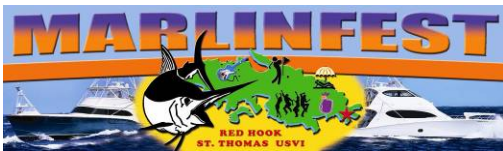


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Greetings All!

This is a mid-year catch up on the MVP's news and progress. The long and short of it is the kids are smart as heck and they are like sponges when it comes to learning! All they needed was the means of getting to the program and the access to the water.

- **Funding** - Let's tackle the unpleasant first. The MVP is in constant need of funding. We pay the St. Thomas Swimming Association (STSA) for teaching our students to swim (\$80 per child), we pay the MVP's share of the electric and internet bill and we keep water and chemicals in the pool here at the MVP training center. We pay a safari driver to get students from the Boys and Girls Club to the STSA pool or to the Lagoon base (averages \$750 per month). We also maintain training equipment (row boat, kayak, dingy/w outboard engine and a 28' diesel training vessel and we pay \$10 per hour to Wilbert Jimmy's helper and first mate. There is also the weekly expense of putting gas in the car for the weekly delivery of magazines and program business. There is the cost of feeding the students in order to keep their energy up and there is the need to keep the accountant onboard. The mentioned have thus far been managed through the generous donations of individuals and caring organizations and several corporate (mainly EDC) contributors have helped out. Bottom line is we are managing to stay afloat... but more income is sorely needed.
- **Fund Raising Efforts** – We don't have the income needed to support a staff grant writer and therefore funding must come from donors and via our year-round fund raising efforts. The income from ad sales in our popular magazine 'ON THE EDGE' cover the cost of the printing and its distribution - but because of a small sales team – the profits of the magazine are small. Coming up soon (Sat. Aug. 5) in the AYH parking lot will be 'MARLINFEST' complete with a chowder challenge and arts and crafts fair. The very next evening, on Sunday Aug. 6th.) the fun moves across the street to Duffy's parking lot where an old fashioned shrimp boil (6 – 10 p.m.) and a Full Moon "Jump Up" (8 p.m.) complete with Moko Jumbies, colorful dancers. Financial sponsors of these events are badly needed and welcomed.



The 5th Annual **USVI Open/Atlantic Blue Marlin Tournament** will also be going on the weekend of MarlinFest and Capt. Billy Borer will be serving as this year's tournament director. A portion of the tournament's profit will go to the MVP and the

event promises to be better than last year. The program's next major fund raising effort is a **New Year's Eve Mountain Sized Party** held up at Paradise Point.

- **Student Training** – The MVP students are so smart... all they needed was exposure to the water and proper training. Their fear of water is gone and it's a challenge to stay ahead of their desire to learn! Ages range from 9 – 14 years and there is not really much difference in their ability to perform the boating skills of professionals. If they stick with the program until they are eighteen imagine how good they'll be and how ready they will be for employment.

Splicing Line: It wasn't known if the students were too young to grasp this skill but we soon found out. The whole class caught on to it immediately and now they have it down for life! Heck, half of the sailors in Red Hook can't splice - we've learned not to underestimate the ability of these youngsters!



They've also learned to coil lines and to properly throw them to dock attendants. They can tie a bowline behind their back and raise and lower fenders with a clove hitch. Next the plan is to move them on to



the knot tying of fishing line and teaching them to wrap leader wire. Soon afterwards comes rigging and they'll be making their own lures and learning how to rig both ballyhoo and mackerel.

They are also learning to properly clean the training vessel and by the time they reach the age of sixteen it's predicted they'll be down on the docks during the summertime - seeking wash down jobs and making \$35 for an hour

and a half of easy work.

Boat Handling: When preparing for departure the group is asked "who's driving?" The first to answer "not me" gets the task. They must take complete charge - the fuel must be checked, then the oil and water in the engine and finally the mates are told to remove dock lines that are not needed. The captain shouts "clear" before starting the engine and the crew members are expected to announce that they are "clear" before the key gets turned. The deeper parts of



the channel are navigated and the students have learned the purpose of the colored markers (red or green) and the reasoning for their odd or even numbering. The instructor stands alongside the student captain during the tighter single engine maneuvering when docking but seldom has there been a need to takeover the controls. Eventually they will become pros at operating the vessel and future studies will start to prepare them for captain's licensing.

Watersports Skills: Students are being multi-trained in order that they may be adept



at many water related activities. This builds knowledge of the elements (current flow, wind speed and depth perception) and it takes in nature along the way. MVP students are now proficient at snorkeling and that has led them to exploring the underwater world and they are questioning more about the creatures they spot. They are also becoming skilled at kayaking,

paddle boarding and rowing. The boys are also skilled at horse playing every chance they get (showing off for the girls) and some of that is tolerated as long as learning is somehow involved.



The fact that these students couldn't swim when they started the program a year ago and now they are totally unafraid of the water is super great!



Someday we'll have the funds to get them scuba diving and earning their basic certification. As you can see the program is working and we welcome you to stop by to see the kids in action. Volunteers are



always appreciated if you have time to give.

Everyone on island is asked to come out to support MarlinFest on both Sat. Aug. 5th and Sun. the 6th. **JL**