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The Weekly Newspaper of the Beach Cities

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 High: 57°F Low: 55°F
 Winds: 14mph
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from Archives: Redondo Beach News

Marine teacher goes to sea

by Annie Lubinsky

(Updated: Wednesday, March 28, 2012 6:15 PM PDT)

The Redondo Beach SEA Lab's Maria Madrigal will be spending two weeks in the Samoan Islands in April studying fish, plankton and coral reefs to gain experience and knowledge that she'll eagerly pass on to interns and visitors.



Madrigal, a program manager at the SEA Lab, was one of 26 teachers selected this year by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the Teacher at Sea program, which puts educators to work aboard research vessels. NOAA wants teachers to develop environmental curricula based on their hands-on experience, while generating interest among students for careers in marine biology.

Brent Scheiwe, SEA Lab's program director, said, "She's the first staff member to do this. We think it's a fantastic opportunity, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The best part is it's professional development."

When she first heard of Teacher at Sea, Madrigal thought it would tie in well with the aquaculture program she was helping to create at the SEA Lab.

"This is a good way for me to get hands-on experience of doing research," Madrigal said. "One of the goals of Teacher at Sea is to develop a lesson plan, so I'll take the experience and use it for the aquaculture program."

The SEA Lab will start running aquaculture pilot programs throughout the summer to prepare for the program's launch in September. Its goal is to teach kids what aquaculture is and where their seafood comes from.

"We want them to get excited about the technology and techniques involved in aquaculture and get them to pursue aquaculture or marine science in the future," Scheiwe said. "Maria will have the practical experience that will help develop the aquaculture curriculum, and this experience will give her access to people doing research that she might otherwise never had access to."

Madrigal will also be creating a presentation to make SEA Lab's interns and others aware of different careers with NOAA and the steps they need to launch one.

Madrigal's journey begins March 29, when she travels to a port in American Samoa. She will spend a few days in preparation before boarding the vessel Oscar Elton Sette, where she'll conduct research from April 2 through April 16. While on board, Madrigal will keep a daily blog about her adventure. She's looking forward to posting photographs and videos.

"I'm hoping to do sketches, depending on what we're doing and the pace the scientists set," Madrigal said. Her undergraduate degree is in art and she has a master's degree in ecological teaching and learning from Lesley University in Massachusetts.

By the end of April, she'll also have hands-on research experience.

"I'm excited for the opportunity to enhance my skills when it comes to research, and I'm looking forward to sharing my experience with our interns," Madrigal said. "They're excited for me and looking forward to hearing my stories when I come back."

Madrigal's blog of her experiences at sea can be found at <http://teacheratsea.wordpress.com/category/maria-madrigal>.

PHOTO: Program Manager Maria Madrigal (second from right) gives visiting FedEx employees a tour of the SEA Lab in Redondo Beach. In April, she will participate in the Teacher at Sea program sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (photo by Wiki

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