

ST. THOMAS SOURCE

Published on *St. Thomas Source* (<http://stthomassource.com>)

Coral World Ocean Park Hosts Reef Fest 2013

Coral World Ocean Park, with the support of the University of the Virgin Islands and Blue Flag USVI, is preparing for the 5th annual St. Thomas Reef Fest, scheduled for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 23, come rain or shine. The Reef Fest community event in past years has been organized by the Sea Grant Marine Outreach Program's Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service at UVI. Thanks to the overwhelming success of the event last year, Coral World has offered its venue again for this year's Reef Fest.

Valerie Peters, Blue Flag USVI coordinator and director of marketing at Coral World Ocean Park, said "As a member of VINE, Coral World Ocean Park saw the public response last year and donated again the use of its facilities for this year's event. The park will provide many of the services that in the past had to be purchased or rented – electricity, restrooms, staging, exhibit space and free admission to the public."

"Reef Fest celebrates the coral reef. It is about empowering the local community to protect coral reefs. It is a day dedicated to learning about the bond between humans and the reef, and about what each person can do to cultivate that relationship in a positive way," she said.

Trudie Prior, general manager of Coral World, said, "We are thrilled to help keep Reef Fest going because it is a perfect match to Coral World's mission. The Coral World mission statement says our goal is to bring you close to the inhabitants of the magical undersea world that surrounds the Virgin Islands and to the stunning variety of plant life that grows in our lagoons and on our hillsides."

"Coral World seeks to entertain, to educate, and to inspire appreciation and understanding of the local environment. Our hope is that you will experience the joy of discovery and that you will love and protect the natural treasures you see here," she added.

Sam Mitchell of the Virgin Islands Marine Advisory Service (VIMAS) said "The University of the Virgin Islands' VIMAS program's mission is to improve the public's knowledge and stewardship of the marine environment. Reef Fest presents us with a unique opportunity to interact with and learn about marine creatures and the reef they inhabit at no cost. Please join us for a fun day full of activities and educational programs at Coral World."

The fun lasts all day with educational and family-oriented activities and includes:

- o Free admission to Coral World Ocean Park
- o Free parking and shuttle from Sugar Bay
- o Show off your sculpturing skills and sand knowledge with the Sand Sculpture competition
- o Learn how to kayak, paddle board, snorkel appropriately around coral reefs
- o Take a reef or coastal tour guided by local naturalists

- o Engage in family-friendly educational games (Human Ocean Bingo, Marine Jeopardy, and more!)
- o Visit booths decked out with take-home information about the unique island environment
- o Live entertainment paired with family fun makes Reef Fest an event not to be missed!!

Coral World Ocean Park encourages individuals, businesses, agencies and groups to come forward with supplies, food, equipment, funds, talent, education and almost anything to support the festival. In the spirit of the reef, islanders will learn more about the ocean, reflect on its importance in their lives, take time to do something good for the blue planet and learn how to take action to protect the ocean and the reefs in their daily lives.

Please stay tuned for more details regarding the much-anticipated annual Reef Fest on St. Thomas at Coral World and Coki beach.

For more information, contact Valerie Peters at 775-1555, ext. 246. Go to the Coral World Facebook page for updates.

St. Thomas business

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