

**NATIONAL AQUARIUM AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OUTDOOR
ACTIVITY AND COLLEGE TUITION TO 100 BALTIMORE CITY STUDENTS**

Program targets students from Title-1 schools to expand interest in science and environmental studies

Baltimore (June 30, 2009) –The National Aquarium, Baltimore has awarded 95 Baltimore City students with fully-funded summer aquatic learning opportunities, and provided another 5 students with college scholarships to assist their science-related studies. These experiential learning opportunities and education dollars are awarded through the Henry Hall Program.

The Henry Hall Program helps students expand their interest in science and environmental studies by awarding Baltimore City middle and high school students with free tuition to a variety of day and overnight summer camps and excursions. Ninety-five students were selected this year to participate in experiences such as kayak excursions on the Chesapeake Bay, behind the scenes study of “aquaculture” at the Aquarium, shark tagging trips; and overnight trips that explore the eastern shore habitats, study the life of sea turtles, or discover the diversity of Maine’s southern coast. The 2009 programs will begin July 6, 2009.

The Henry Hall Program awards a onetime \$1,000 college scholarship which can be applied to studies in engineering, biology, environmental science and aquatic science. Five recipients were named this year, and will be attending St Mary’s College, University of Baltimore, Morgan State University, Morehouse College and Baltimore County Community College in the fall.

Each spring Baltimore City Public School students who will be entering grades 6 through 12 the following school year are invited to apply for the awards. The program targets students from Title-1 schools- those who qualify for free or reduced lunch programs. In most cases, children who receive the awards could not otherwise participate in these activities and they have few opportunities to discover and respect the outdoors.

Studies show that when kids spend time outside and learning about nature, it helps them raise achievement in other subjects, reduces the dropout rate and has important health benefits. Yet the amount of time children now spend outdoors has declined 50 percent in the past 20 years.

“At the National Aquarium, we see children transformed by experiencing nature. Getting outdoors and doing activities like these piques curiosity and creates lasting enthusiasm for this world these children will inherit,” said Dave Pittenger, executive director of the National Aquarium. “We know that hands-on outdoor education works, and we see our kids coming back each year wanting to learn more.”

In 1982, The National Aquarium, Baltimore established the Henry Hall Endowment Fund to fund programs that introduce Baltimore City students to the ocean world. Since that time, the Henry Hall program has become one of the Aquarium’s longest-standing enrichment programs, and since its inception it has awarded more than \$400,000 in scholarships to Baltimore City youngsters as of 2008.

Henry Hall (1896-1979) was an engineer, world traveler, teacher, aquarist, inventor, and philanthropist. An African American, he served as a mentor and teacher to Baltimore Black engineers when there were few opportunities in the field. Hall traveled around the world observing and collecting aquatic animals. In 1977, he donated his entire collection to the future National Aquarium, which opened in 1981. His community involvement and belief in learning helped shape not only the National Aquarium's collection, but its relationship to the city and its students.

The National Aquarium, a non-profit organization, is Maryland's most exciting and popular cultural attraction, as well as one of the region's leading conservation and education resources. For close to three decades, it has been a symbol of urban renewal, an economic anchor for the region and a source of pride for Marylanders. It has enjoyed strong, reliable attendance since opening on August 8, 1981. With original attendance projections of 650,000 visitors per year, the National Aquarium has welcomed an average annual attendance of 1.5 million over the past 10 years. Through transforming experiences, the National Aquarium inspires people to enjoy, respect, and protect the aquatic world. It is dedicated to education and conservation through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.

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