

# Guana Island student research programme has led some to careers in science

By SUSANNA HENIGHAN

**T**aking part in scientific research on Guana Island has led some of Liana Jarecki's students to choose career paths in the biological sciences.

This is one of the positive effects of the island's ongoing scientific research programme. Jarecki, a biology lecturer at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, said during a presentation at the Guana Island Symposium on Friday, Oct. 18.

"Perhaps our greatest achievement is that students leave Guana understanding that biological research is a viable and exciting career path," Jarecki said. "Several of my own students, after leaving HLSCC and continuing their studies at various U.S. universities, have chosen to follow careers in research biology. Some of these students have told me that before their experiences on Guana, they considered only a career in medicine and had not realized the breadth of career possibilities in science."

The experience is an eye-opening one, former students say.

"The close interaction with other people was very beneficial - meeting people that can help you get started in their field of work," Jevam Decastro said after working on Guana in 1998.

"Guana Island is the perfect classroom," was Lesley Husbands' remark in 1999.

These observations are sure to make Henry and Gloria Jarecki happy. The owners of Guana Islands, the couple welcome research scientists to their part-time home every year. In addition, they invite local students to come observe the scientists, and carry out research of their own.

The student research programme has been going on for the last 15 years, and has been happening in partnership with H. Lavity Stoutt Community College for the last nine years.

Liana Jarecki's presentation on the impact the research programme was one of several presentations made last Friday as part of the annual Guana Island Scientific Symposium.

Other presenters discussed biological research they have carried out on Guana Island. Topics

include global biodiversity, migrant birds and melons.

Over the years, local students have been exposed to a range of scientific topics at Guana, from coral reef monitoring in 1994 to marine invertebrates in 1999. In addition, the island has opened its doors to youth groups like the Pathfinders and the Youth Environmental Service corps.

In addition to welcoming students to work with them, scientists taking part in the programme have also been offering the public lectures since the programme started.



◆ HLSCC students conduct research on Guana Island in 1999 under the supervision of marine biologists from the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. (Photo courtesy of Liana Jarecki)