

VIMS Marine Science Day draws large and enthusiastic crowd

(May 22, 2012) The Virginia Institute of Marine Science's tenth annual Marine Science Day open house on May 19th drew a large and enthusiastic crowd to Gloucester Point for a day of fun and learning.

Susan Maples, VIMS' Public Outreach Coordinator, estimates that more than 2,000 people enjoyed a behind-the-scenes look at how VIMS research helps empower Virginians to protect and restore Chesapeake Bay and the coastal ocean. Attendees came from throughout tidewater Virginia and from as far away as Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas.

This year's event—themed on flounder—provided guests with special opportunities to learn about these unusual flatfish and their adaptations for life on the seafloor. The younger set had fun learning with flounder-based crafts and other activities in the Children's Pavilion, including a flounder "Scramble" and "Camo Toss." They were also able to practice the ancient Japanese fish-printing art of "Gyotaku" with flounder, and to create a "Flounder Frisbee" and "Flounder Flipbook."



VIMS volunteer Diane Richmand, grad student Jennifer Elliott, and volunteer Tyler Kelley help visitors

Overall, the event gave visitors a chance to learn how VIMS scientists help manage blue crabs, restore oysters, survey fish populations, conserve biodiversity, monitor water quality, find and remove "ghost" crab pots, and prevent the inadvertent capture of sharks in the tuna and swordfish fishery. Also highlighted was VIMS' educational partnership with local schools through the GK-12 PERFECT program.

On VIMS' lower campus, kids and parents also got a chance to collect and observe organisms from the York River, and tour the Institute's Teaching Marsh, Shellfish Hatchery, and Maritime Forest.

Photos from the "Osprey for a Second" photo booth will be available by Monday, May 28.

Parade of Marine Life

During the annual Parade of Marine Life, a perennial crowd favorite, children and adults from around Tidewater walked through campus wearing handmade costumes portraying flounder, a jellyfish swarm, a 4-person eel, a coral reef, a bryozoan, a boxfish, and seagrass. Even local canines took part, with a golden lab mix named Cara dressing as a "dog shark."

Winners of this year's awards for best Parade costumes were

- A group of Daisy Scouts, who won "Best of Parade" for their swarm of jellyfish.
- Judith Winston, who won the "Most Original Plant or Animal" award for her bryozoan costume.

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- A group of students from Ware Academy in Gloucester, who won the “Best Group Costume” award for their portrayal of a marine ecosystem including fish, jellyfish, and seagrass.
- A local quartet, who won the “Best Representation of Plant or Animal” award for their portrayal of an eel.
- Jonathan Fields, who won the “Most Original Use of Materials” award for his papier-mâché coral-reef costume.
- Rayna Sims, who received honorable mention for her summer flounder costume.
- Rhiannon Kilduff, who received honorable mention for her boxfish costume.
- Pamela Reynolds of Hayes, who accepted an honorable mention for the “dogshark” costume worn by her golden lab mix Cara.



Best of Parade: A group of Daisy Scouts won the top prize in the Parade of Marine Life for their jellyfish costumes. Here, VIMS Outreach Coordinator Susan Maples presents the swarm with their award in McHugh Auditorium. Photo by Sue Stein/VIMS.

Sponsors

VIMS Dean and Director thanks the sponsors of Marine Science Day, who along with faculty, staff, students, and volunteers make the annual event possible.

This year’s sponsors of Marine Science Day at VIMS are the Christopher Wren Association for Lifelong Learning; Wanchese Fish Company; Dominion; Bill Hudgins; John & Julie Dayton; Luck Stone; The Owens Foundation; Chesapeake Bank; Colonial Virginia Bank; Phillips Energy, Inc.; JCB Transport, Inc.; Rappahannock Concrete Corporation, Martin, Ingles & Ingles; and Tidewater Newspapers, Inc.

VIMS, one of the leading marine centers in the U.S., provides research, education, and advisory service to help protect and restore Chesapeake Bay and coastal waters. The Institute offers Master’s and Ph.D. degrees through its School of Marine Science, part of the College of William and Mary.

A full list of VIMS’ ongoing and upcoming summer outreach events are available on the “Public Programs” section of the VIMS website.