



The late Chris Coffman's mother, Carol, right, consoles Deveney Lonerganstenger during the dive at the reef site.

Staff photo/TAMM A-14P-7

## Divers get the artificial reef ball rolling

By LANE KELLEY  
Staff Writer

Divers recently sank a new kind of artificial reef off of Fort Lauderdale beach: huge balls of concrete.

Made of specially treated concrete, a dozen balls were sunk in 30 feet of water about 1,000 feet off shore at Las Olas Boulevard last week by members of the University of Central Florida Dive Club. The balls weigh between 750 and 3,000 pounds, with the largest one 6 feet in diameter and 4 1/2 feet tall.

"I doubt if many people will find them," said Dan Fulmer, dive club president. "They're pretty far out there."

The concrete used for the balls has a pH balance the same as sea water, to help fish and underwater plants accept the reef as part of their natural habitat. The reef balls are supposed to act like

natural reefs, providing a habitat for reef organisms and fish to populate.

The dive team hopes the balls will help reverse some of the damage caused by the destruction of natural reefs, mostly by pollution, Fulmer said.

"Most people don't witness a sea environment that divers experience," he said. "They don't see things dying underwater, so they don't know how bad things really are."

Fulmer, an engineering/computer science major at UCF, said he discovered the company that makes the reef balls while surfing the Internet. Reef-Ball Development Group Ltd. in Atlanta has a home page on the Internet.

Fulmer said he and other club members made the balls at a Rinker Concrete plant in Cocoa Beach. Construction and deployment of the balls cost

about \$5,000, which they obtained through donations and grants.

Fulmer said the balls, which are stacked on the ocean floor, can weather hurricanes and last about 500 years.

The site has been named the Coffman Memorial Reef in honor of Chris Coffman of Melbourne, the club's former vice president and a graduate of UCF who died in a car wreck last year.

Fulmer said the team would sink some more reef balls at the same site in September or October at an official dedication ceremony.

"Many species of coral and sea plants have medicinal benefits, and some are frequently used today in medicine," Fulmer said. "Healthy reefs will ensure the continuance of many natural resources."

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