

International Beach Preservation Trust Locates at Western Carolina U.

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An international charitable trust devoted to the preservation of beaches worldwide has located its offices at Western Carolina University.

Western Carolina University is the new home to the offices of the Santa Aguila Charitable Trust, an international organization devoted to the protection and preservation of beaches around the world, and recent WCU graduate Adam Griffith has been hired as director of the trust's Beachcare program.

Griffith, who earned his master's degree in biology from Western in May, is working out of space in WCU's Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines, known worldwide for its use of science to influence public policy affecting management of U.S. shorelines.

"Our immediate goal is to launch the official Beachcare Web site, www.beachcare.org, to inform, educate, protect and celebrate the world's beaches," Griffith said. Other priorities of the trust include identifying beaches in trouble around the world, and providing the scientific basis for improving their management, he said. "I love the beach and am thrilled to work in the nonprofit and environmental fields," Griffith said.

Established by Olaf Guerrand-Hermes, a member of the family that founded the Paris-based Hermes fashion house, and wife Eva after the death of 2-year-old-daughter Aguila in a car accident in 2005, the Santa Aguila Charitable Trust strives to educate the general public regarding issues that threaten the world's beaches and coasts.

The trust is especially interested in illustrating the negative impacts of sand mining, where sand is removed from beaches, often for construction purposes elsewhere; and shoreline armoring, where hard structures such as seawalls, jetties or groins are used to try to halt the naturally occurring movement of beaches, said Griffith.

The relocation of the trust to WCU comes through the efforts of Rob Young, director of Western's Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines and a member of the advisory board of the trust. The advisory board oversees the trust's strategy and works to ensure its mission of global mobilization to stop the decimation of beaches worldwide.

Other members are architect David Adjaye; Prince Pierre d'Arenberg; Yasmina Filali of the Orient-Occident Foundation; musician Aretha Franklin; Philippe d'Ornano, president of the Sisley corporation; Orrin Pilkey, founder of PSDS; and Glenna Patton of Viacom International.

“This effort will unite PSDS and Western with a very influential group of global movers and shakers in the name of environmental education and responsible coastal management,” Young said. “It is all very exciting.”

As part of the collaborative effort, over the summer Young and Griffith assisted in the creation of a documentary film funded by the trust. The production team is led by actor Jean-Marc Barr and director Pascal Arnold, well-know figures in international cinema. Locations for the documentary include North Carolina, Florida, California, France and Morocco. Small portions of the film will be released on the Beachcare Web site as the production moves forward and in theaters upon completion.

For more information on the Santa Aguila Charitable Trust, call (828) 227-2728. For more information about the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines, call (828) 227-3822 or visit the Web site at <http://psds.wcu.edu>.

Western Carolina University is one of the 16 senior institutions of the University of North Carolina system. Western enrolls approximately 9,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs of study, and is located about 50 miles west of Asheville, N.C., near Great Smoky Mountains National Park.