



Contact: Valerie Peters, Marketing Director
Phone: (340) 775 1555 ext 246
Email: marketing@coralworldvi.com

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Ivanna Eudora Kean High School Science Club Visits Coral World

Mrs. Michealrose Ravalier, the St. Thomas-St. John District 2020 Teacher of the Year, believes in the educational value of field trips. On January 17, she brought 18 members of the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School Science Club to Coral World for a Discovery Day. Her students participated in several activities through which they could explore the ocean without getting in the water. According to Mrs. Ravalier, "The Coral World experience gave students the opportunity to learn in a non-traditional way. Classrooms without windows and doors are such a great way to help students learn about nature and the importance of preserving our true riches – our island resources"

The students started their day with an orientation in the Dolphin Education Center followed by a guided tour of the Dolphin Sea Sanctuary for a dolphin husbandry presentation and training demonstrations. They observed several animal healthcare check-ups and gained a greater understanding of the importance of animal training in support of scientific research. Emma Landvatter, Animal Welfare specialist "It was very nostalgic feeling to speak with these students about my career. I can remember being in their place and visiting facilities like Coral World growing up. Talking with trainers and animal care experts were the moments that solidified my career choice. It was amazing to come full circle and answer questions for students who might want to pursue this as a career!"

After their tour, the students met with Logan Williams, Coral World Research and Education Coordinator. Logan is a native Virgin Islander, who received her Master of Science in Marine and Environmental Science at the University of the Virgin Islands. She has been studying coral disease for several years and last month her work on Coral White Plague Disease was published in the Journal "Coral Reefs." Logan said about the science club visit, "I am eager to educate the public about the importance of coral reefs to the marine habitat and their decline as a result of various diseases. Right now, a major concern is Stoney Coral Tissue Loss disease. I want people to know how human activity could be affecting the health of corals and what they can do to help." Logan's presentation covered topics such as environmental stressors, evolution of the disease, research, and finding solutions. She demonstrated coral fragging and set-up of nursery.

The students also were treated to a presentation about the ongoing study of Coral World's sea lions, led by Kristine Tartaglio, Assistant Curator for Marine Mammals and Birds, designed to help understand the effects of noise pollution on marine mammals. According to the National Marine Mammal Foundation, "Ocean noise has become a major concern for marine mammals, most of which rely heavily on sound for communication, navigation, foraging, the avoidance of acoustic predators (e.g. killer whales), and either avoidance of or attraction to human activity. Scientific information is critical to helping manage the impacts that human-caused ocean noise have on marine mammals."

Mrs. Ravalier expressed her enthusiasm about the science club visit. "As the Science Club Coordinator at the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, it is my hope that students were inspired to become better stewards of our islands natural resources, choose science careers, and become advocates for protecting sea life, animal life, and our planet. I encourage educators in our territory to partner with Coral World and other Community Enterprises to craft lessons without walls. This experience pairs students with positive, fun, and intriguing learning avenues."

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About Coral World Ocean Park

Coral World Ocean Park is a marine park in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands and is accredited by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). Dedicated to providing the highest quality of care for marine mammals and contributing to conservation efforts through scientific research, Coral World offers programming to educate visitors about conservation and how they can make a positive impact on maintaining the integrity of the marine ecosystem. Through interactive experiences that allows visitors to get up close and personal with marine life surrounding the Virgin Islands, Coral World strives to inspire the next generation of animal advocates and conservationists. For more information, visit the Coral World website at <https://coralworldvi.com/>.