2021 Annual Report

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHAIR

A Year Defined by Resilience and Creativity

Providing ocean science lessons for schoolchildren in need. Taking in hundreds of critically endangered frogs. Saving seabirds in the Long Beach Harbor. Rescuing wildlife after the Huntington Beach oil spill. Making sure our 12,000 animals and thousands of daily visitors would never know the difference between a pandemic year at the Aquarium and a normal one. These are the stories that reflect the Aquarium's resilience in 2021.

2021 at the Aquarium had its challenges, but the year was defined by the creativity and dedication of the Aquarium staff. We delivered first-rate visitor experiences, providing an escape and memorable and inspiring connections to nature. We offered educational experiences for learners of all ages, engaged volunteers and community members remotely, helped save local species, and celebrated and engaged our diverse community with scholarship programs and cultural festivals.

By the end of the year we had not only rebounded, but reinvigorated the Aquarium, reaching new audiences and giving new energy to our programs and efforts. We want to thank the Aquarium's staff, who worked incredibly hard, and our dedicated supporters, who were there for us when we needed them most. Thanks to each of you, we will be able to build on what we created for an even brighter future.

Kathleen M. Eckert

CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Peter Kareiva

PRESIDENT AND CEO

Thank You!
Watch later
Share
Watch on YouTube

THE STAFF HERE AT THE AQUARIUM

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR SUPPORT...

EDUCATION

All Ages, All Places

In 2021 people of all ages learned about the ocean and its animals with the Aquarium, both online and in person. Children and their families tuned in to connect with our educators in the Online Academy and through virtual field trips.

Adults attending First Wednesdays and Aquatic Academy learned about important ocean issues, including how underwater robots will play a growing role in resource extraction and the little-known impacts of ocean pollution from sewage and wastewater.

Online Academy

Online Academy reached children and families across the country and the world in 2021

262

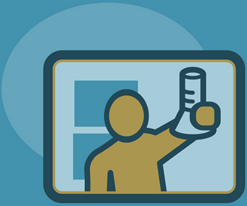
Online Academy Programs

48

Programs in Spanish

Online Academy offered live views of Aquarium animals

Programs tailored to numerous ages and grade levels



Included opportunities to talk to scientists

Virtual Field Trips

410

Virtual Field Trips in 2021

11.3k

Students Participated

17

States Reached Including Canada

EDUCATION

Virtual Science Lessons Reached Tens of Thousands

The Aquarium worked in partnership with Los Angeles' largest school district to create tailored programs for students in need.

In 2021 Aquarium educators provided science education virtually to more than 23,000 students and their teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District. This initiative launched in 2020 provided ocean science lessons for students in kindergarten through eighth grade, for both classroom time and afterschool programs.

LAUSD's Local District East, serving a student population in South Gate, Vernon, Bell, and Cudahy that would normally visit the Aquarium using scholarship funds, reached out to the Aquarium to further collaborate. Working with district STEM coordinators, the Aquarium's education staff developed six webinars to align with Next Generation Science Standards and the needs of their kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. The six webinars were viewed more than 12,000 times.

Students tuned in to the webinars to learn about ocean animals and habitats, following along as Aquarium educators guided them through live or pre-recorded programs like *Tide Pool Treasure Hunters*, in which first graders learned how tide pool animals defend themselves from predators, and *Discovering Earth's Patterns*, a program for fifth graders on weather, seasons, and monitoring our planet with satellites. Depending on grade level, these webinars included a craft or activity sheet to complete after the program.

During the live sessions, teachers sent in students' questions. The fourth grade class on sharks received more than 500 questions during the 45-minute program. Local District East teachers were also able to access the webinars on-demand.

> *"This whole series, from trip to post-trip activities, has been so wonderful, and we've received only positive feedback from teachers. A big thank you for your coordination and the engaging field trip presenters."*
>
> — INYOUNG LEE, *National Board Certified Teacher, Local District East*

Teacher Workshops

In 2021 the Aquarium held professional development opportunities for 138 teachers, including a series of workshops focused on ocean exploration for high school educators and workshops for STEM learning and resources for Long Beach early childhood educators.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Welcoming, Honoring, and Creating Opportunities for Underrepresented Communities

The Aquarium expanded its commitment to welcoming communities traditionally underrepresented in marine science and society at large through scholarships, fellowships, awards, and festivals.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Fresh Voices

In February 2021 the Aquarium announced the recipients of its first African American Scholar program. Throughout 2021 recipients of African American Scholar funds worked on Aquarium projects and events. The cohort attended a symposium at the Aquarium in November, where they networked with aquarium industry professionals and shared their stories with high school students from Long Beach Unified School District.

The Aquarium also launched a new American Indian Conservation Fellowship and invited the first fellow to participate in a working group studying data on wolf-human interactions in the United States.

2021 African American Scholars

KELSEY DECKARD

KATHERINE HANNIBAL

NEWTON ZACHARY HOOD

CANDICE MITCHELL

FREDERICK NELSON

LESLIE NGUYEN

JAHLEN PINELO

DANIELLE SANDOVAL

ELISHEBAH TATE-PULLIAM

CEYENNA TILLMAN

African American Scholar Profile: Elishebah Tate-Pulliam

Elishebah Tate-Pulliam grew up near Long Beach and remembers visiting the Aquarium as a young and curious child. As a master's student in Dr. Christine Whitcraft's lab at California State University, Long Beach, Tate-Pulliam developed a love for marine life and finding ways to engage with the public. She earned her master's degree in biological sciences in 2021 and was a recipient in the first cohort of the Aquarium's African American Scholar program.

Beyond financial support, the Aquarium involves students in the African American Scholar program in its work. Tate-Pulliam created materials for the Aquarium's early childhood education partners and contributed to social media posts.

When asked about the African American Scholar Symposium held in November, she said "I couldn't have asked for a more memorable and amazing day. The Aquarium Scholars program has really changed my life for the better. I've met incredible people, learned so much about the marine science field, and got to participate in events and discussions that have enriched my understanding of my place in the field." Tate-Pulliam served as a special interest research fellow at the Aquarium and is a 2022 California Sea Grant Fellow.

2021 African American Scholar Testimonials
Watch on YouTube

AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC
Autumn Festival

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Honoring and Celebrating our Diverse Community

On one of the twenty-two festival weekends at the Aquarium in a normal year, visitors step into the front doors and encounter something they may not have expected: the heart-pounding throb of Aztec drums, the intricate movements of Pacific Island dancers, or the fascinating tales of an American Indian storyteller, plus art exhibits, educational booths, cultural displays, craft stations, and other activities.

During the pandemic, festivals were transformed into virtual events. But in fall 2021 we welcomed our festival participants back to the Aquarium to celebrate Southern California's diversity, connect with the public, and honor their contributions.

Each festival includes a Heritage Award ceremony to honor a member of the community for their dedicated service and achievements.

2021 Award Honorees

MASTER HO CHAN AND SOKHANARITH CHAN
Heritage Award

MARTIN ESPINO
Heritage Award

INFINITE FLOW DANCE
Glenn McIntyre Heritage Award

QUE KEJU
Heritage Award

DIANA MICHAELSON
Young Hero Award

WENDY NGAU
Corinne Monroe Earth Day Award

SINO U.S.
Heritage Award

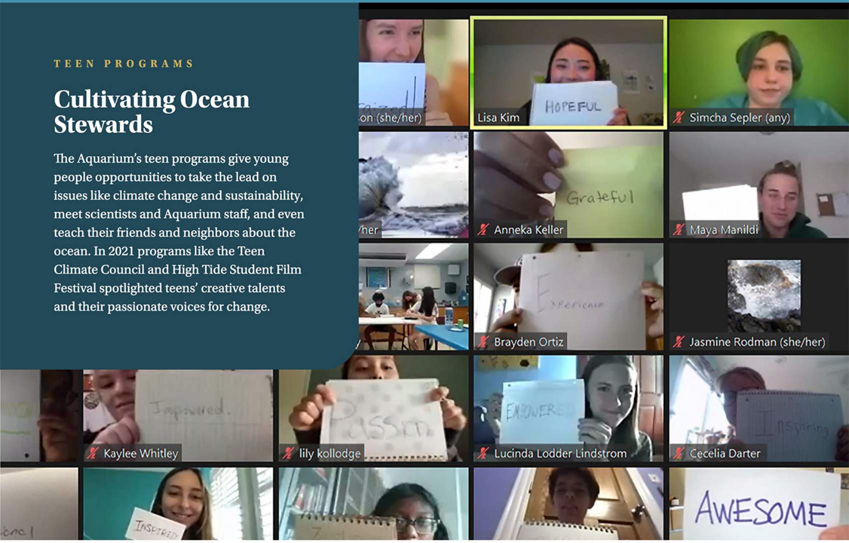
LORENE SISQUOC
Heritage Award

FELTON WILLIAMS
Heritage Award

TEEN PROGRAMS

Cultivating Ocean Stewards

The Aquarium's teen programs give young people opportunities to take the lead on issues like climate change and sustainability, meet scientists and Aquarium staff, and even teach their friends and neighbors about the ocean. In 2021 programs like the Teen Climate Council and High Tide Student Film Festival spotlighted teens' creative talents and their passionate voices for change.



Volunteering

170

Youth Volunteers

8,219

Hours of Service Contributed

TEEN PROGRAMS

Teen Climate Council

In 2021 the Aquarium's Teen Climate Council, with twenty-four teen volunteers, was selected to participate in the National Aquarium's Urban Climate Action Network (UCAN) conference. They collaborated with teens from across the country, spoke with climate scientists, and met with Congressional Representative Alan Lowenthal's legislative director to discuss their goals and projects.

The teens also attended NOAA's Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center Virtual Youth Summit in August, meeting with scientists and participating in workshops to plan climate mitigation actions they can initiate in their home communities.

Also in 2021, the Teen Climate Council launched a new product available in the Aquarium's gift store. Their sustainable starter kits featured eco-friendly products and an online workshop to teach purchasers how to create an all-purpose cleaner, reusable shopping bags, and reusable food wraps.

> *"This [UCAN] conference was transformational for our Teen Climate Council participants. They gained so much in regards to scientific climate change information and engagement."*
>
> — CALLUM WATSON, *Youth and Family Volunteer Coordinator, Aquarium of the Pacific*

HIGH TIDE
STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL
PRESENTED BY
DR. ALLEN AND CHARLOTTE GINSBURG

NT FILM FES
DR.ALLEN
GINSBURG

High Tide Student Film Festival

The Aquarium received eighty submissions from high school students in twenty cities across Southern California for its inaugural High Tide Student Film Festival presented by Dr. Allen and Charlotte Ginsburg. A screening and award ceremony were held at the Aquarium in June.

Students in grades nine through twelve submitted three-minute films in three categories: Ocean and Me, Thriving in a Changing Climate, and Responsible Seafood. A panel of seventy-two volunteer judges selected bronze, silver, and gold winners in each category, as well as two honorable mentions. The judges included sixty Aquarium staff members and a group of twelve community representatives, including city councilmembers, local business owners, and school officials.

The finalists attended an awards ceremony in the Aquarium's Honda Pacific Visions Theater on June 2, 2021.

Gold Winner, Category: Thriving in a Changing Climate

Dreaming of the Deep by Darwin Melchiorre

SUSTAINABILITY

Modeling Change, Inspiring Action

At the Aquarium in 2021 we worked to shrink our carbon footprint and reduce our impact on ocean ecosystems. We also provided a forum for volunteers, members, and the public to learn more and take action.

SUSTAINABILITY

Cleaning Up Our Trash

In 2021 the Aquarium welcomed a team of graduating seniors from University of California, Los Angeles to help us reduce our waste. They conducted three waste audits and using these data developed a plan that will allow the Aquarium to divert 75 percent of its waste from the landfill through recycling and composting.

This will be accomplished through a new waste decomposition system that composts the food waste from Aquarium restaurants, kitchen, staff cafeteria, and food prep room. The nutrient-rich compost byproduct will be used to fertilize the landscaped areas. A trash compactor was also installed to help cut emissions created by waste hauling trips.

Volunteers Lead Clean-Up Program

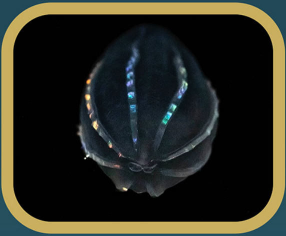
The Aquarium's Taking Responsibility and Saving Habitats (TRASH) Watershed Clean-up Program encouraged volunteers to take on a portion of their local watershed and conduct independent clean-ups with members of their household to remove trash from beaches, rivers, wetlands, and storm drains. This began as a program for registered Aquarium volunteers in 2020 and expanded to the public in 2021.

Volunteers Mobilized Our Mission Remotely

One hundred and thirty-one teen volunteers participated in the Ocean Neighbors program, creating educational yard signs about marine life. They spread ocean conservation messages across California, from Bakersfield to Carlsbad.

Another team of volunteers participated in research and writing to update the Aquarium's online animal database. Others logged wildlife sightings around their homes and communities. Through these programs, volunteers engaged in ocean education and stewardship that is central to our mission and shared the Aquarium with their communities far and wide.

I'M BRINGING THE PACIFIC OCEAN TO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD!
THIS WEEK I AM GOING TO TEACH YOU ABOUT:



A U.S. Aquarium First in Jelly Breeding

Aquarist Josh Wagner, who is skilled in culturing sea jellies, produced about thirty Beroe comb jellies, making the Aquarium of the Pacific the first in the United States to breed this species. Breeding animals at the Aquarium and sharing them with other aquariums reduces the need to collect animals from wild populations.

Big Ideas in Pacific Visions

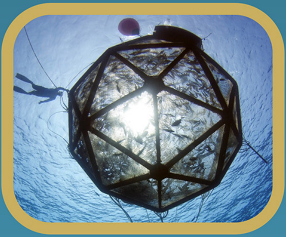
The Plastic Bag Store originated in 2020 as an installation in New York's Times Square. Its creator, artist Robin Frohardt, adapted it into a film that used puppetry, craft, and humor to turn a critical lens on how our massive amounts of plastic waste might be interpreted by future generations. In June the Aquarium hosted Frohardt for a screening of the film and discussion, using the Honda Pacific Visions Theater as a venue where people can examine environmental issues through performing and visual arts.

Plastic Bag Stor
The Film

Seafood for the Future

The Aquarium's Seafood for the Future (SFF) program received a total of $726,000 for new projects in 2021, including $260,000 from the Builder's Initiative Foundation to conduct an analysis on permitting marine aquaculture in California, $250,000 from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to test messages on seaweed aquaculture, including a module for the PBS Learning Media Center, and $216,000 from NOAA's Saltonstall Kennedy program to develop outreach tools for fishers and seafood farmers.

SFF also continued to lead efforts to support sustainable seafood development in the United States through workshops with policymakers and other outreach. Director Kim Thompson served as an expert on a WWF panel on social license for marine aquaculture. SFF Science Communications Fellow Mackenzie Nelson developed Spanish language content on aquaculture for the Baja Splash cultural festival and led the development of a short animated feature on the benefits of eating more seafood. The film has also been translated into Spanish.



Message from Kim Thompson, director of Seafo...

RAPID RESPONDERS

Aquarium Saved Local Animals During Wildlife Emergencies

The Aquarium's staff of animal care professionals helped to save local wildlife during two local emergencies in 2021. The team pulled together to cover animal care duties at the Aquarium to free up trained responders to go into the field.

AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC

RAPID RESPONDERS

Aquarium Rescued Wildlife Impacted by Oil Spill

After the oil spill in Orange County in October, Aviculturist Frankie Lill, Mammalogists Erin Lundy and Samantha Emberton, and Curator of Birds and Mammals Brett Long joined the efforts to search beaches and rescue oiled birds and animals. These responders were trained by the OWCN to be ready to help during oil spills.

Over the course of eighteen days during the response, these four Aquarium staffers traveled to beaches from Long Beach to Oceanside to conduct surveys and rescue oiled wildlife. Shifts lasted ten to twelve hours and consisted of comprehensive beach surveys of up to twelve or thirteen miles a day on foot. Wearing yellow safety vests, they would use spotting scopes or binoculars to search for oiled wildlife, logging their survey track and each sighting in an app. To rescue an oiled animal, they would wear protective gear, including a hazmat suit, goggles, and gloves, carefully place the animal in a carrier, then transport it to the wildlife center in Orange County serving as the triage area.

In total, ninety trained responders from fifteen OWCN partner organizations participated in the response. By the end of the incident, OWCN had rescued thirty-two birds and released nineteen that had made a full recovery. The rest would receive ongoing treatment before their release.

RAPID RESPONDERS

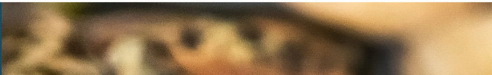
Rescuing Baby Seabirds

In July of 2021 the Aquarium helped to save hundreds of elegant tern chicks in the Long Beach Harbor. The birds had formed a colony on two barges in the harbor, and unfortunately, chicks were falling into the water. Because they had not fledged yet, meaning they had not yet grown their adult watertight feathers, the chicks faced drowning unless they were rescued.

Staff members from the Aquarium went out on their boat daily to retrieve chicks from the water. The chicks were then transported to the clinic at International Bird Rescue (IBR) in San Pedro, where they were stabilized and hand-fed. Organizations involved in this rescue effort included the Aquarium of the Pacific, IBR, OWCN, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Science Center, Heal the Bay Aquarium, and Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards.

The Aquarium of the Pacific and partners' participation allowed the staff at IBR and OWCN to focus on other mitigation efforts and rehabilitation at IBR's clinic. As of July 30 more than 580 chicks had been rescued and brought to the clinic, and IBR estimates that about 2,000 birds have been saved thanks to the addition of floating platforms installed by the barges to help the birds get out of the water safely. Aquarium staff members report that they retrieved about thirty-five chicks each day.

SAVING SPECIES



Rescuing and Protecting Endangered Animals

The Aquarium played a key role in breeding, rearing, housing, and releasing endangered animals during the pandemic.

SAVING SPECIES

Aquarium Helped Save Frogs from Extinction

In 2021 the Aquarium cared for 270 endangered mountain yellow-legged tadpoles. In 2020 the Bobcat Fire tore through the local mountains, destroying the areas where biologists had just released critically endangered frogs. While the fire presented an enormous setback, zoos and aquariums including the Aquarium of the Pacific took action to save these frogs and care for them until a new habitat can be found.

State and federal government agencies collected and transported all the remaining frogs and tadpoles to safety. With this new influx of frogs needing shelter, the Aquarium offered to build a holding facility to add to the available space for the rescued frogs at the other permitted facilities. Inside this specially designed room, the tadpoles are separated into two aquarium systems: one for the 125 tadpoles hatched in April 2020 and collected from the wild and the other for about 150 that were hatched in 2021 at one of the other facilities in the partnership.

Under the recovery plan for this species, returning populations to the wild and removing the frogs from the Endangered Species List will take many years, and the Aquarium will stay involved for as long as needed.

> *"I am so proud to care for our 270 mountain yellow-legged frog tadpoles. Thank you to everyone, including Edison International, who makes this work possible through continued support of the Aquarium and our conservation efforts."*
>
> — ERIN LUNDY, *Mammalogist II, Aquarium of the Pacific*

Lending a Hand to a Small, Furry Rescue

In the fall a months-old sea otter pup arrived at the Aquarium after being rescued off the coast of Pismo Beach, California. Government wildlife officials determined that the orphaned pup could not survive on his own in the wild and deemed him unreleasable.

The pup was paired off with our resident sea otter Betty, who took on the motherly duties of teaching the pup basic otter skills, like grooming and taking food from staff members.

The sea otter pup represented a learning opportunity for the Aquarium, which will welcome more orphaned pups after a sea otter surrogacy facility is completed at the Molina Animal Care Center. The surrogacy program is the result of a partnership with the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which has rescued, rehabilitated, and released stranded sea otter pups since the 1980s.

Relisting Wolves

In 2021 the Aquarium joined a campaign by relistwolves.org to add gray wolves back to the Endangered Species List. In December the Aquarium hosted a workshop to create an open-source database of human-wolf interactions and analyze the data to determine the true threat posed by wolves.

Gray wolves are functionally extinct in 80 percent of their historic range, but in 2021 several states embarked on a campaign to trap and kill wolves. According to some experts, this human-wildlife conflict is based on a misunderstanding of the risk wolves pose to livestock.

Participants in the Aquarium's African American Scholar program and a newly launched American Indian Fellowship joined the working group and will be listed as co-authors on the resulting publications.

Rebuilding Local Abalone Populations

In 2021 the Aquarium participated in field work to release 400 endangered white abalone and raised thousands of baby white abalone at our facility. The Aquarium has been a partner in white abalone recovery efforts for over a decade, with continuous funding support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. In recent years the organizations involved in the recovery have released and monitored thousands of white abalone in Southern California waters to help re-establish the local population.

Tracking Endangered Giant Sea Bass

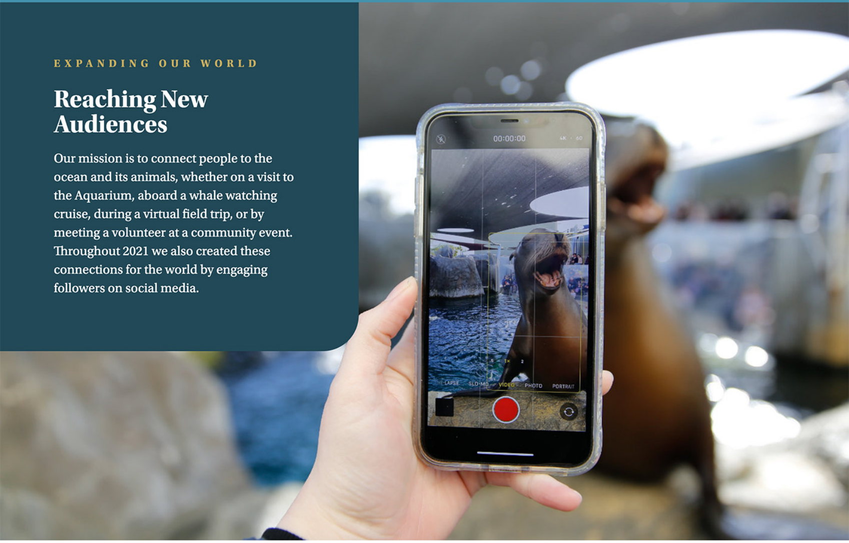
Together with experts at other aquariums and university researchers, the Aquarium released twenty-five juvenile giant sea bass fitted with radio transmitter tags off our coast. At the time, the Aquarium was the only project partner with available divers due to the pandemic. Despite not having volunteer divers available, Aquarium paid staff members completed all the preliminary data collection dives for two months, ensuring that this important work could proceed.

A system of acoustic receivers tracks the location of the released fish. Scientists plan to expand the network of receivers to better track the fish over time, providing data that is essential to the recovery of this endangered species.

EXPANDING OUR WORLD

Reaching New Audiences

Our mission is to connect people to the ocean and its animals, whether on a visit to the Aquarium, aboard a whale watching cruise, during a virtual field trip, or by meeting a volunteer at a community event. Throughout 2021 we also created these connections for the world by engaging followers on social media.



EXPANDING OUR WORLD

Reaching Millions via Social Media

The Aquarium's social media pages were an important way to reach people during the pandemic. By the end of 2021 the Aquarium had 2.6 million followers on TikTok. The Aquarium produced one of TikTok's first weekly livestream series, LIVE at the Aquarium, and continued to experiment with new formats and trends that led to rapid growth.

TikTok allowed us to reach people around the world with inspiring animal stories and educational content.

The Aquarium hosted seventy-seven live broadcasts on TikTok in 2021, raising $70,000 from viewers. On June 8, World Ocean Day, the Aquarium hosted a twelve-hour live stream, including its first live broadcast from underwater. In total, Aquarium videos on TikTok received 320 million views in 2021.

> *“We are very proud of the relationship we have cultivated with TikTok these past couple of years. They’ve supported our mission time and time again by amplifying our voice to millions of viewers during our weekly live streams, supported us financially with grants through their GivingSzn sponsorship, and provided a platform for crowdfunding directly from our fans on our videos.”*
>
> — ANITZA VALLES, *Senior Manager, Web and Social Media, Aquarium of the Pacific*

Social Media Highlights

47.9M

Views on Social Media in 2021

313.7M

TikTok Views

2021 SUMMARY

Financial Report

Pandemic impacts curbed financial success in the early part of the year, but the Aquarium saw favorable results at year end.

In early 2021 the Aquarium continued to experience financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Aquarium was completely closed for the first thirty days of January and partially opened (outdoor only) from January 31 through March 14, 2021.

In March the Aquarium was able to fully reopen for the first time since July 2020. At that time the Aquarium used a reservations-based timed ticketing system to ensure safety and compliance with capacity restrictions required by the State of California.

Once fully opened, the Aquarium began to experience a strong financial year. The pent-up demand for visitation and record-level onsite spending facilitated positive year-end results, which included historical high admission, membership, and retail revenues. The favorable income was also complemented with favorable operating expenses with reduced advertising and printing costs. The Aquarium also received a $10 million Shuttered Venue Operators Grant from the federal government that assisted in paying rent, utilities, insurance, and labor costs.

The net earnings from operations of $21,623,220 provided the Aquarium and the City of Long Beach with the unique opportunity to update the City of Long Beach/Aquarium of the Pacific Surplus Fund agreement. This ensured surplus funds can be applied to future Aquarium rent and capital improvements on the city's asset. As of December 31, 2021, the Surplus Fund balance was nearly $20 million. This covers more than four years of annual rent (at $2,154,000 per year) and nearly $10 million in funds for future capital improvement projects.

REVENUE AND EXPENSES (in 000s)

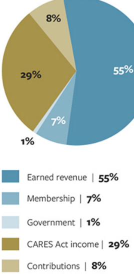
	2021	2020
Earned revenue	32,202	12,585
Membership	3,832	2,876

REVENUE

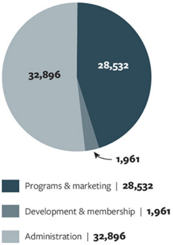
Government	537	6,200
CARES Act income	16,893	-
Contributions	4,855	3,901
Total revenue	**$58,319**	**$25,562**
Programs and marketing	28,532	25,333
Development and membership	1,961	1,790
Administration	32,896	2,855
Total expenses	**$63,389**	**$29,978**
Change in net assets	**(5,070)**	**(4,416)**
Net assets at beginning of the year	57,678	62,094
Net assets at end of the year	**$52,608**	**$57,678**

BALANCE SHEET (in 000s)

	2021	**2020**
Cash and cash equivalents	3,775	5,994
Accounts receivable	389	51
Contributions receivable	1,593	873
Prepaid expenses	561	415
Gift store inventory	648	725
Property and equipment (net)	54,930	58,001
Operating lease right of use assets (net)	18,158	19,855
Finance lease right of use assets (net)	91	41
Total assets	**$80,146**	**$85,955**
Accounts payable	1,897	1,538
Accrued liabilities	2,051	1,581
Deferred revenue	5,340	1,702
Paycheck Protection Program loan	-	3,560
Note payable	-	-
Operating lease liabilities	18,158	19,855
Financing lease liabilities	91	41
Total liabilities	**$27,538**	**$28,278**
Unrestricted	50,612	56,131
Temporarily restricted	1,997	1,546
Total net assets	**$52,608**	**$57,677**
Total liabilities and net assets	**$80,146**	**$85,955**



EXPENSES (in 000s)



OUR DONORS

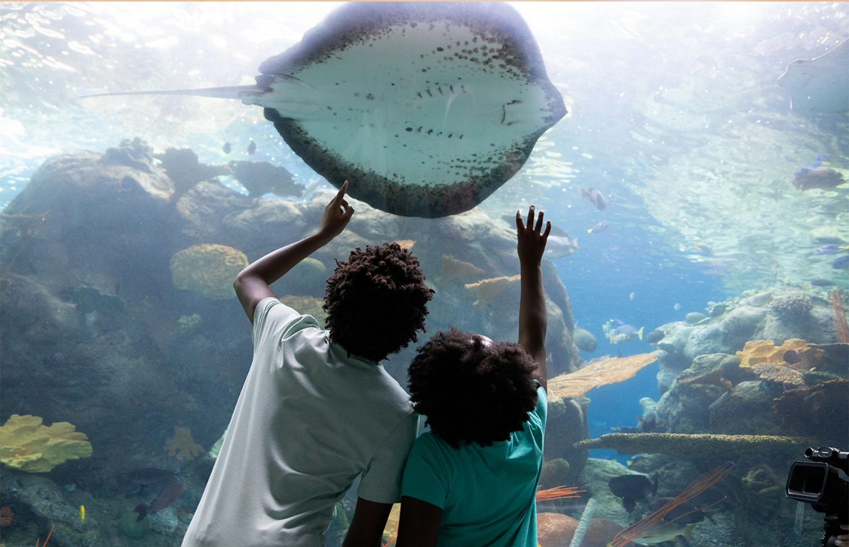
Donors Make Aquarium Programs a Reality

We are incredibly grateful to all of the

supporters and donors who made contributions in support of the Aquarium in 2021.

VISIT DONOR LIST

PRESEN Y
AND C GINS



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OF THE PACIFIC®
A non-profit institution