event blessed with fantastic weather despite the threat of Hurricane Earl which did succeed in keeping Scout Troops from the Carolina shore from participating as their leaders serving in military guard units were put on alert during its passing. In total there were 7 BSA units registered and 4 that were ultimately able to attend.

The weekend started on Friday as Troops and Venture Crews arrived and set up camp. Some Troops were able to get in an afternoon dive taking advantage of 4 days of available diving and unlimited air fills provided with their admission while others arrived about dinner time. Each participant received a welcome packet with information on Lake Rawlings, continuing education from the sponsoring certification agencies, a patch from PADI recognizing the scouting and the recent Jamboree, key rings and pocket lights from Henderson USA and Princeton Tec respectively and a commemorative T-Shirt bearing the ScubaJam logo created by Jeff Knapp and a design created by Courtney Thompson.



Saturday morning began with an opportunity to participate in orientation dives, a buoyancy challenge or one of several navigation courses.

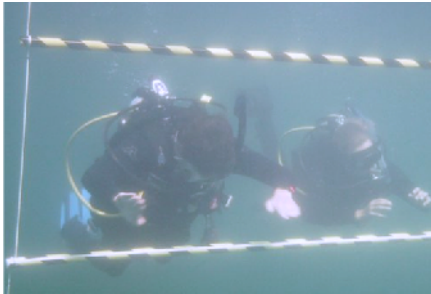
Navigation Challenges – There were three navigation courses set up by Allysa and John Engles while proud dad, Mike Engles, provided technical assistance. One course was set up for land orienteering, one for snorkeling and one for scuba diving. The land course was a ten point navigation punctuated at each point with a picture of a species of wildlife that might be seen in the Lake Rawlings area. The placard also contained information about each species and these placards were created and donated by The Wildlife Center of Virginia.



The snorkeling challenge featured markers set just below the surface of the lake that referenced one of the species of fish and creatures that live in the lake as part of its interesting and vibrant ecosystem. Information on these animals was provided in a brochures created by Jon Hart of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Each participant received a copy of the brochure in their welcome packet and management of the lake is committed to using the information to enlighten all divers to the lake but either publishing the brochure or posting the information on the website or in some other form.

The scuba diving navigation challenge used established navigation points that are documented by Lake Rawlings and used by many instructors and their divers for navigation specialty training.

Buoyancy Challenge – This challenge was created by Bob Minnick and Steve Micelli of Chesapeake Bay Diving Center with assistance from Jim McNeal from The Dive Shop – Richmond. The challenge consisted of several stations where judges were stationed who graded each participant on their skills both individually and as a buddy team. There was the traditional diamond course. A hovering station tested the divers on how well they could maintain their buoyancy. Divers hovered and could not allow themselves to either have their knees rise above a set marker or their shoulders fall below it.



Then came the Limbo challenge. Divers operating as a buddy team had to swim between two bars that with each pass got smaller. The most points were awarded to the team that was able to clear the bars at there narrowest distance.

Finally the balloon challenge. The buddy team was tasked to blow up a balloon while at depth which is no easy challenge. It seems that the balloon opening keeps wanting to be closed by the water pressure. After filling the balloon and then somehow tying it closed the buddy pair had to ascend together at a rate not faster than 30 feet per minute while keeping control of the balloon. The winner was the pair that arrived together with the largest diameter balloon at the surface without it busting from the air expansion.

The afternoon was available for swimming, snorkeling and diving. Some teams opted to continue to run the buoyancy and navigation courses. The afternoon was also an opportunity to visit with Divers Alert Network who exhibited throughout the weekend. DAN offered specials on safety products and memberships purchased that weekend and provided prizes for the events and raffles.

Another exhibitor was John Lyerly from The Dive Shop – Richmond. John met with divers interested in the in and out of re-breathers. On display was a Megladon closed circuit re-breather and many of the scouts gathered to learn of the unit and to understand the various uses and opportunities they provide.



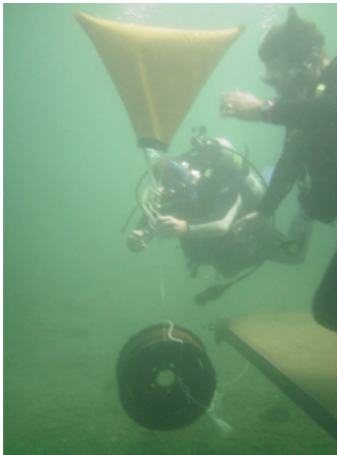
After dinner, teams gathered at the quarry entry to participate in the always eerie Night Dive. With lights ablaze and each diver tagged with a control number and a light stick, they ventured into the blackness in search of Bass snatching minnow out of their lights, all the inanimate objects that never seem to be where you saw them earlier that day, and the Mermaid of Lake Rawlings. Much thanks to Malena Sharkey who dawned in a mermaid costume startled divers much like Bonaire's Charlie the Tarpon. She gracefully and fluidly sped past and through



buddy groups while shore side onlookers watched divers' light suddenly flash in all directions in her pursuit.

Sunday started with a Search and Recovery Challenge, a demonstration of ROVs, and then after lunch, finished with a Treasure Hunt.

S&R Challenge – The challenge was created by Curt Laster of Kathy's Scuba and consisted of three parts. First divers had to demonstrate two basic knots routinely used in lifting objects; the bowline and half hitches. Divers were then challenged to find a bowling ball submerged in the Lake. The submerge part presented the first challenge to organizers. Who would have thought that a specially decorated bowling ball that would be lighter than water? That's right, not all bowling balls sink. So organizer had to make do with one of the balls from the underwater basketball court.



Using a "U" pattern, divers practiced their navigation skills and eventually located the object where they were then directed to the lifting station. At the lifting station two different objects were waiting as were instructor to see if the knots tied at the surface could be duplicated underwater by the youthful divers. Then the successful teams lifted the object and controlled the object's buoyancy and their own to move it about and resettle it on the bottom.

The ROV exhibit was put on by Peter Leighton of Nauticus in Virginia Beach. Divers watched both from the surface and underwater as the operator with vision provided by cameras mounted on the ROV guided the unit in and out of the sail boat left after the filming of the movie *The Replacements*. Nauticus is proposing a challenge to Troops and Crews for next year to build their own ROV for a competition for next year. Kits and instruction are available from Nauticus and more information will be released as the challenge is developed in the next few months.

Treasure Hunt – Nobody was late showing up for the Treasure Hunt and the challenge designer, Steve Ford, explained all the rules. Each troop was given an opportunity to go for the gold and ferret treasure chips from all the artifacts throughout the lake to see who could collect the most. After each Troop, Rangers restocked the chips so that ensuing divers would have the same opportunity.

Rather than being a race, divers were rewarded by how close they were to the planned dive time of 30 minutes. Additionally, the Rangers located throughout the course awarded bonus chips to divers and buddy teams exhibiting good diving habits including buoyancy, not touching objects other than the chips, not disturbing the bottom in their quest, staying together as a buddy team and other good diving practices.

For all of the challenge events, buddy teams were checked in and out of the water using tag board developed and distributed by Divers Alert Network. Air pressure was monitored and recorded with time in and out of the water. A major focus of the event was to promote safe diving practice and acquaint divers with the types of systems used by dive operators where they might be diving in the Caribbean and elsewhere.



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After tabulation of the results of the Treasure Hunt and all the other scored events, everyone met back at the waters edges for a debriefing and awards program.

Awards Ceremony –

The organizers gave a lions share credit to interested scout leaders and the staff from some 13 dive shops who gave of their time and energy to envision and create this event literally from scratch. They developed philosophies, strategies, the rules, the website, the Facebook page, the leader document, the challenges, the logo, the t-shirt design and helped raise the money and prizes to make the event possible.

In all, 10 dive shops in the region many of whom could not attend this first year but recognized the merits of the event, vowed to bring people next year and gave money in support of the events creation. The shops and their certifying agencies, PADI and SSI, gave a total of \$3,300 in support of the event.

Manufacturers and others also stepped up and donated prizes for the event. Prize sponsors participating included Blackbeards Cruises, Henderson USA, Sherwood Scuba, Akona, Princeton Tec, Divers Alert Network, Aqua Lung and Lake Rawlings.

Literally everyone received some recognition and prizes from key rings and mini lights to full dive lights, save-a-dive kits, mugs, dive bags, fins, masks, snorkels, air fill cards and quarry passes. The grand prize was a trip on a scout oriented scuba and sailing trip with Blackbeards Cruises. Two continuing education scholarships were also awarded by the ScubaJam Virginia Committee.



The Scholarships – Because of the generous contributions of the participating scuba shops and the certification agencies, the ScubaJam Virginia committee was able to provide two continuing education scholarships in the amount of \$250 each. These scholarships provided the recipients a cash payment to the dive shop or instructor of their choice for continuing education instruction, materials and certification cards.



Some groups had to head back home following the Awards ceremony but others stayed and enjoyed the hospitality of Lake Rawlings and continued to dive and camp through to Monday afternoon. Many of the ScubaJam Staff stayed and enjoyed a day doing just fun dives at a wonderful dive destination.

The weekend was by far a success, particularly when judged by the joy and camaraderie of all the divers that showed up to include the participants, volunteers and staff.

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We, the organizers, are enthusiastic about the success of this inaugural event, the wide support it has received and the base that was created to allow us to begin planning and more importantly marketing the event for the coming year.

Financial Report – The committee raised \$3,300 in sponsorships with \$900 remaining uncollected as of this writing. Additionally \$3,725 was received in admission fees from participants and volunteers. Total revenues were 7,025.

Expenses – Fees to Lake Rawlings for admission and air fills came to \$2,550 and T-Shirts and Hats cost \$2,023. Other administrative costs amounted to \$1,054 to include website hosting, banners, wrist bands, art work, etc. Scholarships are owed but are as yet outstanding in the amount of \$500.

Staff food for the event, certain advertizing expenses, and numerous day-of-the-event expenses were graciously paid and donated by staff members to whom the committee and the community is most grateful.

Surplus – Assuming that all pledges are collected, we project a surplus of \$898 which the committee plans to use to promote the event for next year and seed the award of additional scholarships.

Plans for the Coming Year –

1. continue development of the website to provide year-long advertising of the event and the event sponsors by providing a tool to list the Troops, Crews and Shops in the communities in our area and to list all the youth friendly trips that those entities provide.
2. develop a marketing plan for ScubaJam Virginia to impact BSA Councils in our area along with all the GSA councils as well.
3. develop a marketing plan for implementation by shops with certain resources to help them understand and penetrate the BSA districts to attract and train youth divers
4. complete documentation of the past event and improve on existing challenges and develop new challenges for the coming years event.
5. continue to work to garner the support of all the shops working with area youth and to try and make this event as meaningful as possible to them and to the general recruitment of divers in our area.

Summary:

Although certainly it would have been better if we had been able to attract a greater number of divers to the event, we believe that we made substantial progress in taking a seed of an idea and growing it into a real event with broad based support from every corner of the scuba industry. Many of the shops that participated financially and Troop and Crew leaders contacted told us that they would have loved to come, but that they did not get enough time to organize it from their perspective.



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We believe that we have an event that truly serves youth divers, the scouting system, the shops and instructors, and the scuba community as a whole. We look forward to improving and involving more people and most importantly beginning early to market the event now that we don't have to spend the time garnering the support to design and create the event itself.

Thank you very much to literally a hundred or more people and the organization that impacted this past year's event. Your support has been critical to this success and we look forward to your help in the coming year. Please be active in bringing your concerns, comments and advice to us so that we can make this event better.

Participating and Sponsoring Dive Shops (alphabetically)

Carolina Divers	Kathy's Scuba
Central Virginia Dive Center	Lake Rawlings
Chesapeake Bay Diving Center	Patriot Scuba
Dive Connections	The Scuba Shack
The Dive Shop – Fairfax	Scubaventures
The Dive Shop – Richmond	Underwater Adventures
Gypsy Divers	

Additional Sponsors (alphabetically)

Akona	Nauticus
Aqua Lung	PADI
Blackbeards Cruises	Princeton Tec
Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries	Sherwood Scuba
Divers Alert Network	SSI
Henderson USA	The Wildlife Center of Virginia

Respectfully Submitted for the Committee,

Chip Earle
Malena Sharkey
Errol Duplessis
Mike Engines