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Scuba diving class could be a lifesaver

PACIFIC LOG / Peter C. Howorth

April 1, 2001 12:00 AM

An all-day scuba diving refresher course and rescue workshop, put on by the nonprofit Diving Foundation of Santa Barbara, is a must for all divers.

The object of the workshop, which will be held on April 28 at UCSB, is to get divers whose skills have become rusty back into the water, and more importantly, to teach divers about accident prevention and rescue. Already, people who have taken the course in the past have saved other divers and kept themselves out of trouble.

Enrollment costs \$25. College students wishing to receive half a unit of credit for the course will be charged an extra \$9 in administrative fees.

This event will be staffed by over 25 volunteers. Proceeds will go to the Nejat Ezal and Ramsey Parks Memorial Diving Scholarships. Ezal was a graduate student at UCSB when he lost his life in a tragic diving accident off Santa Catalina Island. Parks was a major contributor to diving in general and to the Santa Barbara City College Marine Diving Technology Department.

The day starts at 8 a.m. with a series of lectures at Girvetz Hall. The first class will be a diving safety review taught by veteran diving instructor Cindy Campbell. Hugh Greer, a hyperbaric physician, will then discuss medical aspects of diving.

Don Barthelmess, director of SBCC's Marine Diving Technology Department, will introduce participants to oxygen administration as a first-aid measure. Oxygen is extremely helpful in




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treating a number of diving maladies.

Jim Lynch, another hyperbaric physician, will speak about neurological assessments. A representative of the U.S. Coast Guard will then go through the procedures on helicopter evacuations.

After lunch, participants will take a prolonged splash in the old campus pool to practice their newfound skills.

Instructors will review the needed skills and updated thinking on rescue techniques, and go over rescue equipment.

Students will also have a chance to practice emergency ascents. They will learn to assist other divers in trouble, including trying ways of towing them through the water, dealing with panicked divers on the surface, and rescuing unconscious divers, either on the sea floor or on the surface.

The event will wrap up with hors d'oeuvres at Arnoldi's café. Dinner and a no-host bar are available.

The course is open to certified scuba divers at all skill levels. Divers must provide their own gear, including a pool wetsuit, octopus regulator or secondary air source, a full tank of air with a protective boot, and a weight belt with soft or coated weights that will not mar the pool.

Students with medical conditions such as respiratory or heart problems, high blood pressure or other health problems must provide a doctor's letter of clearance.

Persons completing the course will not earn a certificate, but they may contract to do so with a qualified instructor. The certificate involves some extra costs, plus additional lectures and ocean sessions. Information on becoming certified in dive rescue and oxygen administration will be available at the workshop.

People interested in enrolling in the workshop may call workshop coordinator Ed Stetson at 687-4771. For businesses and individuals who may wish to help sponsor this event, call Don Barthelme at 965-0581, ext. 2427.

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