

# Unprecedented Gift Assures New Depths in Florida Keys Community College Underwater Education

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Key West, FL ([PRWEB](#)) May 14, 2009 -- At a time where cut-backs are the norm, Florida Keys Community College is able to announce monumental expansions and improvements to its diving program, thanks to an unprecedented \$1 million bequest. The Florida Keys Educational Foundation, a direct-support organization of FKCC, will recognize the generosity of scuba diving forefather James E. Lockwood, Jr. during a ceremony on Friday, May 15, 2009 at 4:00pm at the Dive Lagoon on the Key West campus. The college's school of diving will be named the James E. Lockwood, Jr. School of Diving and Underwater Technology for its historic benefactor.

The gift will enable FKCC to expand its already stellar diving program into a nationally recognized curriculum that will integrate marine science and diving to further support the needs of local, regional, national and global constituents. FKCC will offer workforce education and re-education in areas such as underwater welding, hyperbaric medicine, port security, aquaculture, coral reef mapping and restoration.



"This gift is going to allow us to pursue a wealth of exciting new initiatives to modernize our program," says Marine Sciences Director Dr. Patrick Rice. "We're going to purchase new, high-tech equipment, modernize our existing gear, and develop new curricula. We'll also be able to extend our support to our Middle and Upper Keys Centers with the purchase of mobile training equipment."

The dedication ceremony will include remarks from local, state, and national dignitaries. There will be presentations on the history and the future of college's dive program, as well as diving demonstrations by students in the lagoon, also referred to as the underwater classroom.

Representatives from two organizations that were also funded by Lockwood's estate will be in attendance: [Diveheart](#) and [Shake-A-Leg Miami](#). Both organizations help children, adults, and veterans with physical, developmental, and economic challenges through diving. FKCC plans to partner with both groups to set up new programs to certify and train individuals with disabilities.



The Florida Keys Educational Foundation will pay tribute to the life of Mr. Lockwood and the legacy he has left to the field of diving and underwater film.

"This gift is an excellent example how the interest and generosity of one person can make a dramatic impact on an educational institution's educational offerings," says Deborah Solow, FKCC's Vice President of Advancement. "James E. Lockwood, Jr. will touch the lives of thousands of our students in the years to come".

For more information about FKCC's Diving program, visit [FKCC's website](#).

About James E. Lockwood, Jr.:

James E. Lockwood Jr. was one of the early pioneers of scuba diving, building his own rebreathers in 1938. Lockwood developed an underwater camera housing that was used in the Tarzan movies of the 1930s and developed underwater props for the film "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea."

In the 1940s, he served in the Navy and the Coast Guard, and ran the rescue for the Wolverine to save pilots who went down in Lake Michigan. He also ran the submarine Peto (the first submarine built in the Great Lakes) down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico on its way to Australia during World War II. Lockwood then set up a shop in Chicago to experiment on military rebreathers. After the war, Lockwood traveled extensively and worked with many professionals in the scuba diving world. In the 1950s, he became editor of "Undersea Digest", an early diving magazine, spending much of his time writing and lecturing on his numerous discoveries and inventions. Lockwood worked as an ambassador of the sport, negotiating for the release of nine American scuba divers held for a time in Cuba by Fidel Castro.

In the late 1950s, Lockwood discovered the remnant of an ancient Haitian temple which predated the Incan and Aztec civilizations. In his later years, Lockwood worked with Dan Johnson in the development of his diving products company. Lockwood died in 2003 in Florida at age 92