

. . That, in response to the frequent question, is why the owners opened the Scuba Shack in downtown Frederick in April 1997.

Curious passersby are attracted by the display of underwater diving equipment in the small storefront on Fifth Street.

They step inside to discover they can learn to scuba dive for less than \$100 in one of the class sessions taught each month.

Scuba certification follows completion of the open water training that costs from \$.90 to \$200 depending on location selected.

Any certified diver can enjoy the pool nights at the recreation center for the cost of the pool fee only.

When the decision is made to take up scuba diving as a regular, personal recreation activity, the Scuba Shack has several complete lines of diving equipment.

The store carries equipment for children and adults, plus snorkeling gear.

They can even outfit customers for very technical activities like rescue diving.

Everyone probably knows what scuba-the-activity is but may not know the word stands for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus .

That's what the Scuba Shack sells, in addition to training from basic open water certification to dive master.

The business owners are factory-trained service representatives for all lines of equipment carried.

Scuba Shack prices are better than competitive because of the low overhead and because the owners are the only employees, co-owner Matt Kramer said.

The other co-owners are Gary and Margo Boyer, Bob and Lori Young, and Russ and Debbie Crystal.

Kramer has been teaching scuba diving for 25 years. He taught Gary and Margo Boyer, and they've now been diving for nine and seven years respectively.

Workshops are offered in advanced diving and water rescue.

The storeowners also organize and lead diving tours for their members and customers.

"We escort a couple of trips per year," Kramer said:

Kramer leads the trips to diving spots in Mexico, and Boyer escorts groups to locations in the Caribbean.

Diving tour groups usually include six to 10 people and last about a week. The trip costs . about \$1,200 per person and includes airfare, lodging and diving.

Diving trips locations have included the Channel Islands off the California coast and the Cayman Islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao north of Venezuela. Trips are also made to Belize in Central America, the British West Indies and the Lesser Antilles including Barbados and St. Vincent.

"An up-and-coming destination is off Vancouver Island in Canada," Boyer said. "With its

Scuba shack / hours

• The Scuba Shack is open 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and noon to 6 p.m. Saturday.

cold-water coral and sponges it's a whole different eco-system."

In the British Virgin Islands, these divers have watched Cleaner Shrimp nip at the cuticles of their fingernails. At Grand Cayman Island, they've petted and played with stingrays.

Scuba divers can do more than swim around looking at fish and underwater plants.

Specialty activities include wreck diving, underwater photography, cave diving, and treasure hunting.

A diver can become an underwater naturalist, archeologist or hunter - that's spear fishing.

Contact Michael Neilson at mneilson@metrowestnews.com or 303-884-1117.