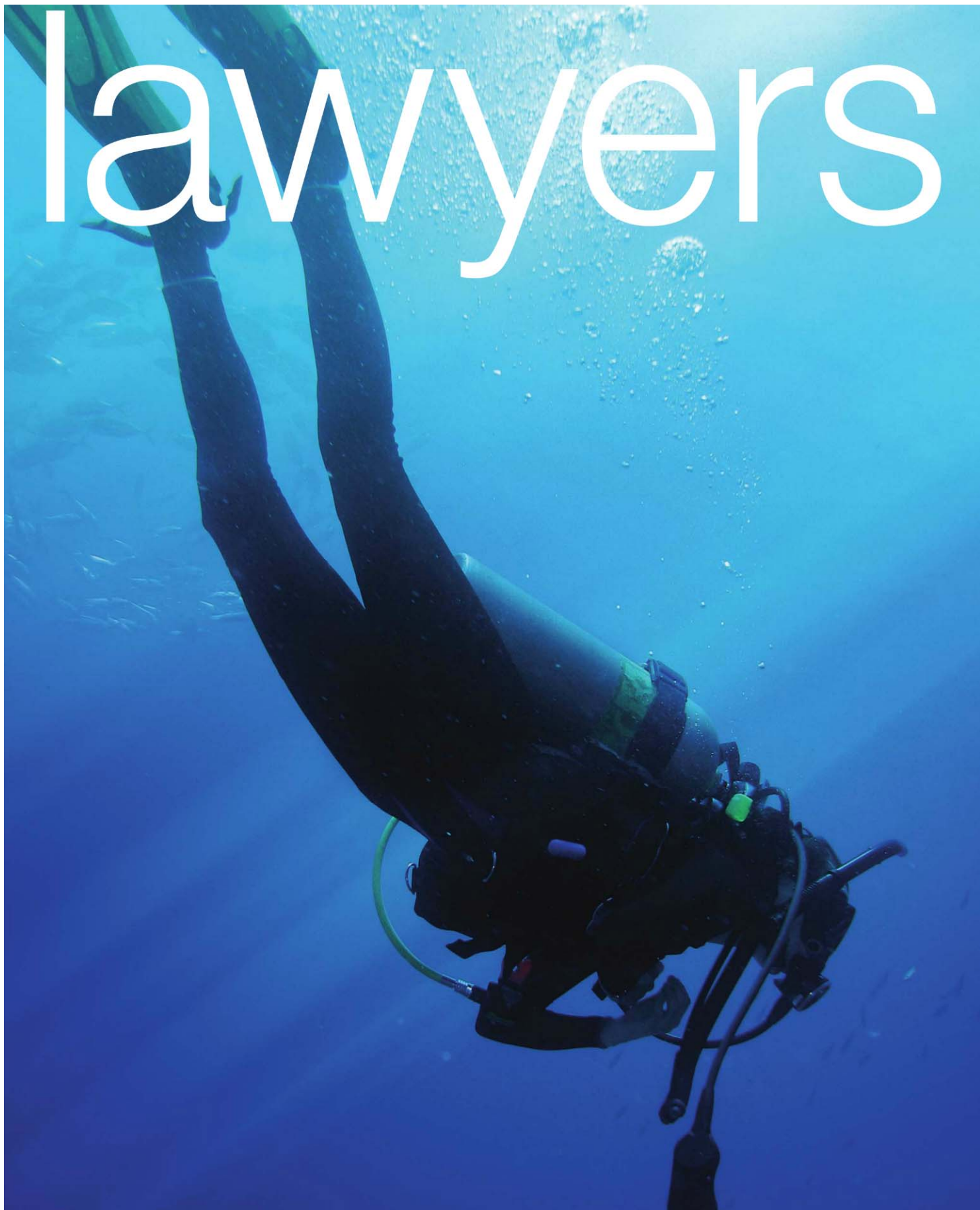


# HORIZONS

FALL 2013

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY





lawyers

# dive in

## TO ASSIST OCEANOGRAPHIC CENTER RESEARCH

BY OLIVE H. COGDILL

For scuba divers, a journey to the bottom of the sea combines relaxing with witnessing nature's beauty. But a group of divers—many of them graduates of NSU's Shepard Broad Law Center—uses the time underwater to assist academic researchers from the Oceanographic Center (OC).

DiveBar's 102 members found the ideal outlet to invest time and money for philanthropic activities by partnering with NSU's OC. This year, DiveBar members participated in two dives to assist the center in offshore nursery maintenance. They also sponsored a coral nursery tank for researchers to study and grow coral at NSU's state-of-the-art Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Ecosystems Research.

"How could DiveBar not get involved with NSU's research in saving coral reefs?" said Jennifer Rosinski, (J.D., 2012), vice president of communications for DiveBar, a two-year-old nonprofit association for South Florida legal professionals. "The loss of coral reefs is devastating not only to the sport of diving,

but to the entire marine environment. NSU's program gives me the chance to do something about it."

DiveBar teamed up with the OC in early 2013 to assist with the Staghorn Coral Nursery Project, headed by David S. Gilliam, Ph.D., professor, and Liz Larson, a Ph.D. candidate. Under the supervision of researchers, the volunteers help maintain underwater coral nurseries offshore near Broward

County. During the dives, the volunteers assist researchers in cleaning away algae and organisms near the coral, record coral conditions, and take clippings from selected coral to grow new coral offshore.

Before the first dive, more than 50 volunteers spent an evening in intensive training learning about coral and what their underwater duties would be. The session was led by Larson at the OC's campus near Port Everglades in Hollywood, Florida.

Anita Paoli, (J.D., 1990), who serves on NSU's Ambassadors Board and is a member of DiveBar, called the training session inspiring. "The training was so advanced it was like a master class in coral. We are lawyers, not scientists, and it was enlightening to learn about the coral," said Paoli, whose law firm is based in Hollywood, Florida.

"We have a new appreciation about the coral reef environment and the dangers to it and what can be done to remediate it. That we could then participate in doing something to improve this environment is amazing. The Oceanographic Center is spectacular, and the entire program and [the OC's] plan to generate live coral are so impressive," said Paoli.

The researchers routinely take monthly dive trips to check on the coral. The two dives that DiveBar participated in were each devoted to a different aspect of the program—coral maintenance and outplanting. The dives included up to 25 volunteers, 3 to 4 NSU students, and at least 1 professor. As part of its commitment, DiveBar agreed to finance the entire boat charter, even if not enough





*DiveBar sponsors a coral nursery tank at the Oceanographic Center. In the front row, from left, are Dick Dodge, dean of the OC; Liz Larson, OC Ph.D. candidate; and Bob Kelley, DiveBar founding member. Back row, from left, are Dave Gilliam, OC professor; David Black, DiveBar president; and Abby Renegar, OC Ph.D. candidate.*

members signed up to fill the boat. So far, that has not been a problem. Each dive has had a waiting list of DiveBar members wanting to attend.

“Running a coral nursery takes real resources—time and money; it’s never cheap to take a boat offshore,” said Gilliam. “One of our biggest expenses and, in a way, somewhat of a limitation for us, is being able to afford the cost of taking a vessel offshore for research. DiveBar’s offer to pay the cost of a boat day allows the OC to put more people in the water and do more research. And that boat charter also helped the volunteers to be more aware of how valuable this project is.”

For the volunteers, the NSU dives combine their love of the sport with DiveBar’s mission of promoting awareness and education, which dovetails with one of NSU’s core values of community involvement.

“When I dive with the NSU group, I make a tangible difference,” said Rosinski. “It isn’t like donating money to the cause; I am down there using my hands to help save coral reefs.”

David Black, a Fort Lauderdale attorney, echoed that sentiment. As president of DiveBar, he was eager for the group to pair with the OC. “We know how important the work is that the Oceanographic Center is doing. And it’s special to be a part of this—to give back to the ocean instead of just enjoying it. DiveBar members share that passion of coupling their hobbies with philanthropy,” said Black.

The dives also tie in with academics. Larson has been with the offshore coral nursery since its inception in 2006, using data collected during the early days of the offshore nursery

for her master’s degree. She now manages the offshore nursery as part of the work on her Ph.D., which also will contribute to her dissertation.

“Real science is going on here, learning about this particular threatened species of coral and ways to help recover its population status,” said Gilliam, who pointed out that research assistant and Ph.D. candidate Abby Renegar manages the land-based coral tanks on campus. “There also is a community benefit in working with a volunteer group. It is good to have the help and to increase their awareness.”

That education extends beyond NSU. “It goes back to educating the community,” said Larson. “Getting the volunteers involved in a project helps the environment and the reef. We are hoping that this project will result in the threatened coral sustaining itself. By providing this information to local divers, the volunteers will then spread the word to other divers to be more conscious about how they can help the health of the reef.”

DiveBar members “hope to grow with NSU next year,” said Black, becoming even more involved with the project. During 2014, the group will plan more diving excursions, continue to support the onshore tank, and sponsor a specific section of a natural reef off Fort Lauderdale beach where DiveBar volunteers would primarily work. “We would be able to point to a reef where all the work in maintaining it was done by DiveBar members and with DiveBar money,” said Black.

“NSU’s Oceanographic Center is world class and it’s in our backyard. What better way to spend our philanthropic money and donate our time?” said Black.

For more information on DiveBar, contact [www.thedivebar.org](http://www.thedivebar.org); for more information on NSU’s Oceanographic Center, visit [www.nova.edu/ocean](http://www.nova.edu/ocean). ■

