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## The Palm Beach Post

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### Floating reefs designed to bring back marine life

The concrete reefs are molded around balloons and beach balls and can be used to repair damage to natural reefs.

By MICHELLE BROWN Vero Beach Post Staff Writer

**BOCA RATON** - Todd Barber officially quit his job Monday. The marketing consultant position paid \$125,000, but Barber is confident that his new career will pay the rent. Barber is the president of Reef Ball Development Group Ltd., a Georgia company that makes artificial saltwater reefs. Since its showing at a diving equipment trade show in January, the reefs have drawn queries from 27 countries. The molds that make the reefs rent for \$2,000 a month.

"The market is huge," said Barber, 33. "Buyers include local governments, large 'aquariums, hotels and cruise lines, divers associations -- anyone that can benefit from reefs.'

Barber and his crew began building the ball-shaped reefs at Gumbo' Limbo - Environmental Complex this week.

The reefs, which act as homes for buses, fish and other marine life are concrete molded around the structure to float.

I'm amazed no one else thought of floating reefs," said Barber, who developed the concept with his father, Jerry Barber, an inventor. "We can put these reefs in exact locations to repair damage done to natural reefs because of hurricanes and storms." he said.

The concrete is specially designed with fiberglass strands to withstand saltwater and nature for more than 500 years.

Reef Ball Development Group is donating one reef per tank at the Gumbo Limbo center. The first one will be used for loggerhead turtles. Gumbo Limbo directors probably will develop an educational program about the reefs, explaining their importance and preservation to grade-school students who visit daily, said Marl Ruche, a marine biologist at the ocean-plex '

"Our reefs are over-fished," Ruche said. "These reefs will help in providing habitats and that will hopefully bring back the populations."

## HELPING BRING BACK MARINE LIFE



**BOCA RATON-** Workers pour concrete into a Reef Ball forming one of the saltwater fish tanks at the Gumbo Limbo Environmental Complex Monday. Joe Kelly (right) signals to stop the pump as Todd Barber helps fill the ball and Jim Beck (bottom) holds the hose.