

Media Alert

NOAA's Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary will celebrate its 25th anniversary with the teachers and students of Thunderbolt Elementary Marine Science Academy on Thursday January 26th from 1:30 to 2:30 in the school's media center.

Gray's Reef is forging a partnership with the school to enrich marine science education for Thunderbolt's 650 students. To kick off the partnership, Gray's Reef will present three framed educational posters and books to the Thunderbolt Elementary media center. In addition, each classroom at Thunderbolt will receive a set of educational posters from the sanctuary.

First graders from Thunderbolt will entertain at the anniversary party with fishy music, song and dance. Birthday cake will be served.

Gray's Reef was designated as a National Marine Sanctuary in January 1981. It is one of the largest near shore live-bottom reefs off the southeastern United States, encompassing approximately 17 square nautical miles. The area earned sanctuary designation in 1981. The sanctuary consists of a series of sandstone outcroppings and ledges up to ten feet in height, scattered across a predominantly sandy, flat-bottomed sea floor. The live bottom and ledge habitat support an abundant reef fish and invertebrate community. Loggerhead sea turtles, a threatened species, also use Gray's Reef year-round for foraging and resting, and the reef is near the only known calving ground for the highly endangered North Atlantic right whales.

For more information, call Pat Priestly at Thunderbolt Elementary Marine Sciences Academy at 303-6655 or Gail Krueger at Gray's Reef at 598-2397. Find us on the web at www.graysreef.noaa.gov