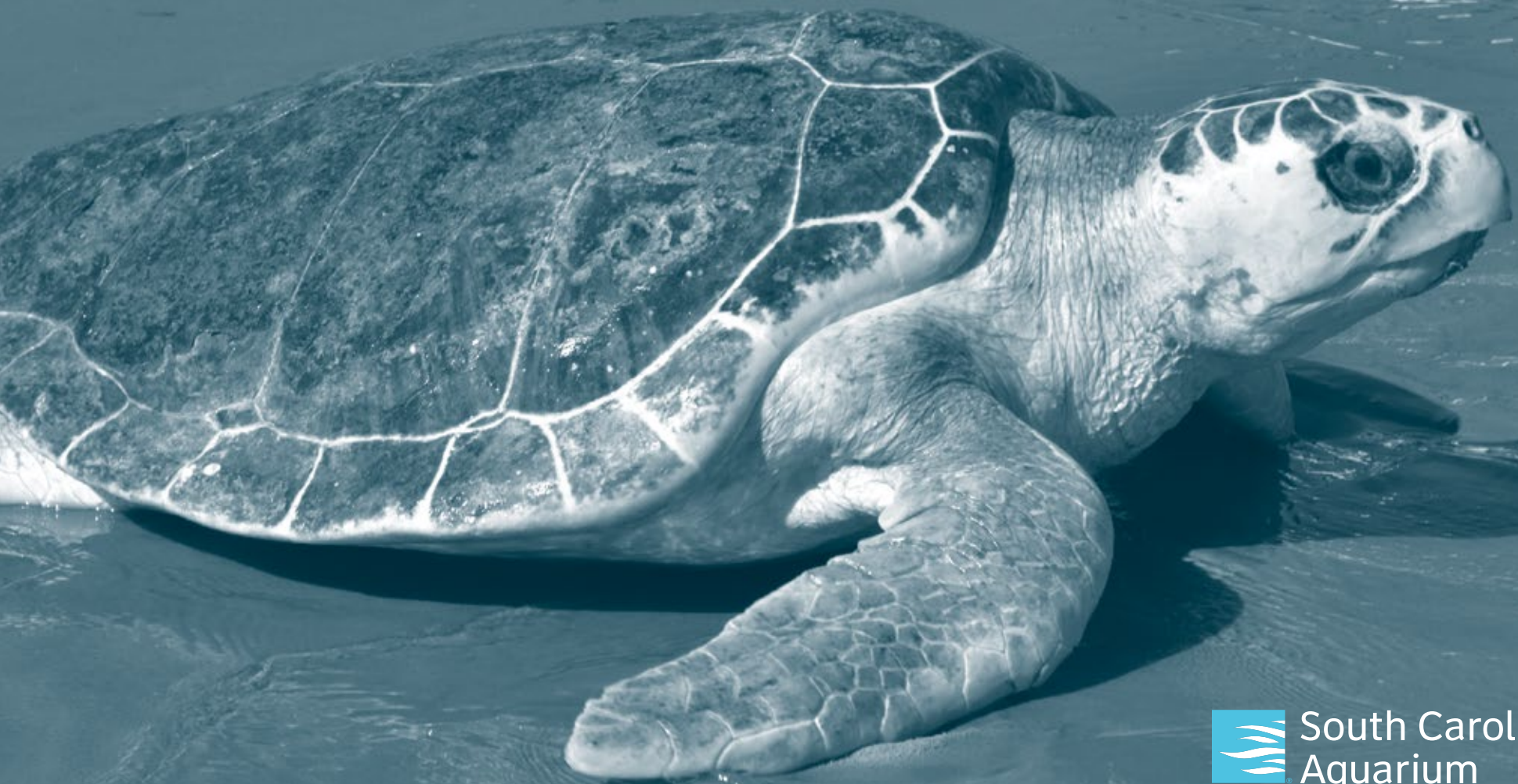


# A JOURNEY FULFILLED

SOUTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



South Carolina  
Aquarium

**IMAGINE WHAT THE  
WORLD WITHIN OUR  
WALLS MIGHT MEAN  
FOR THE WORLD  
BEYOND THEM**



#### OUR MISSION

The South Carolina Aquarium is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to inspire conservation of the natural world by exhibiting and caring for animals, by excelling in education and research and by providing an exceptional visitor experience.

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As Dr. Shane Boylan carefully extracted a 4-foot length of plastic fishing line from the intestines of a Kemp’s ridley sea turtle named Peach, a rapt crowd of Aquarium guests stood watch just outside the window of the surgical suite.

They were witnessing a truly historic moment.

This was the first publicly viewed surgery in the newly opened Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery™. And it was a life-saving turn for the rare adult Kemp’s ridley sea turtle, who would later fully recover and return to the sea, fitted with a satellite tag to track her progress.

It was a year of “firsts” for the South Carolina Aquarium.

The opening of the unprecedented Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery heralded an institutional commitment to preserving endangered sea turtle species around the world. With the installation of a CT scanner, exercise tank and

other innovative technology behind the scenes, and groundbreaking educational experiences featuring augmented reality and multi-media in the public space, the Aquarium created a new paradigm for animal care and public engagement.

Last March, we staged an international summit, Breaking Down Plastic, to illuminate the scourge of plastic pollution in our lives. Our leadership on this important topic extended throughout the year, with public testimony on the impacts of plastic on sea turtles and other wildlife, a “plastic art” exhibition staged jointly with the Halsey Institute for Contemporary Art, and the rollout of a citizen science app to track clean-up efforts in our communities and beyond.

Thanks to the PNC Foundation, Kids Coast opened in the fall to great acclaim and quickly became a new hub for young families seeking fun and play in a learning landscape. And tens of thousands of children around the world were provided access to the Aquarium’s educators via our web-based distance learning program.

Each of these achievements is a direct reflection of our community’s inspirational investment in our Watershed Campaign. We are proud to count you among our many supporters. Thank you for helping us lead the way in connecting people with water, wildlife and wild places.

Sincerely,

Kevin Mills  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
*South Carolina Aquarium*



It is an exciting moment when an idea that was once a dream becomes a reality. It is even more astounding when that reality blossoms beyond the original vision. The opening of Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery this past year was

truly a watershed moment for the Aquarium. We not only expanded our rescue and rehabilitation efforts, but we viewed that journey into an experience that our guests will never forget. This extraordinary learning laboratory has now become a platform for activating our guests to respond to issues from climate change to plastic pollution; a call to action beyond our walls.

This year, our award-winning education programs served more students than ever before, and reached students across the globe. Our distance learning program alone connected more than 20,000 students worldwide to the programs only we can provide, igniting a lifelong passion for safeguarding the future of our planet. The McNair Center for Sea Turtle Conservation and Research has already begun to transform the way animal care professionals manage procedures and rehabilitation. In the past year, our team began to test the effectiveness of utilizing an exercise tank to better prepare our sea turtles patients for their journey home.

In the surgical suite, nearly 4 feet of monofilament line were removed from a patient’s system, marking our first publicly viewed surgery and the beginning of an unparalleled learning opportunity about the dangers of plastic in our oceans. Our facility is outfitted with a new CT scanner, enabling our team to look deeper than ever before and facilitating more rapid diagnoses and treatment plans. This state-of-the-art addition sets the South Carolina Aquarium apart from other animal care institutions in the country.

I am so proud of this great work.

Even while working towards realizing the goals of the Watershed Campaign, we never stop dreaming. Early in 2018, together with community leaders, staff and volunteers, we began the process of envisioning the next phase of the Aquarium’s growth. We are imagining how we can better serve the community; how we can reach more students; how we can become a more effective voice in conservation; and how we can continue

to delight all of our guests in the most meaningful way. I am excited to share that vision with you in the coming year. Thank you for your continued and generous support and for your belief in this organization. With your support, we continue to inspire and transform our community in ever-evolving ways. Our future is bright, and I look forward to you joining us for the next phase of our journey.

Sincerely,

Jonathan M. Zucker  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
*South Carolina Aquarium*

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# YEAR IN REVIEW

## ZUCKER FAMILY SEA TURTLE RECOVERY™



The grand opening of our state-of-the-art sea turtle rehabilitation center now allows all 470,000+ annual guests to experience the plight of sea turtles from rescue to rehabilitation to release. With mock medical stations and viewing windows into our animal care practices, Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery is a revolutionary learning experience for everyone.

## BREAKING DOWN PLASTIC



We established our role as a leader in tackling plastic pollution by hosting a daylong conference convening top authorities in policy, advocacy and innovation. Among the 535 participants, we welcomed actor Adrian Grenier representing the Lonely Whale Foundation, Dr. Marcus Eriksen of the 5 Gyres Institute, and Danni Washington, TV host for Nature Knows Best.

## CT SCANNER



This new piece of medical-grade equipment was installed in Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery, enabling us to significantly improve diagnostic, interventional and intraoperative imaging. Having this technology on-site has elevated the level of specialized animal care we can provide. Additionally, we have proudly shared our CT scanner with medical and educational partners throughout our state.

## OYSTER REEF RESTORATION



In partnership with the South Carolina Oyster Restoration and Enhancement Program, more than 100 Aquarium staff, volunteers and supporters helped to construct a large oyster reef from recycled oyster shells along the bank of Wappoo Creek. The reef helps prevent erosion and creates habitat for juvenile fish, crabs and other saltmarsh animals. Preliminary observations of the reef's progress indicate that the restoration project was a success.

## PEACH'S SURGERY



Peach was only the third adult Kemp's ridley ever treated at the Sea Turtle Care Center™. Dr. Shane Boylan and our medical team conducted two surgeries to remove nearly 4 feet of monofilament fishing line from Peach's gastrointestinal tract. The procedures were the first publicly viewed surgeries, making them especially meaningful. Peach was also one of the first sea turtle patients to use the exercise tank in Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery, preparing her for her return to the ocean.

## KIDS COAST



In partnership with the PNC Foundation, we opened Kids Coast, an inspiring play area that encourages exploration with peers and promotes play-based learning. We expect to serve more than 60,000 toddlers each year, inspiring the next generation of conservationists by connecting our youngest visitors to water, wildlife and wild places.

## SEA CHANGE



In partnership with the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, we presented Sea Change, a sculptural and photographic exhibit, to the Charleston community – expanding the reach of both institutions. The exhibit showcased the work of two prominent artists expressing critical conservation themes addressing the scourge of plastic pollution. Sixteen area art teachers from Sumter, Charleston and Berkeley counties also participated in a hands-on workshop with featured artist Aurora Robson at the Aquarium.

## DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM



Using videoconferencing technology to connect with classrooms nationwide, our distance learning program enables Aquarium educators to share knowledge, answer questions and provide an up-close look at our animals and exhibits. We reached 21,812 people (double our original goal) by implementing this program in states such as South Carolina, New York, Colorado, California and Ohio.

# YEAR IN REVIEW (continued)

## OPEN-ACCESS INITIATIVES



Thanks to our Angelfish Fund and open-access initiatives, we welcomed 6,411 deserving guests free of charge to the Aquarium to explore water, wildlife and wild places. These groups included MUSC Dreamnight, Charleston Promise Neighborhood and Lowcountry Autism Foundation.

## CITIZEN SCIENCE



With the South Carolina Aquarium Citizen Science app, any South Carolina resident or visitor can contribute data to the study of local environmental issues like plastic pollution, sea level rise and invasive species. To date, more than 210K pieces of trash have been logged in the Litter-free Digital Journal, a project of the app.

## STRUCTURED SCHOOL PROGRAM



Through our free classroom and field trip program that reinforces South Carolina state science standards, 6,100 students and 140 teachers were educated and trained through experiential learning at the Aquarium.

## SEA TURTLE RELEASES



After undergoing rehabilitation at the Sea Turtle Care Center, 28 sea turtles were released, completing their journey home. During the year, we witnessed an increase in the number of sick and injured sea turtles admitted due to human impacts. These included plastic ingestion, boat strikes and fishing line entanglement.

## HIGH SCHOOL INTERN PROGRAM



This competitive, paid internship and training course provided hands-on professional experiences and environmental stewardship opportunities to 20 tri-county high school juniors who qualify for the free-and-reduced lunch program. We added a new component focusing on expanding STEM leadership skills for the top two interns from the previous year. These interns stayed on board and provided mentorship to the incoming class.

## MCNAIR CENTER FOR SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH



Our new research center has enabled staff to experiment with innovative rehabilitation techniques, including the use of an exercise tank to increase our sea turtle patients' muscular strength and resilience prior to their release.

## AQUARIUM ROVERS



We served 8,961 students with our traveling Aquarium Rovers outreach program, bringing interactive, hands-on learning opportunities throughout the entire state of South Carolina. This standards-based program includes engaging activities, wildlife artifacts and live animals.

## HOLLAND LIFELONG LEARNING



More than 500 adults attended events in the 2017-18 season of the Holland Lifelong Learning series, exploring issues in conversation, research and science with expert-led discussions geared towards adults in a relaxed social environment. Participants engaged in conversations about dolphins, oyster reef restoration, ocean conservation, connecting with nature and more.

# THANK YOU



Together, as a community, we have accomplished so much through the Watershed Campaign. We have brought new exhibits to life, expanded our education reach, established a Conservation department and became leaders in the care and rehabilitation of sea turtles.

We are entering into the final stage of the Watershed Campaign. Because of your generosity and belief in our work, we have accomplished nearly all we set out to do. The Watershed Campaign has secured more than \$20 million of our \$25 million campaign goal.

**OUR FUTURE IS BRIGHTER THAN EVER,  
AND YOU HAVE MADE THIS POSSIBLE.**

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Members of the Nautilus Society have pledged their support to the James L. Ferguson Permanent Endowment ensuring the South Carolina Aquarium will be a source of magic and wonder for generations. We are thankful to these individuals who have included the Aquarium in their estate plans.

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Richard\* and Karen Sherwood  
Tom Tate and Lori Fox

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Aardvark Straws  
The Boathouse at Breach Inlet  
Boxcar Bettys  
Charleston Magazine  
Charleston Mix  
Coastal Provisions  
Cooper River Brewing Company  
Diamonds Direct  
DICK's Sporting Goods  
Duvall Events  
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EventHaus Rentals  
Fleet Landing Restaurant  
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Hank's Seafood Restaurant  
Jim 'N Nick's Community Bar-B-Q  
Karson Photography  
Krispy Kreme  
Lilly Pulitzer  
Loggerhead Apparel  
Nature Adventure Outfitters  
OtherBrother Entertainment  
Papa John's Pizza  
Plants Alive  
Production Design Associates  
Ship's Wheel Hard Cider  
Snyder Rentals & Spike Bar Service  
Triangle Char + Bar  
Tristan Catering & Events  
Whole Foods Market  
The Windjammer  
Zoe's Kitchen

**HONOR GIFTS**

Jonathan Bedell, who volunteered on behalf of sea turtles  
Miss Wesley Bonnin  
Nigel Bowers  
Drs. Robert and Deborah Branner Gaddy  
Claudia Brown - Happy Birthday!  
Mary Brown  
Ms. Veronica Gray Burnett  
Veronica Gray Burnett. Our very, very deepest sympathies.  
Clara Campbell  
Isla Dawahare  
Brad Drawdy and family  
Timothy Dunn  
Dianna Eastman, S.C.U.T.E. volunteer  
Marcy Gaynes' Birthday  
Our Grandchildren  
Vicki Greene  
Jordan Grosh's 9th birthday, the lovely child of Katherine and Mark Grosh  
Zachary Handel  
"Happy 91st Birthday Aunt Helen Sue"  
Happy Birthday Robert! Love, Claudia and Jeff  
Bob Harris - Happy 72nd Birthday!  
Bob Harris - thank you for a great behind the scenes tour  
Billie Hazard  
Cathy Higgins. Wishing the sea turtles a very Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year!  
John A. Hill  
Mason and Mary Holland  
The Holloway family  
Logan and Margaux Hotze  
Carol Jackson  
Sunnie Jones  
Maddie and Cade Kyzer Megan and Braxton Chubb  
Our children Benjamin, Zoe, and Logan Landis  
Frederick Long  
Dr. and Mrs. Alan Marcus, Happy 14th Anniversary.  
Love, Dad and Mom  
Penelope, Lucia, and Ellie McClintock  
Tammy McGee  
Nana and Pop Pop  
John and Susan Neely Anniversary  
Susan Neely Milestone Birthday  
Dr. Gary Neiman, volunteer, on a special birthday  
Tom Proctor, volunteer  
Betsy Richardson  
Mr. and Mrs. John H. Scofield  
Sea Turtle Care Center™ Medical Team  
Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Shaffer's 40th Anniversary  
South Carolina Aquarium Staff  
Sue Tanner, S.C.U.T.E. volunteer  
Mr. and Mrs. David Topping  
Jake Tucker  
Jackie and Jason Wong

**MEMORIAL GIFTS**

Silverio Almeida  
Cherie Lee Anders  
"Big Jim"  
Dr. Martha Boger  
Jenatha Boose  
Veronica Gray Burnett

Sara Conley  
Cheryl Hardy  
Tyler Huttle  
Sonia "Sunnie" (Bovier) Jones  
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Sherry Fox  
Jay Hubbell  
Donald Jones  
Lois Jones  
Diane Lauritsen  
Hal Wynne

**2500-4999 HOURS:**

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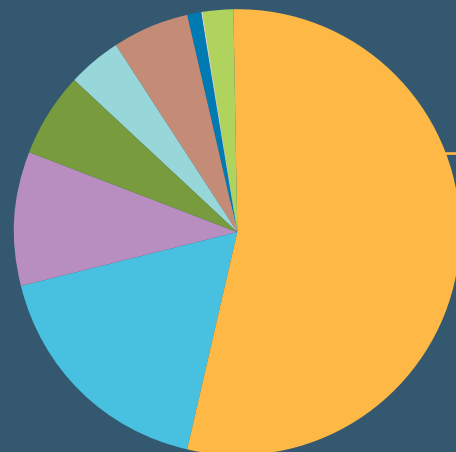
# OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

FOR THE NINE MONTH PERIOD OF APRIL 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2017

## REVENUE

Admissions	\$5,191,529
Contributions and Grants	\$1,663,812
Membership	\$949,807
Concessions	\$563,589
Facility Rentals	\$378,693
Fundraising Events	\$538,766
Program Revenue	\$117,620
Investment Income	\$696
Other Income	\$187,404

**Total Revenue** **\$9,591,916**



**54%**  
of this year's revenue was  
earned through admission.

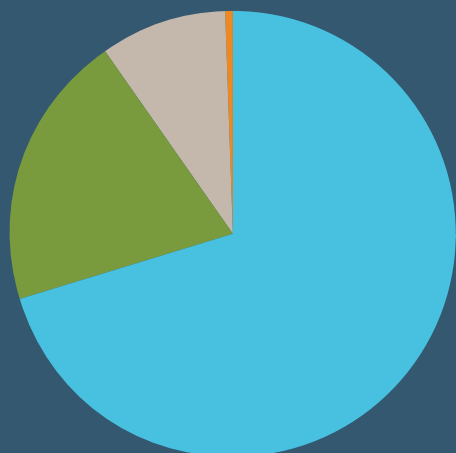
**\$1,663,812**

came from our generous donors through grants, corporate and individual gifts.

## EXPENSES

<b>Program Services</b>	
Husbandry	\$1,109,710
Facilities	\$1,031,000
Education	\$765,379
Conservation	\$471,131
External Affairs	\$1,164,751
Guest and Member	\$1,345,115
Total Program Services	\$5,887,086
Exec, Finance and Admin	\$1,671,360
Fundraising	\$773,306
Membership	\$31,230

**Total Expenses** **\$8,362,982**



**70%**  
of this year's expenses (\$5,887,086)  
were used toward program services  
that connect people with water,  
wildlife and wild places.

**\$765,379**

was used toward education  
program services.

Short fiscal year 2017 Audited Financials.

# OUR FUTURE

Situated on the Charleston Harbor, the South Carolina Aquarium enriches our community in a multitude of ways – as a learning laboratory for students of all ages, a platform for innovative research, a facilitator for scientific discourse and exploration and a space for reflection and calm in a turbulent world.

For the past several years, the Aquarium and the City of Charleston have collaborated to set in motion the realization of a long-pursued vision – the transformation of Aquarium Wharf into a gathering place for the entire community, a space for learning and civic life, shaped by the uninterrupted access to the staple resource that defines us – the water. We are leading the charge to not merely teach about the human connection to the water, but to make it happen. To bring people together and closer to the water.

As our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year approaches, we look to grow from a single facility to a campus, from a waterfront outpost to a civic complex where children from every part of our state will view the water with

excitement and intrigue. The new Aquarium campus will be a dynamic and engaging venue for community gathering and environmental discovery. It will be a place where all will be welcome, and all belong.

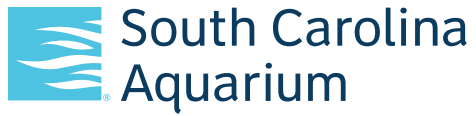
Our team is actively engaged in strategic planning to define our identity, and how we will serve our community by 2025. It is our priority to reinforce the foundations of our organization while emerging as a foremost distance learning provider for students across the globe. We are not merely planning to reach beyond our walls, but to turn walls into windows, and welcome every family and student into an immersive landscape that will leave them forever changed.

The South Carolina Aquarium will continue pioneering significant contributions in education, sea turtle rehabilitation, conservation and research. With your support, we will embrace a heightened vision to serve, connect and inspire the community. We are honored to count you a partner in this journey.

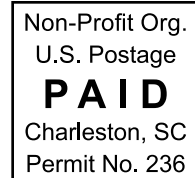
## INVEST IN THIS WATERSHED MOMENT.

To find out how to make an individual, planned, corporate or foundation gift, call our Advancement Office at (843) 579-8628 or visit [scaquarium.org/give](http://scaquarium.org/give).





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