

The Scuba Sports Club Congratulates Beneath The Sea -- for 41 YEARS of Excellence and leadership!

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*BTS Founder Zig Zigahn and
President JoAnn Zigahn*

The Scuba Sports Club extends heartfelt 'JOB WELL DONE' to the staff and leadership of Beneath The Sea (BTS) on the occasion of BTS's 41st Anniversary! The Scuba Sports Club (TSSC) has a unique relationship with BTS, because BTS's founder Zig Zigahn also founded TSSC the year before. Thus, the TSSC Club members feel doubly lucky owing to this connection. Many of us have known Zig and JoAnn for years, and gratefully extend our congratulations to this charismatic and big-hearted team with warmth and appreciation. Many TSSC members are also part of the BTS organization, and those folks have earned a victory lap as well for all their sustained contributions to BTS's success. So, to everyone at BTS, including our own TSSC members who have worked hard at BTS for many years, you can be proud of your accomplishments!

BTS has been serving the diving community since 1976, and is growing each year. Originally part of the "Scuba Sports Rites Club" (which was the immediate precursor to



*BTS's current home for the
Annual Expo in Secaucus, NJ*

TSSC), BTS was spun off by Zig and soared into history! The BTS Expositions were originally held at a college in New Rochelle, then moved to various venues including the State University of New York/Purchase campus, then later at the Westchester Marriott, the White Plains Hotel, The Crowne Plaza; the BTS Expo outgrew all of these and was moved to the Westchester County Center. BTS is now held at one of the biggest venues in the entire Tri-State area, the Meadowlands Exposition Center where it has been ever since. Zig and JoAnn Zigahn have built the show into the biggest Scuba, Travel and Ocean Exposition in the US. Several top dive industry folks told us in recent years that BTS is recognized as one of the *three best dive shows in the world*. What a wonderful recognition from the Dive industry! The Northeast dive community in general – and in particular the members of TSSC – have benefited from the many advances in our sport initiated by BTS.

The BTS Expo offers the opportunity for conversation with many of leading lights of this sport we love. Each of us has differing diving backgrounds, interests and diving

histories. Thus, BTS participants each have their own individual “top moments”. Whether it was meeting and learning from revered experts in marine biology, or meeting our personal favorite diving legends, or viewing the work of so many gifted photographers with their stunning underwater photography and video, or conversing with dive historians and dive-related jewelers and artisans – BTS ‘makes it happen’ for all of us in unique ways. The BTS educational offerings are important contributors to our sport’s yearly cycle of dive education, advanced diving topics and underwater exploration. The BTS Expo thus is not only the East Coast’s leading dive education venue and the focal point for continuing education for so many divers looking to expand and enrich their diving endeavors with utmost safety always first in mind, but BTS has grown over these four decades to the biggest Scuba Travel, and Oceans Exposition in America.

And-- all those breathtaking Dive Destinations all over the globe, and all the leading edge, alluring dive gear, Oh My!!! (Thank goodness for financial slush funds which help insure that our misguided non-diving spouses will not be able to detect changes in family financial liquidity! *NOW is the time to replenish those slush funds in advance of BTS!*). Just walking through BTS’s aisles and exhibits of gear, destinations, and ‘ways and means’ combine to set the stage, whipping up excitement for a whole new great year of diving! The March/April timeframe is perfect because it puts our diving plans into focus for the rest of the year. BTS reminds us to start preparing and upgrading our dive gear, and step up our skill building in advance of the upcoming dive season.

Wonderful things happen when friends reunite in the warm fellowship and excitement at BTS. We get reacquainted with our diving friends from all over the region, our former dive buddies with whom we have shared the indescribable joys of underwater discovery, our vendor partners from adventures past, (and maybe we even encounter some former romances!) --- basically: *magic things happen!* Who can forget the spirited, impromptu, riotously fun and totally spontaneous bagpipe concert at BTS 2014 which had the whole Expo rocking to the blast of the bagpipes! (and PS, yes there is excellent diving in Scotland – and definitely not just wreck diving at Scapa Flow, but at many locations - where some surprisingly warm Gulf Stream water has fostered abundant, diverse sea life! YES, the information is from a BTS vendor, but also from personal knowledge!)

All the BTS experiences – the reignited friendships, the dive education, the dive destinations, all the new and alluring scuba diving gear, the vendor exhibits where we get to meet the voice on the other end of phone, the historical exhibits, BTS’s compelling marine environment advocacy, the FILM FESTIVAL, and the community outreach – combine synergistically to create engaging excitement from every direction for the sport we love.

The community outreach initiated by the BTS leadership deserves special recognition and approbation by all of us. The ‘jewel in the crown’ is the Ocean Pals initiative which was founded in 1986. Ocean Pals is JoAnn’s program to involve children into the world of marine environment advocacy through art. Luminaries in the world of marine

environmentalism and the scuba dive industry have all given their heartfelt endorsement to this initiative. Dr. Sylvia Earle has praised Ocean Pals as a 'hope spot' taking a place of honor with the others which she calls out for special attention, approval and support. Many cherished awards have been conferred on the program, including PADI's Environmental Awareness Award. World-renowned artists have also been drawn to Ocean Pals and promote this initiative. Literally thousands of children from Africa, China, India, the Philippines, Turkey and Japan and all across the world have been drawn into the endeavor of marine conservation through the BTS Ocean Pals Program. Those of us who have been to the Beneath The Sea Expositions have seen the children's wonderful posters portraying marine conservation through the eyes of kids. We all remember our own childhood cherished art projects, and thus it is easy to understand how these children's projects will in the future forge a frame of reference of marine advocacy for these kids as they grow into young adulthood. Thus, BTS via Ocean Pals is creating a future annuity of awareness and activism towards our marine environment.

BTS's other initiative led by Zig & JoAnn involves the Maria Ferrari Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. Aquariums with colorful fish and sea life can be very soothing during times of illness and there is surely no greater anguish than when children are being treated in hospital. BTS has collaborated with Eisenberg Foundation to create the aquarium at WMC, and this has provided comfort, light, emotional support - and enjoyment under the most trying circumstances - to those families visiting their children at The Children's Hospital at Westchester Medical Center. The leadership of BTS, JoAnn and The Eisenberg Foundation is most impressively represented there.

For the new millennium, Zig was invited to join a cadre of six women who were looking to create a special venue to honor women divers. Zig, Hillary Viders, Kathy Weydig, The Woman's Scuba association, The Underwater Society of America, and Women Underwater together created the WOMEN DIVERS HALL of FAME - 'WDHOF', an international organization with the mission of recognizing the most highly accomplished women divers. WDHOF brings recognition of pioneering women divers both to the dive industry and to the whole diving community. By establishing WDHOF, they dismantled the gender barrier. Outstanding women divers have risen to excellence in every industry including commercial and military diving, as well as the medical field and underwater cinematography. Many of these women have been presenters and educators at Beneath the Sea, and are inspiring the next generation of divers in the Marine Careers program (see below). WDHOF have an extensive scholarship and mentoring program for young divers to learn from the professionals and expert divers, which paves their way into exciting underwater careers.

BTS extends its community outreach to encouraging young people to explore marine careers, and based on that many choose this field for their career. The Marine Careers initiative includes close to ten different scholarships for those embarking on a marine career. What better way to engage young people into marine environment advocacy, ecology, conservation and research than to recognize their efforts and support their

marine-related endeavors, including also photography, marine and diving technology.

For all that BTS does for the dive community – from education, fellowship, bringing us all those great dive destination planners and equipment vendors together in one place, the breathtaking photography and filmmaking, and for Ocean Pals, marine careers and the Marine Scholarship Program for aspiring divers, and for the children and the families at The Maria Ferrari Aquarium at Westchester Medical Center --- ***we all owe a heartfelt and big thanks to BTS and extend Bon Chance for forty more years! Hope to see you at the show, TSSC welcomes you to Booth 107!***

***With Grateful Appreciation,
The Club Officers and Directors of The Scuba Sports Club***

<http://www.thescubasportsclub.org>