

Military Veterans, Students and Scientists Come Together To Save Coral Reefs

Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, FORCE BLUE, I.CARE and Mote Marine Laboratories partner to save coral reefs in the Florida Keys

ISLAMORADA, FL, UNITED STATES, May 26, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Retired Special Operations military veterans, one Gold Star family member, whose father was killed while serving in the Armed Forces, and two students from Monroe County schools will soon make an impact on saving the coral reefs in the Florida Keys, where only 3% of living coral remains.



Jessica Harvey, Dr. Kylie Smith, and Dr. Guy Harvey planting corals

Through a partnership between the [Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation](#) (GHOF), which conducts scientific research and hosts educational programs aimed at conserving the marine environment; [FORCE BLUE](#), which retrains and redeploys Special Operations veterans to work alongside scientists on marine conservation missions; [I.CARE](#), which is dedicated to restoring the reefs of Islamorada; and Mote Marine Laboratory, the veterans and students will participate in a two-day program designed to research and help save the coral reefs in Islamorada on Thursday and Friday, June 16-17 at Bud N' Mary's Marina, 79851 Overseas Highway.

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Dr. Guy Harvey

This is an initiative that is near and dear to my heart,” said Jim Hill, chairman, co-CEO, and co-Founder of Trajector,

which helps ensure the U.S. Veteran and disabled population receives all of the medical, disability, and financial benefits they are qualified for, and who is the donor who made this partnership possible. “We are so excited to bring veterans, students, the GHOF, FORCE BLUE, I.CARE, and Mote together to have a real and positive impact on our environment. The oceans

need us now more than ever.”

Participating divers will undergo scientific training provided by I.CARE staff covering coral restoration methodology, coral species identification, and data collection. During the dives, the team will transplant corals and conduct maintenance and monitoring activities on previously transplanted corals.

“Coral reefs play a critical role in protecting coastal communities and economies. We can and must do more to save them,” said U.S. Congressman Brian Mast (FL-18), who along with Congressman Darren Soto (FL-09), introduced the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act to restore and conserve coral reefs by authorizing five years of directed federal grant funding for the restoration and management of coral reef ecosystems. “Restoring and conserving these reefs will promote healthier ecosystems, protect aquatic habitats, and support our marine life.”

Among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, healthy coral reefs have high cultural and economic significance.

“Here in the Florida Keys and throughout our state and country, coral reefs have a powerful impact on tourism, business, the marine industry, and our way of life,” said Monroe County Mayor David Rice. “Our reefs are declining here because of development, climate change, overfishing, and disease. What we are doing in the ocean today will go a long way in protecting them.”

The two-day training and diving will generate awareness and focus attention on the health of coral reefs.

“Coral reefs make up less than point two percent of our oceans and yet they contain 25% of the world’s marine fish species,” said Dr. Guy Harvey, world-renowned marine scientist, conservationist, explorer, and recognized today as the world’s finest marine wildlife artist. “Coral reefs are second only to rainforests in diversity. We are rapidly losing our coral reefs to pollution and climate change, and we must do what we can to help these ecosystems before it’s too late. What we are doing with our partners here in the Keys is a monumental step. By deploying these veterans and working closely with our educational system to engage students, we will have the positive impact we need and must have to keep our ocean ecosystem healthy and thriving.”

Leading the students on the dive will be Jessica Harvey, daughter of Dr. Guy Harvey, co-chair of the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, and an environmental conservationist who has been traveling the world working with students. “It is critically important to inform, educate and engage students in the importance of preserving our oceans and marine life,” Jessica Harvey said. “If we show them at an early age the environmental perils that affect marine life and our oceans, then they will have a better understanding of how they can help us in preserving our ecosystems for future generations.”

Among the divers are:

Suze MacDonald, Lt. Col, US Army (Vet.): Served 29+ years in the United States Army as an intelligence officer. She is a combat veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as multiple deployments around the world.

Gavin S. Fisher, Master Sgt., USAF Pararescueman: Has 12+ years of Special Operation (SOF) and more than two years of experience with private contracting. His experience is hard-fought, having been awarded the Silver Star, two Purple Hearts, and multiple other medals and awards for valor in combat and professionalism in the joint environment.

Dan Henderson, First Sgt., US Army (Vet.): Army veteran with 20+ years on active duty. He spent well over half of his career in the U.S. Army Special Forces as a Green Beret.

Adam "Cleve" Levine, SSGT, USMC (Vet.): Served just shy of 10 years in the United States Marine Corps as a Force Reconnaissance Marine and led Recon and Force Recon Marines on combat deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, South East Asia and in and around the Horn of Africa.

Dale McClellan, GM2 SEAL, US Navy (Vet.): A combat veteran and former Navy SEAL, Machine Gunner, Point Man, Sniper, and Scout Sniper Instructor, McClellan is now the president and CEO of Special Tactical Services, LLC (STS) in Virginia.

Jimmy Settle, SSGT, USAF Pararescueman (Vet.): During his service as a member of the 212th Rescue Squadron (Alaska Air National Guard), Settle trained exhaustively to execute rescue missions anytime, anyplace, and in any environment. In late 2010, Settle was shot in the head in Afghanistan attempting to rescue an injured and pinned down Army patrol.

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