



Contact: David Valaika
215-256-6000
dave@indianvalleyscuba.com
www.indianvalleyscuba.com

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Valaika announces Academy of Deeper Education is ready to host 1st Annual Dive In Festival!

Harleysville, PA (October 7, 2009)

Dave Valaika has never missed an opportunity to take advantage of his passion for scuba diving. And now, with his work for the International Association for Handicapped Divers (IAHD), he'll be helping others realize opportunities they never realized existed.

Valaika, owner of Indian Valley Scuba in Harleysville, got involved with the IAHD about eight years ago. Founded in the early 90's, the European organization had risen to become one of the top providers of scuba experiences and training for people with mental, physical and emotional handicaps worldwide. Eventually, the organization asked Valaika to serve as executive director of IAHD-Americas, providing training for instructors and professionals to help with scuba diving experiences at approved locations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Now, to help take that project further, Valaika founded the Academy of Deeper Education, a scuba and watersports training facility that will eventually be constructed in Harleysville, where Indian Valley Scuba currently operates. Once constructed, the Academy of Deeper Education will include a 40,000-square-foot, three story building with three pools, including a therapy pool, retail space and a 35-foot-deep, 1 million gallon naturally-lined indoor pool – the largest pool in the northeastern U.S. – so that divers training at all levels can take lessons through certification right here in the Northeast.

In order to celebrate that project and raise money and awareness for the IAHD-Americas work, the Academy for Deeper Education will be holding its first 'Dive In' Festival [www.diveinfest.com]– planned to be a yearly event – this Saturday, Oct. 17 from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. at 601 Yoder Road, Harleysville, PA. The event, which Valaika calls “a celebration of diving,” will feature vendors, a diver swap meet to buy and sell unused and surplus supplies, presentations on diving from divers and medical professionals, equipment demonstrations, public safety dive teams, food, live music, gliders and more. And, of course, those interested in learning more about scuba diving can take part in “Discover Scuba” classes at the facility's 28,000-gallon portable pool that will be up and running for the event. The all-day event is designed to provide a fun and educational environment for divers and non-divers from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Indian Valley Scuba
601 Yoder Road
Harleysville, PA 19438

All of the proceeds will benefit IAHD-Americas, a true passion for Valaika.

Valaika was initially interested in working with handicapped divers because it seemed like a natural merging of his favorite activities: youth coaching and community involvement and diving.

The IAHD-Americas divers often are challenged with multiple disabilities – not just physical, but also mental and emotional. It works with divers with muscular dystrophy, traumatic brain injury, blindness, spinal injuries, amputees, myotonic dystrophy, diabetes, autism, developmental disorders, at-risk youth and those with emotional scars – all in a supportive, nurturing environment designed for success.

“For all these groups, being a diver is extremely empowering and well outside of the expectation of goals they may have had for themselves,” Valaika said. “It really helps expand their self-confidence... diving’s not an end, it’s a means.”

IAHD’s trained instructors work with each individual to determine how far they may pursue their diver training. For some, they may only experience diving in a standard swimming pool while others will be able to train and develop their skills further, with the potential to eventually achieve the same levels as a conventional-agency trained diving student.

Valaika loves working with the handicapped divers and helping them reach a new level of awareness. He says his favorite part is the smiles.

“Sometimes they start before they even go in, others start as soon as they come up out of that water and they realize they are now a diver,” Valaika said.

Because IAHD-Americas has approved resorts and facilities it works with all over the North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, Valaika works to train the instructors in Harleysville and then get them working with handicapped divers in their local area – wherever that may be.

To expand awareness of the program, IAHD-Americas conducts Discover Scuba program at pools or hospitals to introduce them to the concept, as well as conducting sessions with divers-in-training at the Harleysville site. Valaika is constantly working on outreach to let disabled and handicapped people know the opportunity exists. He also encourages diving shops and instructors to get involved with the program to tap into the new market and enjoy a truly rewarding experience. One of the key differences that separate the IAHD-Americas programs from other agencies is that all diver-level training is completely free. This is part of a unique business model that Valaika shares with dive shop owners and instructors who come on board and certify as IAHD-Americas professionals. It’s a 180-degree departure from the industry’s current mindset, and it has proven to be very successful since it’s unveiling several years ago.

Valaika’s history with diving began 32 years ago when he heard stories of a co-worker’s scuba diving experiences and was inspired to try it. He began diving and was eventually certified to be an instructor. Today, he’s certified as a Course Director through the Professional Association for Diving Instructors (PADI). He began working full-time in diving five years ago. Since then he has trained and been certified as an instructor or trainer with TDI, IANTD, PSDA, DAN, SDI, RAID and a host of other agencies.

Never one to follow the crowd, Valaika started with a blank sheet of paper and built his own scuba business plan from the ground up, basing it on his experience as an entrepreneur and founder of several former businesses in the engineering and industrial contracting fields. From day one, the “deliberately different” approach that Valaika brought to the dive industry has proven

Indian Valley Scuba
601 Yoder Road
Harleysville, PA 19438

to be the model of success for a truly progressive dive center. Indian Valley Scuba was recently recognized by the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Wharton Business School as one of the Philadelphia area's fastest growing business over the last three years, placing 52nd on the 2009 Philadelphia 100 List.

Valaika opened Indian Valley Scuba about five years ago on Broad Street in Harleysville, where he rented a retail space. Last year, he purchased the former meat processing property at the corner of Yoder Road and Harleysville Pike to expand the services offered.

The new facility opened in December 2008 and features an expansive retail store, repair & service center, multiple training classrooms, a complete rental department, and more.

The existing farmhouse on the site was gutted and converted into a full-service dormitory so that handicapped divers can come to the Academy of Deeper Education to take lessons through IAHD-Americas and stay right on the premises in a handicapped-accessible home with space for caregivers and instructors upstairs.

And while currently those lessons have to go on in the portable pool or the nearby Indian Valley YMCA, eventually there will be a facility on site for that when the construction is complete on the Academy of Deeper Education.

One of the primary reasons Valaika decided to create and build the academy is that many divers, shop owners and independent instructors in the northeast find themselves without a true, loyal connection to those they train because of a lack of certification locations. As it currently stands, many instructors watch their students go to Florida, the Bahamas or other locations to get their final certification. And in doing so, they lose customer loyalty and business over time. By building the 35-foot deep, 1 million gallon indoor pool at the Academy of Deeper Education, instructors from throughout the region will be able to bring divers to a closer location so they can follow through and complete the certification programs with their students.

In order to be certified to scuba dive, a person must take a classroom training component first. Then, they move on to skill building sessions with the equipment, which occur in shallower water like a swimming pool. But once they reach the final step in the certification process, they must conduct their final dives in open water with limited depth around 40 to 60 feet and natural conditions. Here in the northeast, the only thing that qualifies is a few lakes and old stone quarries. This means that the options for certification are few and far between, and practically non-existent from October through May when the weather and water are too cold for local diving – and Valaika aims to change that.

Valaika has already met with the heads of several prominent scuba training agencies, and based on the current design plans, has already received preliminary formal recognition of the facility as an Open Water site; a key factor in permitting year-round certification dives for students and divers of all levels within the climate controlled confines of the facility.

Additionally, the indoor facility will have a natural stone lining, gravel bottom, and an aquarium like setting with fish and other aquatic life inside so that divers can truly experience the joys of scuba diving all right there, Valaika said.

For more information and exciting details about the Academy of Deeper Education, visit the Academy's website at <http://www.academyofdeepereducation.com/>

Indian Valley Scuba
601 Yoder Road
Harleysville, PA 19438