

LOCAL

'Absolutely rewarding.' Sarasota company memorializes loved ones with eternal reefs

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Families memorialize loved ones in eternal reefs in Sarasota Families gathered in Sarasota at Reef Innovations to create 'eternal reefs' using meaningful mementos and cremated remains. Sarasota

Sifting through a box of colorful costume jewelry, a Florida family chose the fashion accessories that their loved one will be buried with forever — under the sea.

On a sunny day outside the Reef Innovations plant in Sarasota, Tom and Karen Ries selected the brightly colored pieces that will grace a living memorial for Gisela, Tom's mother.

"She loved her jewelry and she loved fishing," Tom said as he placed a brilliant hummingbird into a concrete mold.

His mother, who lived her final years in Florida, died last February. On Friday, the Ries family found a way for Gisela to live on.

Ries and others gathered to memorialize their loved ones in an environmentally innovative fashion; by placing cremated remains into 'eternal reefs' with plaques and personal mementos honoring their loved ones.

"Families go home and they don't talk about, 'We went to Florida and we buried grandma.' They say, 'You would not believe what we just did down in Florida,'" said George Frankel, CEO of Eternal Reefs. "They take ownership of these reefs. They're really proud of the contribution that they're making, and when they see the life and the growth that develops on these reefs, it's absolutely rewarding in every sense of the word."



Tom Ries adds a colorful piece of his mother, Gisela's, costume jewelry to an eternal reef with her cremated remains incorporated into the structure. "This will attract a lot of fish," said Ries, who said his mother loved fishing. Tiffany Tompkins tompkins@bradenton.com

The reef balls are made with environmentally friendly concrete that will become part of a living reef about a mile and a half off the coast of Sarasota where hundreds of eternal reefs have been placed. Artificial reefs, which can also be formed by shipwrecks, oil rigs or other man-made objects, provide food and shelter for marine life.

Eternal reefs are also part of a growing segment of environmentally friendly burials that forego traditional embalming and caskets for a different kind of memorial that benefits the environment.

"This is a wonderful way for kids who have to say goodbye to a loved one to participate in a memorial," Frankel said.

"It contributes to the environment and also benefits the community," he added, sharing that many who incorporate a loved ones' remains return to the area.

Ries, a marine biologist from Indian Rocks Beach in Pinellas County, said he will bring his wife and sons to dive at the site where his mother's reef will be placed.

"She would have loved this, being around fish would make her so happy."



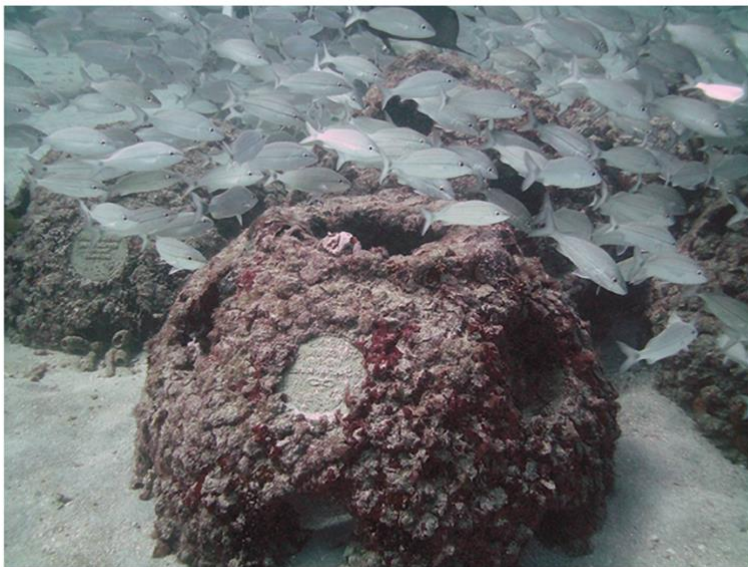
Brian Kryzanski's cremated remains have been added into a reef ball which will be placed about a mile and half off the shore of Sarasota as an environmentally friendly way to honor his memory. Tiffany Tompkins tompkins@bradenton.com



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An eternal reef ball underwater after 4 years. Eternal Reefs provided



Digital image Eternal Reefs provided