



Coastal America Press Release



National Ocean Art Contest Winners Announced Smithsonian Ocean Hall Video Stories to Reach Audiences in Wide Network of Aquariums

(Both Programs Support Seven Key Principles of Ocean Literacy and Smithsonian's Sant Ocean Hall)

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(Washington, D.C., Sept. 26, 2008) – Coastal America and its partners recognized 20 students, from kindergarten through college, as winners in a national ocean art contest to illustrate science principles essential to ocean literacy. Earlier in the morning, the students were invited guests of the President of the United States for his tour and remarks at the Smithsonian Sant Ocean Hall. The winning artwork will be displayed from December through March in Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). More than 2000 students created art and wrote accompanying essays addressing a key ocean literacy principle.

At a media availability today, Coastal America also demonstrated the interactive Ocean Today Kiosks that are now installed at five of the Network's aquariums, and will be installed at all 21 aquariums of the Network through the significant commitment by a new Coastal America corporate partner, the Panasonic Corporation. The official opening of the kiosks is September 27th, 2008, in coordination with the Sant Ocean Hall, Ocean Today Kiosk opening. Each kiosk has a national feed of ocean news and video features from NOAA also available to visitors to Sant Ocean Hall, as well as key regional stories from each aquarium. Plans are now underway to expand the kiosk to all Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers and their 25 million visitors.

The art contest was sponsored by Coastal America and its network of 22 leading aquaria and learning centers, the Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers Network. The Network has a combined yearly visitorship of over 25 million. Coastal America and the aquariums worked closely with their Federal and corporate partners on the contest. The aquariums also reached out to schools systems throughout their local communities.

The 20 national winning student artwork entries, from the five age groups competing, were chosen from over 2000 entries submitted. The artwork and accompanying essay addressing a key ocean literacy principle was first considered by 16 aquariums' regional judging panels, and these winners were then judged by a national panel that included leading representatives from the sciences, arts, and the Smithsonian. The winners were selected based on their works' creativity, artistry and skill at raising awareness of critical principles linked to the health of the world's ocean.

"The health of our ocean is crucial to our future. The ocean covers more than 70 percent of the Earth, and we rely on it for food, commerce, and the critical role it plays in the Earth's hydrologic cycles and atmospheric processes," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., NOAA Administrator, Coastal America Principal, and honorary chair of the national judging panel.

“It’s a very hopeful sign for the nation that so many young people came together to dramatically and powerfully evoke the key ocean literacy principles essential to preserving and protecting our ocean.”

“Congratulations to all the students who participated in the art contest. We hope this is the start of a lifelong journey on behalf of the ocean,” said Virginia Tippie, director of Coastal America. “Their art sends an impassioned message to act to protect our ocean and coastal systems.”

Dr. Sylvia Earle, Oceanographer and “Ocean Ambassador,” National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence, and a member of the national judging panel, said, “It’s tremendously important for us to engage the imagination of our citizens in understanding and fighting to protect our ocean and environment. As an oceanographer and explorer, I thank the aquariums and Coastal America for encouraging so many young people to become passionate about our ocean.”

Michael Lawrence, chief of exhibit design at Smithsonian NMNH, and national judge, expressed his appreciation for the success of the contest: “The contest is a wonderful way to help celebrate the opening of the Sant Ocean Hall. I was very pleased to help judge the contest and greatly look forward to Smithsonian exhibiting these works of art. I have no doubt our visitors will enjoy and be inspired by the variety and creativity in the images.”

Ocean Today Kiosk Network Wide Deployment

Ted A. Beattie, President/CEO, John G. Shedd Aquarium, stated that: "These kiosk stations will give our first five participating organizations a vital new tool for reaching their combined annual visitorship of over five million people, and impassioning them to learn about our world's ocean." Jerry Schubel, President and CEO of the Aquarium of the Pacific (AOP), and Chair of the Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel, was pleased to be able to announce that the Panasonic Corporation has committed to provide the hardware and additional resources needed to roll out the kiosks across the entire Network and its 20 additional centers in the United States and Mexico, as well as installing a kiosk at the Osaka Aquarium in Japan.

“We greatly appreciate the significant contribution of the Panasonic Corporation that will help our Network deliver fully coordinated, critical ocean literacy information in a truly entertaining and interactive manner to the more than 25 million people who visit our institutions each year,” said Mr. Schubel. “We look forward to building a long-tem relationship with a company that has demonstrated leadership in green initiatives to reduce the environmental footprint of its products and its facilities, and is a leader in consumer electronics and in advancing new technologies.”

“We are also very appreciative of our corporate partners’, the CWRP’s, ongoing support and contribution to the success of the Ocean Art Contest,” said Jerry Enzler, Executive Director of the National Mississippi River and Aquarium. Pat Hester, of Spectra Energy Corp and chair of the CWRP, said, "We are strongly committed to working closely with the aquarium Network and supporting vital education initiatives as we all work to protect, preserve and restore our nation's essential ecosystems."

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(See Notes to Media following for location of 12:00 p.m., September 26th, 2008 media availability, number for operator hosted conference line, and additional information on artists and Partnership.)