

Photographer's Water World

Man's deep-sea work beginning to catch on

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Pat Barton has always thought that he would combine his love of diving, photography and sailing when he retired. Maybe sail around the globe, snapping pictures of underwater life.

But he couldn't wait until retirement.

Barton owns and operates Barton Visions – a search engine optimization, marketing, design and photography business – that caters to companies that need help marketing their products or ideas.

A 20-year veteran in marketing and a 1986 graduate of Abraham Lincoln High School, Barton said that he provides a niche for many businesses.

"I am a designer by trade, but I know there are much better designers out there," he said. "But I also know technology, so I work as a liaison between the two fields."

That is his full-time gig, but his part-time job at a scuba shop in Omaha is equally as important to him.

"I love it," he said of working at the shop. "The exposure and experiences I have had have been fabulous."

Barton became a certified diver in 1997 and has worked his way up to dive master, but he will soon attend a school in Curacao, in the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea, to become a certified dive instructor.



A veteran diver, he said he sees the certification as an opportunity to hone his ability and improve his other love: Underwater photography.

Barton started in photography while working in design.

"A business would want a photo, but they wouldn't want to pay a photographer, so I bought a 35-mm camera and started playing with it," he said. "In 2003, I went digital and bought a Nikon, and later that year I bought my first housing for diving.

"Now, I don't have much desire to dive without my camera."

While he doesn't have the desire to dive without his camera, he still does at the Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo, where he has volunteered as a diver to clean exhibits since 1997. Barton said he started by cleaning the Howler monkey facility in the Lead Jungle.

"I was supposed to clean peanut shells out of the drain, but it usually turned out to be more sunglasses and camera lens covers than anything," he said.

From the Howler monkey exhibit, he moved to the aquarium where he has cleaned nearly every exhibit.

"I dive in the small shark exhibit most regularly, but I still clean the penguins occasionally," Barton said. "I'm still like a kid in a candy store when I do it. I've been doing it for 12 years, and I am still thrilled every time."

The interaction with the animals is always enjoyable, he added.

"Penguins are just like people in that they all have their own personality," Barton said. "Some are glad to see you and others just think you are an interruption."

While Barton doesn't take many pictures of the animals in the zoo, he has been all over the world shooting pictures of underwater life.

Some of his more interesting photos focus on sea anemones and their abstract beauty in varying vibrant colors and unique shapes.

"They are abstract underwater shots that create a kind of contemporary art," Barton said.

Barton said that he has had a positive response showing his photography as part of Second Fridays, but he has also had a lot of word-of-mouth interest.

"It's great, but I am certainly not making my living off of it," he joked.

But those days might not be that far off.



Staff photo/Chad Nation - Council Bluffs resident Pat Barton is familiar with the business world, but he loves the water. He has combined his love of diving and photography to create contemporary abstract art from pictures of underwater life.