

lifestyles@rafflesmarina

nau**ique**

Mar/Apr 2015



21ST SINGAPORE STRAITS REGATTA

Best of Singapore and Indonesia yachting comes of age
Pictures and reports inside!

NAKA'ED AND LOVING IT

Bliss on Phuket's private island

EASTER EGGS-TRAVAGANZA

Your hunt for Easter celebrations ends here

BIOSPHERE STEWARDS:

Uniting for *Change*

In 2014, Biosphere Foundation hosted the third International Biosphere Stewardship Programme at the Scientific Education and Research Center in Indonesia's Bali Barat National Park. **MacKenzie Kugel** from the USA shares her experience.



Students snorkeling at Menjangan Island's coral reef

On 17 June last year, 15 students from Bali, India, Cambodia, Puerto Rico and the USA joined together to embark on the 2014 Biosphere Stewardship Education Programme. I had the extraordinary opportunity to be one of them, partaking in a truly eye-and-heart-opening experience. The diverse mix of teens was one of the many features that made the programme so remarkably special. The varied cultural perspectives that each one of us brought to our daily interactions and activities shaped an experience like no other.

Although we came from different cultures and backgrounds, and didn't all speak the same language, we quickly became a team. We built our friendships from the bond of shared concern for the health of our earth. We all had one main goal in common: to make a positive change for the future.

Snorkeling on Menjangan Island's coral reef, we discovered the beauty of the underwater world but were also struck by the alarming signs of human destruction caused by anchor damage and plastics pollution. We learned about many environmental challenges and how Biosphere Foundation is collaborating with *Friends of Menjangan* on community conservation programmes such as the installation of mooring buoys to protect the coral reefs from anchor damage, and other efforts to preserve the national park's ecosystems.

It was fantastic to have the chance to work with local Balinese on many of these preservation projects. As a team we organised beach cleanups, reforested a



MacKenzie (2nd from the right) planting a tree in the monsoon forest with her new friends



Students weeding a research plot on a local farm



Students recycling styrofoam trash to make cushions

mangrove, weeded a plot for a sustainable farming project, and cleared the invasive species *lantana* from the monsoon forest to promote reforestation. We also learned how to repurpose styrofoam trash to make cushions and how to recycle plastic to make wallets and bags at a local waste recycling programme run by *Friends of Menjangan* coordinator, Nono Suparno.

Amidst all this, what we really did was light a kind of fire: a fire of hope inside each one of us, for our world. United as a group of students despite being from different corners of the globe, we felt the power to make a change. Our earth is facing incredible environmental hardship. Learning about ecological challenges and working as a team to come to conclusions about how to solve these problems inspired all of us to be driven to help save our world.

On the last night, we all discussed our intentions for what we could bring to our communities that will fuel the healing of our planet. Teary-eyed with the knowledge that our ten days were over, we went down to the jetty and released little boats – made out of banana leaves with a candle inside – onto the water, and made a wish. During the stewardship programme, our group had become unbelievably close. We not only made friendships to last a lifetime, but we also individually made vows for how we were going to bring change to our own communities. Our common link was our eagerness to educate ourselves about our environment and our yearning to nurture and preserve our precious blue planet. ↓

For information about the Summer 2015 Biosphere Stewardship Education Programme, please visit <http://biospherefoundation.org/project/biosphere-stewardship-project/>