

Kingston Business on deep quest to save coral reefs

Staff Writer



A Kingston based diving business is about to embark on a mission to preserve coral reefs in Cuba – and thus the air we breathe.

Kenn Feigelman, the founder of Deep/Quest 2 Expeditions, and his employee, Sharilyn Kennedy, are partnering with a Toronto based travel company and a pair of environmental groups on a program that will get tourists to help conduct studies on the oceans.



Sharilyn Kennedy and Kenn Feigelman of Deep/Quest 2 Expeditions are getting ready to host an eco-tourism adventure in Cuba.

Photo: Stephen Petrick

New Research shows that more than half of the world's coral reefs could die in less than 25 years and that human activity and climate change have contributed to a loss of 30 percent of the world's reefs to date.

And it's troubling news, seeing that as coral reefs go, so does the marine life that sucks carbon dioxide out of the air, turning it into the oxygen the planet needs to breathe.

"There's a popular phrase that coral reefs are to the ocean what the canary is to the coal mine," said Feigelman.

The phrase is in reference to Welsh miners who used to keep bird cages in deep parts of the mines. Then if they saw a bird drop dead, they would know oxygen is in short supply, so it's time to get out.

Similarly, "if coral reefs are doing poorly, the environment is doing poorly."

For roughly \$900, tourists can sign up for one of two week long travel junkets to Marea del Portillo, Cuba this January where they will be given a handful of assignments to help conduct research.

In other words, Feigelman says, "It's not for tourists who want to sit in the sun and twiddle their toes."

For instance, they'll be asked to dive into shallow parts of the ocean and record the colour of reefs, which will indicate their health.

They'll also participate in night trawls to gather organisms to take to labs to help marine biologists study whether the ocean's food chain is healthy.

The idea is to do this year after year, in different parts of the world, so that marine biologists can compare results over time and see to what extent climate change and human activity is having on the ocean.

All the while, the work of the tourists will be documented by Deep/Quest 2 Expeditions filming crews.

Feigelman stresses, "we are not a travel company, but our mandate is to explore, to educate, to enlighten and entertain."

The Deep/Quest crew also hopes to bring used scientific equipment such as microscopes and hygiene products and first aid supplies to donate to the Cuban people.

Anyone who has items they'd like to donate can contact Sharilyn at 613-767-0739.

Those who would like more information on the travel packages can call Judy Gallant at 1-877-586-8747.

To learn more about Deep/Quest 2 Expeditions and its work documenting underwater life, visit www.deepquest2expeditions.com.

Feigelman is also premiering "Rhapsody in Blue", a multimedia presentation showcasing the work of his business, at the Isabel Turner Library at 7 p.m., Tuesday October 30.