

DIVING FOR KNOWLEDGE



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Yusen Huang catches an underwater Frisbee at Case Western Reserve University's Veale Pool. He was one of 11 youths attending a two-week Shipwreck Camp at CWRU, where they learn the skills and sciences used in finding and exploring shipwrecks. The underwater games followed intensive instruction in safe scuba diving. See story, Page B3



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Scuba instructor Jay McGrath, left, teaches Case Western Reserve University's Shipwreck Camp participants how to clear water from a face mask at the university's Veale Pool. For most of the 11 youths attending the camp, it was their first time in scuba gear.

CWRU Shipwreck Camp mixes science, fun for young explorers

JAMES EWINGER
Plain Dealer Reporter

Teams of young explorers plumbed the depths of the world's oceans Tuesday — all from the shallow end of a Cleveland swimming pool.

They were attending a two-week Shipwreck Camp at Case Western Reserve University. The idea was to present a scientific smorgasbord to 11 aspiring Cousteaus, immersing them in everything from field work, historical research, land and marine navigation to actual underwater exploration.

They spent the morning poolside, guiding video-equipped remotely operated vehicles, or ROVs, around the pool. And after lunch, they pulled on wetsuits, masks and scuba tanks to explore on their own.

The ROVs came from kits. A cube of PVC pipe about 1 foot on each side was weighted with iron bars, made somewhat buoyant

with foam, and propelled by little props attached to motors from submersible pumps.

Eleanor Werner, 12, and Brenna Statt, 13, of Parma, talked over each other in their excitement when they realized they were the first team to get their vehicle working.

The young explorers actually did find shipwrecks, but not in the CWRU pool. They were assigned different known Lake Erie wrecks and had to research and identify where they went down, when and why, what they were carrying, how they were propelled and whether anyone died.

Adam Miller, 13, of Pepper Pike, worked with Brenna to learn about the Cortland, an ore carrier powered by sail and steam.

Emily Sabanegh, 14, also of Pepper Pike, told about the Dundee, another ore carrier that ran afoul of a storm in 1900, and how most of the crew saved themselves by successfully scal-

ing the mast as the ship sank in shallow water.

Meanwhile, another ROV team got a genial Socratic grilling from Jeff Klein, a Gilmore Academy science teacher who worked as a Shipwreck Camp counselor.

He elicited from Mike Kaifesh, 13, of Eastlake, that an ROV should have the ability to retrieve or grasp things from the ocean floor. Klein gave the campers an oblique history lesson during lunch when he got them to contribute details about a shipwreck of their own invention.

They conceived a thousand-foot wooden ship that sank in the 15th century because it hit a Japanese ninja vessel. One camper said the helmsman was distracted because he was on his cell phone, and Klein nudged her back to reality by saying that "he'd have to be on [the phone] a long time because there wouldn't be a very good signal in the 15th century." Another said the big ship was "Moonbeam powered."

Klein challenged, but the youth retorted that "there is lunar power."

The afternoon belonged to John Norris, a certified scuba instructor and dive-shop owner, who schooled the campers on buoyancy, breathing underwater, not drowning, and general safety, among many things.

Within an hour's time, they had devolved from small humans into very large salamanders, true amphibians in matching dark wetsuits.

Today is a bit more sedate. The young scientists are doing more research on actual shipwrecks and weather-data collection. All are between 12 and 15, which gives them a lot of tomorrows to be in, on and under the water.

For more information about the camp, go to case.edu/arts/csm.

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