

impact 2020

INSPIRING TOMORROW'S LEADERS AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

The National Aquarium is a nonprofit organization changing the way humanity cares for our ocean planet. Through unparalleled exhibits, science-based education programs and hands-on field initiatives, we are creating a community of hopeful conservationists, driven by our mission to inspire conservation of the world's aquatic treasures. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic—which impacted every facet of our operations throughout 2020 and temporarily shuttered the Aquarium to guests for an unprecedented 109 days from March to July—we are proud of what we accomplished this year to benefit people, animals and the planet.



The National Aquarium's floating wetland prototype promotes clean water in the Inner Harbor, attracts native species and teaches visitors about the harbor's connection to the ocean.

nature

RESTORING VITAL HABITATS FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

For more than 20 years, we have helped restore thousands of acres throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed—including planting native gardens and wetland grasses in Baltimore City and beyond to provide habitat for wildlife and promote coastal resiliency. We work to combat climate change, save wildlife and habitats and stop plastic pollution.

From where the National Aquarium sits at the Inner Harbor’s edge in downtown Baltimore, the Patapsco River winds its way to the storied Chesapeake Bay, which connects us to the Atlantic and Earth’s one, global ocean. Our location is an important reminder of our responsibility to our community, region and planet.

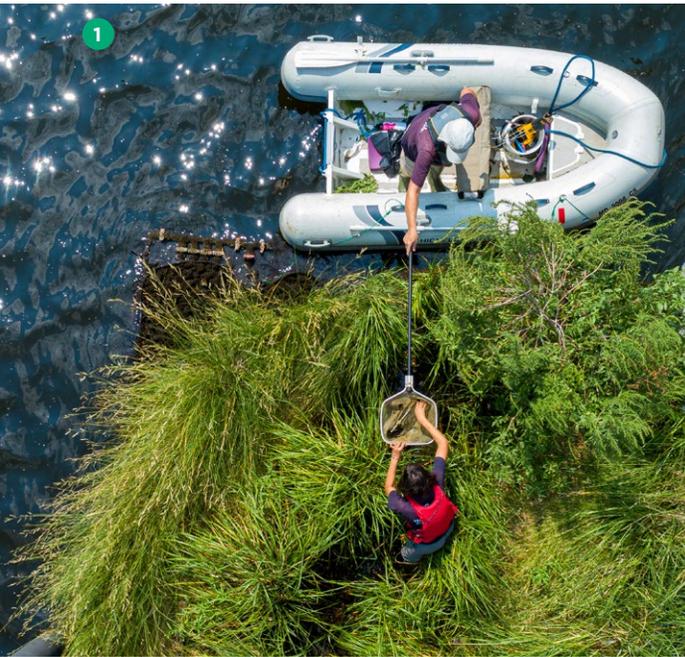


“
It’s not the responsibility of any one person or organization or agency to clean up the Inner Harbor. If you want something done, you do it.
 ”

JACK COVER
 General Curator,
 National Aquarium

A snapping turtle found at Masonville Cove, the first certified Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in the U.S., during a Bioblitz event.

nature



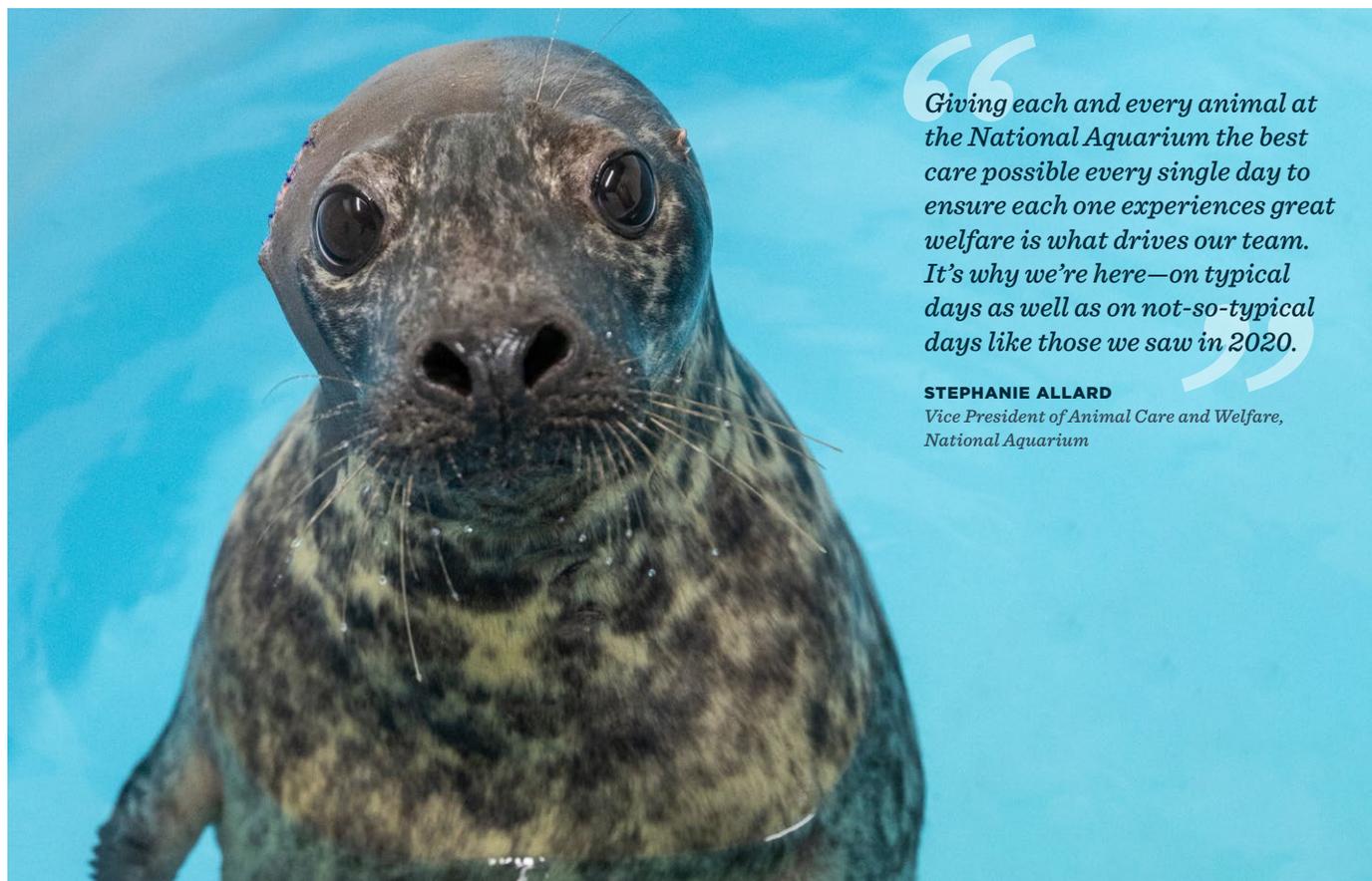
- 1** The Aquarium promotes clean water in the Inner Harbor through our waterfront campus project. Our floating wetland prototype [removes excess nitrogen](#), attracts native species and teaches visitors about the harbor’s connection to the ocean. Grants in 2020 from the Baltimore Office of Sustainability and 11th Hour Racing support water quality research around the floating wetland, and we partner with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to collect water quality data in the harbor as part of the [Eyes on the Bay](#) project. The National Aquarium team and partners also undertook the messy job of hauling more than 30 electric scooters and other large pieces of debris from the harbor this year.
- 2** As part of our long-term partnership with The Nature Conservancy to restore vulnerable Atlantic white cedar habitat in the [Nassawango Creek Preserve](#) on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, five members of the our Conservation team planted nearly 2,000 saplings in April. We also joined Baltimore County’s Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability in Dundalk to plant a living shoreline of 2,400 wetland grasses at Watersedge Park and 1,200 grasses at Inverness Park.
- 3** In January 2020, then Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young signed Baltimore City’s Comprehensive Bag Reduction Act into law at the Aquarium. The act, which will reduce plastic pollution in neighborhoods and waterways by prohibiting grocers and other retailers from supplying customers with plastic bags at checkout, will go into effect in 2021. We also supported Maryland’s Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Food Service Products Ban, and in October, Maryland became the first state to implement a statewide ban on foam food containers.
- 4** For more than 10 years, we’ve been a key partner at [Masonville Cove](#) on the Patapsco River in South Baltimore, the first certified Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership in the U.S. This fall, we worked with 28 volunteers to remove 9,182 pieces of debris from the water and shore at Masonville Cove as part of the annual International Coastal Cleanup. And during an Urban National Wildlife Refuge Day BioBlitz, volunteers observed a variety of plants and animals at the site, documenting more than 230 observations of 132 different species. All observations can be viewed on our [Masonville Cove BioBlitz 2020](#) iNaturalist project.
- 5** This year marked the third year in a row that the Aquarium has coordinated the Baltimore metro area’s participation in the [City Nature Challenge](#), a friendly international competition that connects people with nature right outside their front door and showcases the biodiversity in cities all over the world. Because of the pandemic, 2020 participants were not able to gather at events and instead made observations around their neighborhoods. In Baltimore, 705 participants recorded 11,087 observations of 1,465 species of plant and animal life in and around the city—our largest totals ever.

nurture

CARING FOR ANIMALS AT THE AQUARIUM AND IN THE WILD

We practice the highest standards of animal care and promote animal welfare—both inside the Aquarium and out.

All animals—from microorganisms to apex predators—play critical roles in maintaining healthy ecosystems and a healthy ocean, which humans rely upon for oxygen, water, climate regulation, food, energy and other resources.



“Giving each and every animal at the National Aquarium the best care possible every single day to ensure each one experiences great welfare is what drives our team. It’s why we’re here—on typical days as well as on not-so-typical days like those we saw in 2020.”

STEPHANIE ALLARD
Vice President of Animal Care and Welfare,
National Aquarium

Rescued grey seal Pippi Longstocking spent just over nine months at the Animal Care and Rescue Center, the longest seal case we have had since our program began in 1991. Her long stay was due in part to the time it took to treat—and for her to heal from—an ear infection that required surgery.

nurture



- 1 The National Aquarium closed its doors to guests on March 14 due to COVID-19, but the thousands of animals at the Aquarium and Animal Care and Rescue Center required the same level of daily care as always. Our animal care teams and essential employees from departments across the organization—including dive safety and life support—continued to [report for duty during the shutdown](#), navigating new safety and scheduling protocols while meeting the animals' needs.
- 2 National Aquarium Animal Rescue cared for [125 rescued sea turtles](#) in short- and long-term rehab, as well as [three seals](#) (two grey and one harp) that were rehabilitated at our world-class Animal Care and Rescue Center before being released back into the ocean. [Grey seal Pippi Longstocking](#) was the Aquarium's longest seal rehabilitation case, along with other milestones. We celebrated the release of our 300th rehabbed animal, a Kemp's ridley sea turtle nicknamed Muenster, in June at Assateague State Park.
- 3 To prepare the National Aquarium dolphins to move to a [seaside sanctuary](#) and thrive in a more natural environment, our marine mammal team focused on [building the dolphins' resiliency](#) throughout the year. This resiliency training included reinforcing the dolphins' natural inclination to work together to secure food and share the results of that work. The team also introduced the dolphins to fluctuating water temperatures as well as new objects and stimuli, including outdoor umbrellas, floating docks, birds, and vegetation like mangroves and sea grapes.
- 4 In October, we welcomed a new resident to the Animal Care and Rescue Center: [a juvenile green sea turtle](#). Kai was rescued in 2018 by South Carolina Aquarium after being struck by a boat. Because she remains unable to dive, Kai was deemed non-releasable by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and moved to the National Aquarium because of our unique ability to continue her rehabilitation and provide appropriate accommodations for the rest of her life. [After losing Calypso](#), the 500-pound green sea turtle who was a National Aquarium icon, in February 2020, our team is looking forward to keeping Calypso's legacy alive by providing long-term care for another charismatic green sea turtle.
- 5 There were a number of noteworthy hatchings and births at the Aquarium in 2020. Seven [sandstone long-neck turtles](#), a freshwater species rarely encountered outside its native habitat in Australia's Northern Territory, are believed to be the first to hatch at any aquarium or zoo. We also welcomed five [sandbar shark pups](#), two [big-headed Amazon River turtles](#), one [Atlantic puffin chick](#) and one [Mertens' water monitor](#).

next generation

INSPIRING THE OCEAN CONSERVATIONISTS OF TOMORROW

With a wide range of programs for students from pre-K through college, we are an educational partner that works with young people, families, schools and communities to build STEM skills, spur conservation action and prepare students for college and careers.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects overall employment to grow by 5% between 2018 and 2028, but forecasts that jobs in science, technology, engineering and math fields will expand by nearly 9%. Women continue to be underrepresented in the STEM workforce, as do Black and Hispanic/Latino communities. We believe diverse backgrounds, thoughts and opinions are critical to scientific progress and the continued development of inclusive conservation and climate change solutions.

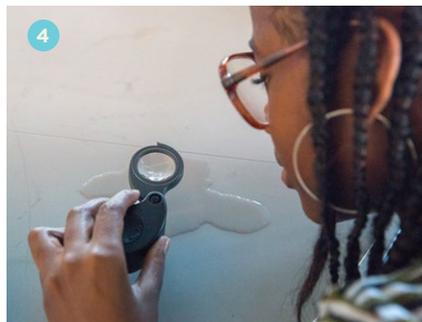
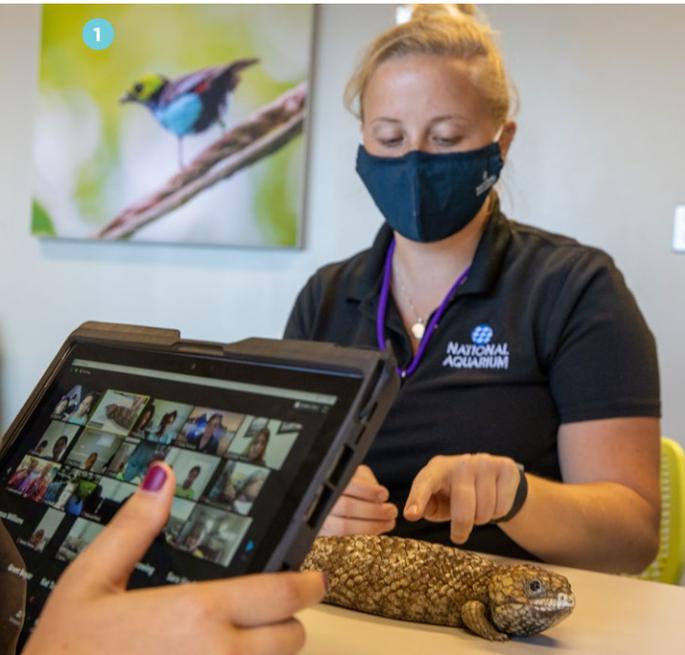


“When I was a freshman just joining the Aquarium, I didn’t know really anything about the sea. Now, three years later, I’m actively trying to find ways to learn more about the animals, culture and mystery of the ocean, which has also led me to want to become a marine biologist and continue in this field during college.”

AKIL SMITH
11th grader, Archbishop Curley High School;
participant, Henry Hall Fellowship

Two young guests explore the Maryland: Mountains to the Sea exhibit, which was refreshed in 2020 with the generous support of the France-Merrick Foundation.

next generation



1 We engaged 24,129 students in educational programming, including [Terrapins in the Classroom](#), [AquaPartners](#), [Henry Hall Summer Scholars](#), [Henry Hall Fellowship](#) and classroom programs, as well as new virtual field trips and programs that let us reach schools in counties that traditionally cannot travel to the Aquarium. Working with the Maryland State Department of Education, we developed a virtual field trip, “Maryland: Mountains to the Sea,” with a video tour and a live question-and-answer session with our educators. More than 5,640 Maryland students participated in the field trip for free in the first four months of the 2020-21 school year. In addition, two new virtual education programs—“Shark!” and a squid dissection lab—both free to Maryland students from Baltimore City Public Schools or Title 1 Schools, reached more than 4,800 students early in the 2020-21 school year.

2 Through a partnership with the Enoch Pratt Free Library, we offer [Read to Reef](#), a conservation-themed book club for young readers in Baltimore City. Throughout its five-year history, thousands of Baltimore children have read a total of 63,000 books and celebrated their reading achievements at the National Aquarium with their families. Because of our closure from March through June, we extended the spring Read to Reef season through the summer, providing a safe, free, in-person learning experience for local families while incentivizing literacy skills.

3 We served high school students through our Youth Exhibit Guide program and Henry Hall Fellowship. Youth Exhibit Guide student volunteers learned about Aquarium exhibits, conservation initiatives and professional development virtually, and will be able to continue in-person in summer 2021. As part of the

Henry Hall Fellowship after-school work-study experience, the fellows chose food security as their main topic to study during the 2019-20 school year. As one of their culminating projects, they created a booklet about food security to be distributed at Enoch Pratt Free Library branches. This project was supported by T. Rowe Price. In addition to career exploration and general workforce readiness, the fellows learned about water pollution, habitat restoration, air quality and the history of Baltimore.

4 To support local youth and communities affected by the digital divide, we joined 21 other local organizations and artists through the Baltimore Arts Passport, distributing 10,000 books and kits through the city’s meal sites and community centers to engage young people without access to internet and/or devices. We also prepared printed booklets and kits for children attending 15 centers providing childcare for essential workers. The centers were run by Y of Central Maryland and Boys and Girls Club of Metro Baltimore for children under the age of 10. Each kit contained a density experiment, water properties experiment and create-your-own sea creature activity.

5 During our closure, we completed a [refresh of Maryland: Mountains to the Sea](#), with a greater diversity of animals and more interactive displays and sensory experiences. The exhibit takes guests through the water cycle, from an Allegheny stream through tidal marshes surrounding the Chesapeake Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. The work in the exhibit was completed with the generous support of the France-Merrick Foundation—which shares in the National Aquarium’s commitment to inspiring the next generation of active, engaged conservationists—and the State of Maryland.

neighbors

HONORING OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY

The National Aquarium attracts visitors from around the globe, but we belong to Baltimore. We work to ensure that a visit to the Aquarium is within reach of all our neighbors. We also invest in projects and engage city residents in important conservation work right in their own neighborhoods—from Jonestown to Locust Point to Curtis Bay. In 2020, we supported immediate community needs brought on by the pandemic.



“The National Aquarium’s partnership in Jonestown began before the Animal Care and Rescue Center even started to be built. There was clear back and forth communication with the community about what would be going on, and they promised to stay engaged with the community once the ACRC was open—which they have. Conservation Community Coordinator Amber Doherty’s dedication to Jonestown is genuine. Amber and the Aquarium are true partners.”

MALIK JORDON
President, Historic Jonestown Incorporated

At the Exeter Street Community Garden in Jonestown, Aquarium staff work with community volunteers to plant, nurture and harvest vegetables, and then distribute fresh produce to neighbors.

neighbors



1 While people remained in their homes in 2020, the Aquarium was able to come into their houses in positive ways. Our [livestream web page](#), featuring three Aquarium habitats, received 645,331 views in 2020, with nearly 40% of those views during the month of March when the shutdown began. On [aqua.org](#) and our livestream vendor site combined, our *Blacktip Reef* cam had 2.4 million impressions, *Pacific Coral Reef* had 1.9 million and *Jellies Invasion* cam had 2 million. Throughout the year, we hosted 34 exhibit livestreams on our social channels, featuring everything from meditative jellies to shark feedings, reaching an average of 52,897 users with peaceful, educational content.

2 As citywide festivals and community experiences came to a halt, the Aquarium connected with local partners to understand how they were pivoting to fill the void virtually and how we could contribute in ways that their audiences needed. Viewers of a library's story time about sharks were treated to a live shark feeding. Children at local pediatric hospitals watched from their beds as live presentations by our animal experts were broadcast over the hospitals' CCTV. An architecture festival that would usually invite people to explore Baltimore's most interesting spaces and places asked us to participate virtually instead, including through a [virtual live tour](#) of the ACRC's exhibit fabrication studios.

3 When the National Aquarium reopened to guests on July 1 with capacity reduced to 25% of our usual total, we made sure affordable admission programs were included so that our neighbors in Baltimore and throughout Maryland could continue to visit the Aquarium for less. While many of our usual community access events were canceled, Half-Price Friday

Nights, presented by M&T Bank, continued and saw attendance from Baltimore-area ZIP codes increase significantly this year. We also created a new special admission rate for public health workers in recognition of their contributions during the ongoing crisis.

4 As a member of Baltimore's historic Jonestown community through the Animal Care and Rescue Center on Fayette Street, we have collaborated with neighbors and Helping Up Mission clients in the Exeter Street Community Garden. In 2020, the garden offered a safe outdoor place where people could come together to work on a shared project that benefited the community. Throughout the 2020 growing season, Aquarium staff were joined by over 40 Jonestown neighbors to plant vegetable seedlings, nurture and harvest them, and ultimately distribute almost 100 pounds of fresh produce—including popular greens and herbs—to neighbors in Jonestown. Gardeners also planted native flowers in some of the beds to attract bee populations.

5 The Aquarium's exhibit fabrication team temporarily pivoted away from their work creating life-like corals and other exhibit elements in March to join Open Works' Makers Unite, a collaborative emergency effort to combat the COVID-19 crisis in Maryland by mobilizing 3D printers to help manufacture personal protective equipment for local healthcare workers. Our team not only 3D-printed face shield components, but also molded and casted the headband portion of the face shields faster than they could be 3D-printed. In total, the Aquarium provided parts to assemble 1,127 face shields to help frontline workers at Baltimore hospitals.

by the **numbers**

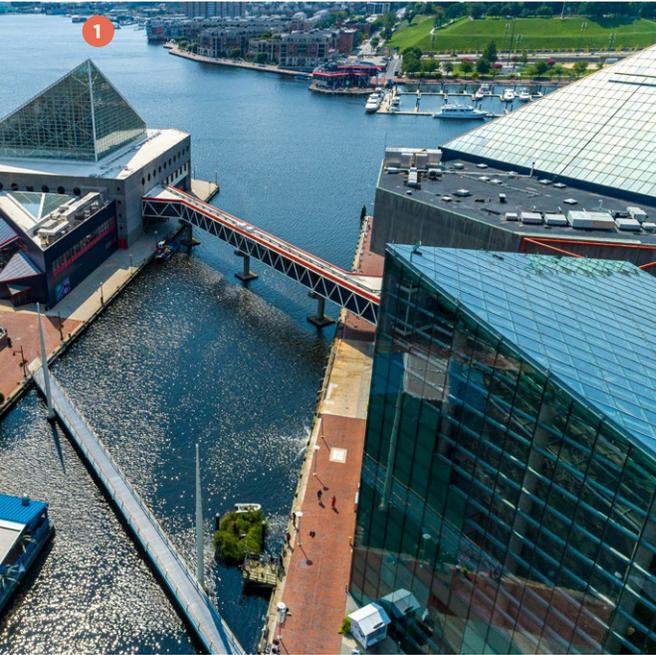
OUR ECONOMIC IMPACT: SUPPORTING MARYLAND BY ATTRACTING VISITORS AND CREATING JOBS

Since the day the Aquarium opened in 1981, we have served as an important economic anchor in Baltimore City and throughout Maryland. This remained true in 2020, even though we were closed to guests for more than 100 days, our capacity was limited when we reopened, and national and international travel was restricted. Our award-winning exhibits still attracted visitors, generating a significant amount of tax revenue. As one of the top three aquariums in the United States and the largest paid cultural destination in Maryland, we have historically created \$455 million in economic activity statewide each year. *(Source: "The Economic Contributions of the National Aquarium: A 2017 Update" created by Sage Policy Group, September 2017.)*



National Aquarium animals like the Linne's two-toed sloths required the same level of daily care as always in 2020, despite the pandemic and the Aquarium's extended closure.

by the numbers



- 1 Historically each year, we create \$455 million in economic activity across the state of Maryland—including generating \$20 million in tax revenue and supporting 4,500 jobs statewide and creating \$9 million in tax revenue for Baltimore City. We employ 350 people at the Aquarium.
- 2 We are ranked as one of the top three aquariums in the United States and usually welcome more than 1 million guests each year. In 2020, we welcomed nearly 500,000 guests, despite being closed for more than 100 days and operating under limited capacity for six months.
- 3 Typically, 5 in 6 Aquarium visitors are from outside the Baltimore region, and 1 in 3 stay in the area overnight. In recent years, nearly 90% of Aquarium visitors reported that the Aquarium was their primary reason for visiting Baltimore; in 2020, it was even higher, which illustrates that the Aquarium filled an important need for individuals and families looking to spend time downtown during a difficult year.

stay connected

As a nonprofit organization, the National Aquarium relies on donations to support our animal rescue efforts, habitat restoration work, education programs and conservation initiatives. Contact our Philanthropy team if you'd like to join our community of hopeful conservationists or sign up for our newsletters to stay updated on Aquarium news, conservation events and more!

philanthropy@aqua.org

our donors

UNLEASHING POSSIBILITY WITH YOUR GENEROSITY

lifetime giving

The National Aquarium exists today because of the leadership and continuing support of the entire community. The following list recognizes those who have contributed a total of \$200,000 or more to the National Aquarium since it opened in 1981.

Anonymous (3)	Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick	Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Rosenberg, Jr.	The Citizens of Baltimore County
The Abell Foundation, Inc.	Mr. Randall M. Griffin	The Rouse Company	Constellation, an Exelon Company
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Cermaq	Maryland Environmental Service	Travelers Foundation	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
CFG Bank	Maryland Port Administration	United States Environmental Protection Agency	Betty and Tom Robinson
Chesapeake Bay Trust	Maryland State Department of Education	Venable LLP	Richard H. Schwartz
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national aquarium society

The following elite group of donors demonstrated their commitment to ocean conservation by supporting the National Aquarium with gifts of \$2,500 or more in 2020.

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individual giving

The National Aquarium is pleased to recognize those individuals who made generous philanthropic contributions in 2020.

\$1,000,000+

Ms. Emily Dwyer
 Mr. and Mrs. John W. Dwyer

\$500,000-999,999

Ms. Mary Catherine Bunting
 Mr. Edward A. Wiese

\$100,000-\$249,999

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