



AQUARIUM *scholars*

2019 PROGRAM SUMMARY



AQUARIUM SCHOLARS

Conservation Education Opportunities for North Carolina's Title I School Students

The North Carolina Aquarium Society

The Aquarium Society is a private, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization whose purpose is to provide philanthropic support for the three state-operated Aquariums at Fort Fisher, Pine Knoll Shores and Roanoke Island, as well as Jennette's Pier in Nags Head. This support is provided through donations, exhibit and program sponsorships, membership programs, gift shop operations, and advocacy. These efforts support the Aquariums' operational and capital needs, as well as their mission to "inspire appreciation and conservation of our aquatic environments."

The Society, under the leadership of its 45-member Board of Directors, provides millions of dollars annually in fulfillment of its mission. Often cited as a role model for public-private partnerships, the Society has earned a reputation for innovation and excellence in support of the state Aquariums. As a private partner, the Society has worked hand-in-hand with the Aquariums to secure more than \$100 million in funding over the past 25 years.



“What an amazing experience our children had yesterday at Jennette's Pier! Thank you so much for providing this service to us! To watch children enjoy the ocean for the first time is a memory I will always remember.”

– First grade teacher, Colerain Elementary School

The Need

The Aquariums have years of experience offering dynamic and effective conservation education programming for public schools across the state. Millions of school students have participated in these programs over the Aquariums' forty-plus years. These programs, many offering unique experiences in coastal habitats and featuring live animals, serve to not only educate and inform, but to expand students' perception of careers in science and conservation. Unfortunately, the Aquariums have seen a decline in the number of school students visiting and participating in these programs in recent years—especially from poorer rural counties. Teachers and school leaders indicate the decline is not due to lack of interest, but directly related to available school funding.

The Project

To address the problems schools faced in bringing students to the Aquariums and Pier, the Aquarium Society created *Aquarium Scholars*, a unique program funded through a consortium of private donors. This program expands access to science and environmental educational offerings for underserved students in Title I schools across North Carolina. Through a partnership between the Aquariums, our state's public schools and Aquarium Society

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donors, students now have access to the Aquariums' unique STEM-based education programs. Teachers from Title I schools apply for *Aquarium Scholars* mini-grants to fund their choice of class engagement: field trips to one of our three Aquariums or Jennette's Pier, Aquarium outreach with educators bringing programs to individual schools, or for virtual learning opportunities where educators conduct live, online programs. *Aquarium Scholars* engages students with

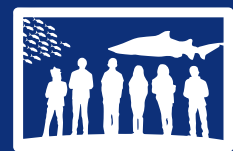
fascinating aquatic animals, important environmental and conservation messages and other unique educational opportunities for thousands of students who might otherwise never experience a visit to the Aquariums, Pier or the coast.

Mini-grant awards for class field trips may be used to support the cost of transportation to an Aquarium, including buses and fuel, the cost of substitute teachers, and program fees. North Carolina school groups receive free admission to the Aquariums and Jennette's Pier. School mini-grants typically range from \$350 - \$1,250.

The program launched in December 2017 with the first students participating in early 2018.



Aquarium Scholars grant applicants can choose funding for:



Class Visits / Field Trips



Aquarium Outreach



Virtual Programs

The Benefits

Why are school field trips to places like public aquariums important? Years ago, elementary and middle school field trips to museums, zoos and aquariums were often treated as unbridled spring excursions to reward students at year-end. Everyone had a good time, but with little emphasis on learning. In the last twenty years, that mode of thinking has changed as schools developed more rigorous expectations against a backdrop of curriculum standardization and an emphasis on test-score performance. Today, teachers are far more likely to coordinate their visits to closely align with curriculum standards, and cultural institutions use pre- and post-visit exchanges to make field trips more meaningful.



Recently, researchers have addressed the relative value of such trips and their role in student performance. One recent study presents important evidence that such out-of-classroom learning experiences have measurable positive influence, especially for underserved students. The study suggests that field trips might be an effective tool for reducing achievement gaps.

Beverly Vance, Science Section Chief for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), expressed her strong support for the *Aquarium Scholars* concept: “Your target to reach tens of thousands of underserved school students is admirable and represents a priority to the NCDPI as we seek to close the gap for students who are under-represented in STEM fields.”

“Our students learned how important research is in the area of marine biology and how much this research affects other areas of our lives. The program brought the Aquarium to our students and many will never have the opportunity to visit the Aquarium or even travel outside of Davidson County.”

– 10th Grade Teacher, Davidson County High School

Aquarium Scholars Program Objectives

- Tens of thousands of underserved students, especially those from rural counties, will gain exposure to the wonders of North Carolina’s aquatic life through Aquarium visits and programs.
- Many of these students will experience unique out-of-the-classroom learning opportunities (and trips to the coast) that they might otherwise never receive.
- The Aquariums will reverse the trend of declining student participation by targeting underserved schools and expanding awareness of the Aquariums across the state of North Carolina.
- Programs will spark interest in participating students, increasing their knowledge and understanding of habitats, wildlife, conservation issues, and ocean science—while ultimately propelling them toward enhanced science achievement.
- Students will learn from new perspectives, develop new skills, and engage in discovery in ways that are different from traditional classroom methods.
- Students will better understand the connectivity between humans’ activities and their impacts on the natural world.
- Students will gain insights into careers in aquatic science.

A Robust Array of Programs

The Aquariums and Jennette's Pier have developed a reputation for producing a substantial offering of popular and effective conservation programs and outdoor experiences for visiting school students. For situations where students cannot travel, Aquariums have invested in vehicles, animal transport systems, staffing and associated materials that allow the Aquarium to go into the schools. Another area of learning is occurring online through the virtual programs. These programs use live video conferencing for Aquarium educators to share compelling messages with students in real-time. Examples of programs being offered include:



Squid Squish

Cephalopod investigation features a squid dissection



Scaly Skin, No Fins

Explore the world of reptiles and touch an alligator, turtle and snake



ROVs and Scientific Discovery

Explore amazing remote-operated vehicles and discover their use in undersea exploration



River Basins of NC

Learn about the state's rivers and how our diverse ecosystems are connected



Living Seashells

Live mollusks reveal their secret lives under the sea



Swamp Symphony

Reptile and amphibian comparisons highlight the world of frogs, toads and turtles



Sea Turtle Trails

Threatened sea turtles and their conservation story are among the most popular of Aquarium programs



Green Energy

Hands-on programs available from our Platinum LEED-certified Jennette's Pier location include Solar Science, Wonders of Wind and Geothermal-Hot & Cold



Feathered Friends

Students learn about the important role birds play in our environment and get up close and personal with a screech owl

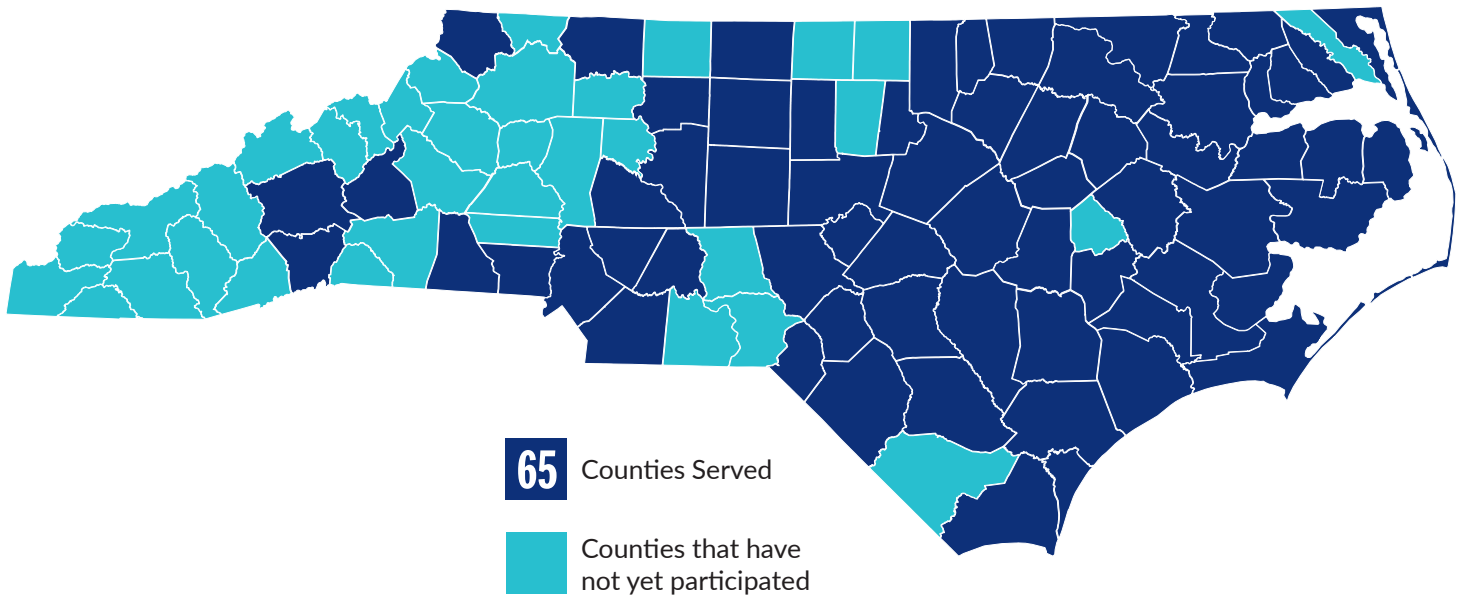


Ocean Rx

Students learn about medicines from the sea and the amazing research that might one day lead to cures for cancer and other diseases



Aquarium Scholars Outcomes SPRING 2018 – SPRING 2020



2019 AQUARIUM SCHOLAR OUTCOMES

Total Grants Awarded	\$122,280
Virtual Education	5
Number of Grants Awarded	140
Field Trips	91
Outreach Visits	44
16,893 Students Served	16k+

TOTAL OUTCOMES FOR THE PROGRAM SINCE 2018

Total Grants Awarded	\$286,864
Virtual Education	14
Number of Grants Awarded	352
Field Trips	225
Outreach Visits	113
> 35,000 Students Served	35k+





Aquarium Scholars funding will provide Aquarium and Pier visits to approximately 16,000+ students from Title I schools across North Carolina in the 2020-21 school year. These are schools with historically large concentrations of underserved students and that are much less likely to engage in Aquarium field trips or other off-campus learning opportunities. This program would not be possible without corporate or individual donors who have given generously to make an immediate lasting impact on education in our state.

Donors

Founders

RA Bryan Foundation
Duke Energy Foundation
NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation
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Wells Fargo Foundation

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Legacy Fund
George Smedes Poyner Foundation
Rotary Club of Kinston
Smithfield's Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q
Southern Bank Foundation
Triad Foundation
Walters Family Foundation
100% of Aquarium Society Board
of Directors members

“The parents were excited that we were able to bring that [the program] to them and it did not cost any extra, because money is very, very tight with a lot of my children's families.”

– Teacher, Brinson Memorial Elementary School – Craven County

How you can participate:

Apply: Teachers can visit ncaquariums.com for more information, deadlines, and an online application. Start by selecting the closest or preferred location, fill out its grant application and submit between **July 20, 2020** and **September 7, 2020**.

Donate: Visit ncaquariumsociety.com/aquarium-scholars to find out more about the program and make a tax-deductible donation. Or, contact Jim Mulvey, Director of Development, Aquarium Society at 984-239-6789 or jim.mulvey@ncaquariums.com.



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