

Dr. Lee Harris, Associate Professor of Ocean Engineering, and DMES graduate students, (pictured left to right in upper left photo below) Dana Arnouil, Aurélie Moulin, and Jenna Vogt, volunteered with the Reef Ball Foundation on Grand Cayman February 17-24, 2007.



Dr. Harris works closely with the Reef Ball Foundation, a non-profit organization that developed Reef Balls. These artificial reef units can be used to promote shoreline stability and for reef restoration and mitigation of damaged coral reefs. Reef Balls are made of marine-friendly concrete, and can be anchored into the ocean floor to prevent movement. They can be used as submerged breakwaters and are habitats for rescued imperiled corals (corals that have been damaged by storms).

In February 2007, the students participated in the construction of five new concrete reef balls and the propagation of coral onto already deployed units. The reef balls were deployed onto an existing reef restoration project in an area locally known as Cemetery Reef, located north of Seven Mile Beach. The coral propagation process then took place, where imperiled corals were gathered and rescued, and then brought back to a designated nursery, where they were carefully placed into concrete plugs. Divers were then sent out with the plugs to plant the 350 rescued coral fragments onto the reef balls, giving the corals a chance for re-growth, creating an artificial reef which will provide a natural marine habitat for benthic and pelagic sea life.