



Education Department Update: April 26, 2021

1. Florida Oceanographic Society and The Everglades Foundation partnered up for a virtual **lecture focused on Everglades restoration** and the health of our coastal estuaries. A total of 178 guests attended the program. Speakers included FOS Executive Director Mark Perry, FOS Director of Education Dr. Zack Jud, and Everglades Foundation Senior Ecologist Dr. Steve Davis. A recording of the lecture can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/RDONjBAQ5Cs>.
2. The Education Department is **excited to welcome our newest full-time Education Specialist, Jill Zerkowski**. Jill holds a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies from The State University of New York at Buffalo, and has an extensive background in the environmental education field. Jill comes to us directly from the University of Idaho's McCall Outdoor Science School, where she worked as a K-12 AmeriCorps Lead Instructor. Previously, Jill held a 6-month Marine Education Internship with the Pigeon Key Foundation in the Florida Keys, an AmeriCorps Educator position at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center, an Environmental Educator position at the University of Georgia's Camp Jekyll on Jekyll Island, and a Naturalist Internship at Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve in Depew, NY. These previous roles have allowed Jill to hone her skills as an environmental educator, and we anticipate that she will hit the ground running!
3. Education Specialist Yasmeen Fadlallah has been busy scheduling virtual field trips for second grade classes in St. Lucie County as part of our grant-funded **"Deserving Kids to the Coast" program**. Normally, Deserving Kids to the Coast provides free Coastal Center field trips for students who attend Title I schools in St. Lucie County. Since the school district is not allowing in-person field trips this school year, we have transitioned the program to an entirely virtual format. This month, **Yasmeen and Zack have led virtual field trips for 32 classes of St. Lucie County 2nd graders**.
4. Education Specialist and Camp Director Shannon Dack is **preparing educational curricula for this summer's camp programs**. Shannon has hired a former Education Department intern, Lily Linehan (2019), as a full-time temporary camp counselor for the summer. Shannon's camp staff will also include a returning full-time camp counselor who worked with us last summer.
5. We are currently **planning our nighttime sea turtle watch program** for the summer of 2021. We will be offering walks on Thursday nights during June and July. Additionally, we will continue to offer single-family walks for guests who would like to take advantage of this unique educational program without interacting with other members of the public. More information will be posted to <https://www.floridaocean.org/nighttime-sea-turtle-walks> in early May.
6. During Easter week, the Education Department provided educational programming and other guest services to a **single-day crowd of 910 visitors – one of the busiest days in the Coastal Center's history**. Despite the record-setting crowd, we did not receive any guest complaints or refund requests – a testament to the quality of the customer service experience provided by our Admissions and Education teams.

7. Zack and Abbie Flood, Director of Development and Marketing, teamed up on a grant proposal for a small grant program supported by Premier Realty Group. We were awarded \$2,400 to purchase three digital microscopes for the Ocean EcoCenter's Exploration Lab.
8. Zack led two upper-level virtual lectures about Florida's nonnative reptile and amphibian species this month – one for a herpetology class at Mississippi State University and another for a local 5th grade gifted and talented class (taught at a high school level). These lectures are priced at \$135 per presentation. Zack and Yasmeen have also conducted several other fee-based virtual field trips for lower grades this month.
9. Zack led our second in-person Coastal Center Experience field trip since the start of COVID-19. Although we have been effectively utilizing virtual field trips to reach students during the pandemic, this was only the second school group to visit the Coastal Center in more than a year.
10. Zack appeared in a CBS 12 news story about a series of local shark bites. A video clip of the story is available here: <https://cbs12.com/news/local/back-to-back-shark-bites-arent-connected-says-marine-biologist>. Zack was also interviewed as part of a virtual tourism conference promoting visitation to the Treasure Coast.
11. Zack continues to coordinate with ColorAd and Trivium to finalize exhibit design and installation for the Ocean EcoCenter.