By Timothy Roberts

A group of post-graduate students from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, in conjunction with Friends of the Environment, visited Abaco during the last week of March in order to conduct and equip volunteers with the means to carry out ongoing water quality tests.

Last year a group from Tufts University conducted a number of tests over the course of one week and found a significant level of fecal coliforms in the harbour of Hope Town. Fecal coliforms are generally harmless bacteria which are commonly found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals and are often used as an indicator of fecal contamination.

The tests, though based on a short period of time, indicate a level of contamination deemed by Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection as unfit for recreational use or for catching shellfish.

While last year’s group conducted a short series of tests that had a definitive end, this year’s students hope to establish a framework to conduct ongoing tests and to eventually give Friends and Abaco the tools to set up a management program of our coastal waters.

The students, who specialize in different sciences, will be looking at the social, biological, medical and engineering aspects of the management of our water resources and will assist with recommendations and information in order to for us to create and implement plans, programs, and projects to sustain and enhance waters and the effects on plant, animal and human communities within our coastal areas.

In general, increased levels of fecal coliforms provide a warning of failure in water treatment, a break in the integrity of the distribution system or possible contamination with pathogens. When levels are high there may be an elevated risk of waterborne gastroenteritis (otherwise known as the stomach bug or flu).

The program is intended to preserve our marine resources which are an important part of our tourism and fishing industry. Friends hopes to build awareness and understanding of the potential problems we face with the threat of further contamination of our waters as our population grows and more and more people visit our islands.

Friends, while initially starting the testing in Hope Town, will eventually seek to acquire volunteers from other areas across Abaco to continue and expand the program and come up with proactive solutions to curtail future problems with our water resources.

Tufts University will begin water testing program

February 26th was a special day at Cooper’s Town Primary School for 117 children and staff as lunch was served and titled Big Dog Day. Ellen Rees, representing David and Becky Rees, second homeowners of Morgantown, West Virginia, and Richard Rees, representing the Knights of Columbus in Marion, Ohio, arranged the meal as a gesture of community involvement and a display of good citizenship to the students.

Also offering contributions were employees of Diamond Seven and WPC Cox of the Royal Bahamian Police Staff.

Photographs were provided courtesy of Jack Slack, second homeowner of Orlando, Florida.

Big Dog Day for Cooper’s Town Primary