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## **RRHA Youth Diving Program Wins National Honor**

A local youth diving program, which teaches scuba diving to youngsters who live in Richmond's public housing, won national recognition from the National Association of Black Scuba Divers (NABS).

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority's (RRHA) Youth Scuba Diving Program, provided through the RRHA Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy, won the NABS "Service to Diving" award. The program was nominated for this award by the Black Dolphin Divers of Richmond, the group which provides mentoring and diving training for the youth program.

The award, announced at the NABS Annual Summit in November on the Caribbean island Tobago, is designed to honor individuals and organizations who make significant contributions to the sport of scuba diving through education, training, marine science, volunteerism or organizational development. RRHA was recognized for its innovation and commitment to youth development through establishing a scuba diving program for at-risk youth through the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy.

Operating through a partnership with the Black Dolphin Divers, the RRHA Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy's diving program is believed to be the only such program in public housing in the U.S.

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Anthony Scott, RRHA's executive director said the entire agency is excited about the award. "This national recognition shows that we're doing the right thing by providing a positive outlet for young people," Scott said. "Economic circumstance shouldn't restrict learning opportunities and the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy allows RRHA to open doors and open minds. This is a proud moment."

The mentoring program with the Black Dolphin Divers of Richmond is led by Clifton Hicks, club president. The group members volunteer monthly and assist in sponsoring the youth on scuba related travel and activities. All of the youth are Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI) certified open-water divers and two are pursuing advanced certification. "We have a strong commitment to this program and it is paying off. As these students are trained, they will be able to go forward to become examples and mentors in the community", shared Hicks.

In addition to scuba diving, RRHA's Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy offers training in swimming, golf, tennis, boxing and tae-kwon-do; and offers a reading club and other cultural and educational programs.

The National Association of Black Scuba Divers, Inc. has been a catalyst for promoting scuba diving through the African-American community. This national organization promotes scuba diving, water sport skills, and environmental awareness and conservation; develops educational programs to stimulate interest and knowledge in the sport of scuba diving; provides scholarships for students studying marine and environmental sciences and sponsors scuba trips and open water educational experiences.

*For more information on the National Association of Black Scuba Divers visit [www.nabsdivers.org](http://www.nabsdivers.org). For more information on the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority and the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy call (804) 780-4167 or visit [www.rrha.org](http://www.rrha.org).*