

LBTS marketing effort hopes to boost summer tourism

SEAN D'OLIVEIRA

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With Lauderdale-by-the-Sea already serving as a popular location for scuba diving for both residents and out-of-town guests, officials are hoping to attract a greater number of tourists to the area by organizing a series of diving-related events this summer during what is typically the slower tourism season.

For instance, the town's first "Bugfest-by-the-Sea" will take place during the state's annual two-day lobster mini-season on July 25 and 26. The event includes an underwater photo contest, lobster hunting competitions, music, and a beach diving clinic.

Many local business owners said they would love to see the town put a greater emphasis on tourism during the summer months.



"We really want to bring attention to Lauderdale-by-the-Sea as a great scuba diving destination," said Steve Gagas, owner and dive instructor for Gold Coast Scuba, a diving business that offers rentals and classes out of its shop on Commercial Boulevard in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea.

To better market the town's summer events to tourists, the town has sent out thousands of emails to divers and businesses around the state as well as local shops.

As part of "Bugfest-by-the-Sea," other incorporated events include the "Bug Bake & Boil Lobster Cookout" on July 25 at El Prado Park, 4500 El Mar Drive, lobster hunting class, fish identification seminar, and a pier cleanup event on July 27.

So far, the town has been able to collect more than \$3,500 in donated prizes and scuba gear for the lobster hunting competitions. Lauderdale-by-the-Sea Chamber of Commerce president and owner of Argenti Designer Jewelers Mark Silver also designed a special pendant for the inaugural "Bugfest."

Along with town sponsored events, "Bugfest-by-the-Sea" also involves local businesses, restaurants and hotels. Recently, the town hosted Family Fun Week to help kick off the recent tourist marketing effort.

Gagas, whose shop is also an organizer the pier cleanup, said the town's involvement in planning the events and reaching out to the local businesses makes positive progress on the local economy.

"It's been great for us," Gagas said.

For information about "Bugfest-by-the-Sea" and other event, visit BugFestBytheSea.com.