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REGISTRATION FOR WIDER CARIBBEAN ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH PROGRAM STILL OPEN

MIAMI, Florida (June 19, 2007) – The deadline for registration to the 8th Wider Caribbean Environmental Youth Program has been extended to allow additional subscriptions subject to capacity. Under the theme “Natural History, Ecology, and Conservation on Caribbean Islands,” this youth camp will be held at the U.S. Virgin Islands’ Environmental Resource Station (VIERS) from July 30 to August 4, 2007. The program is sponsored by the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), its environmental subsidiary the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST), American Airlines, and Clean Islands International.

“One of the main goals of the program is to foster the development of a positive environmental ethic by students - building their awareness and strengthening their commitment to the conservation of the natural environment and to sustainable development for the good of human society,” said program coordinator Randy Brown. Students, ages 12-18, will be immersed in activities that cover natural history and ecology of selected Caribbean ecosystems – coral reefs, sea grass beds, mangrove wetlands, dry forest and moist forest – conservation issues, natural resources management strategies, and environmental careers. The daily schedule includes field activities such as guided plant walks, hikes to petroglyphs and reef bays, as well as group discussions on personal experiences, eco-systems, and environmental ethics. The group of instructors leading this program is composed of experts with practical experience in conservation, biology, marine biology, terrestrial tropical ecology, environmental policy, waste management, and environmental education.

The cultural and environmental exchanges are two very important components of the program. As part of the curriculum, each group is invited to make a presentation about their country’s history and the environmental issues and concerns that affect it, while the cultural exchange is pervasive throughout the duration of the camp, especially each night, when students take turns to prepare a local dish from their country and share it with their peers at dinner.

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“The key for the success of the VIERS program is that participants are engrossed in a real, first-hand experience with nature; not only do they learn about the surrounding eco-systems, but they see and feel them as part of the learning process,” says Deirdre Shurland from CAST, adding that participants are also encouraged to conserve water and energy, recycle, and respect the wildlife around the camp.

Program fees are US \$400.00 per person and include all fees from St. Thomas airport to and from VIERS, lodging, meals, activities, and ground transportation. Participants are welcome to seek the support of their national hotel association, a local hotel in their community, a local organization or business, to sponsor wholly or help the student’s family to fund the participation fee.

For more information and the full program of the 8th Wider Caribbean Environmental Youth Program, contact Randy Brown at (410) 647-2500, via email at: rb@islands.org, or visit <http://www.islands.org/virgin/viers/aacha1.htm>.

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About Clean Islands International – www.islands.org

Clean Islands International, Inc. is a non-profit non-governmental organization with international members who are dedicated to providing educational and technical assistance to island communities for the preservation and beautification of indigenous natural environments and the sustainable development of proper solid waste handling practices.

About the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) – www.cha-cast.com

CAST, the environmental subsidiary of the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA), was chartered in 1997 to undertake collaborative environmental efforts within the hotel industry, enhance the practices of the region’s hotel and tourism operators by providing high quality education and training related to sustainable tourism; promote the industry’s efforts and successes to the traveling public and other stakeholders; and serve as a vital link to all stakeholders with sustainable tourism interests in the Caribbean region. CAST has consolidated its strategic focus within the following four program areas: sustainable tourism certification and standards development, development of environmental management tools, advocacy and fundraising.

