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BRITISH WEST INDIES COLLEGIATE'S REEF ACTION TEAM CLEANS UP
THE BEACH AND SNORKEL REEF IN FRONT OF CORAL GARDENS
RESORT.

26 January 2016, Providenciales, TCI – The Reef Action Team (RATs) from British West Indies Collegiate (BWIC) spent a recent Friday afternoon picking up trash on the beach near the Coral Gardens snorkel trail. They also donned their snorkel gear and removed trash from the snorkel trail as well. Ms. Tessa Rankin, a staff member at BWIC, organized the RATs four years ago as an environmental club.

“Working with these students, many of whom have been part of the RATs for several years, is a great pleasure,” said Ms. Rankin. “They are very enthusiastic and really are interested in helping to protect the environment of the TCI.”

The RATs meet every Friday afternoon when school is in session and they have been involved in many different activities, including snorkeling in the mangroves, getting their advanced scuba dive certification, learning fish identification skills, learning how to prepare mooring lines, and many other things. The Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) has been working with Ms. Rankin and the RATs since the group was formed four years ago.

“This is one of the many educational efforts we have been undertaking to further our mission of helping to preserve and protect the environment of the TCI,” said Don Stark, Chairman of the TCRF. “Some of these kids are going to go to college to study marine biology and hopefully they will come back to the TCI to work in areas that continue their efforts to better understand the TCI environment

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and to protect it. Young people are the key to protecting the health of the ocean and the reefs for the long-term.”

Over the past two years, TCRF has increased its focus on educational programs for local school children. TCRF, in conjunction with the National Museum and the Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs is in the process of developing a marine ecology curriculum for elementary school children and will also be developing one for secondary school students. Additionally, TCRF has been funding a group of researchers from Keene University in New Hampshire, USA who have been training Clement Howell High School students to snorkel and assist them with their coral monitoring efforts.

About TCRF

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is an all volunteer-run organization that provides funding for education, research and conservation programs to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. Our goal is to have at least 85% of all funds raised through voluntary contributions from divers and snorkelers visiting the Turks & Caicos Islands directed to the Fund's programs.

Anyone wishing to donate or assist the TCRF in any way can contact them through their website, www.TCReef.org. Scuba divers visiting the islands are encouraged to make a \$10 donation through the purchase of a dive tag that can be attached to their dive gear to show their support. Snorkelers visiting the islands can show their support through the \$5 purchase of a pink or blue silicone wristband. A complete list of outlets for TCRF merchandise can be found on the organization's website.

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