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THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS

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PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BALLARD PHOTOGRAPHY

Sheldon Suga

VP AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF HAWKS CAY RESORT

BY ANDREA CARNEIRO

MOST SOUTH FLORIDIANS ARE WELL acquainted with the Keys and the various resorts that lure them South. At the top of that list you'll often find Hawk's Cay, where families and couples both can find just about everything they want in a relaxing (and fun) getaway. This summer, the resort turns it's head toward conservation, implementing Everglades Literacy curriculum via the Everglades Foundation. We spoke with resort Managing Director and VP, Sheldon Suga about the new addition, the Keys ecosystem and environmental education

HOW WERE YOU CONNECTED TO THE EVERGLADES FOUNDATION CURRICULUM?

Our partnership with the Everglades Foundation formed in April after the organization and its cause caught our attention. We wanted to give back in any way we could and since our goal was to educate and raise awareness, we knew that adding the curriculum to our existing camp would be a great fit.

WHAT IS THE CAMP HAWKS PROGRAM AND WHO PARTICIPATES?

Launched summer 2016, Camp Hawk Environmental

Education program offers children ages five to 12 the chance to learn about the unique Florida Keys ecosystem. Each session has a different theme with engaging topics that range from bugs to birds, dolphins to sharks and even Florida's weather. The program is a great way for kids to learn hands-on about the environment in an age-appropriate way.

WHY CREATE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM WITHIN THE RESORT AND HOW HAVE GUESTS RESPONDED?

At Hawks Cay Resort, we have always had strong children's programming, but the Education Program fit perfectly with what we already offered. We found that parents wanted their kids to be engaged and enriched on vacation, so we had set out to develop a curriculum-based program that fulfilled an educational need while at the same time making the process fun, fresh and exciting for kids. Since its debut last summer, we have had positive responses from families.



Children enjoy the various activities offered while parents relax nearby or follow their children along.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE KIDS (AND THEIR PARENTS) GAIN FROM THE NEW PROGRAM?

Visitors don't realize that visiting the Keys impacts the ecosystem, so we are hoping that the program educates them about the bodies of water surrounding us and that what we do at the Resort does have consequences. We are also implementing new signage around the Resort that encourages guests to reuse their towels and take advantage of the filtered water stations to refill their

reusable water bottles.

ARE MOST OF THE PARTICIPANTS LOCALS OR TOURISTS?

Most of the participants are tourists who are visiting the Resort as guests, but we also have worked with different school districts and kids in the community who have an interest in environmental education.

- Rabbi Mark H. Kula
- Cantor Ronit Rubin
- Dr. Judi Gampel
Director of Education
- Ariel Kobetz
Director of Early Learning
- Aileen Lafont
Executive Director

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- Preschool
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- Adult Programs



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