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Pt. Defiance Zoo to celebrate new Pacific Sea Aquarium in April

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TACOMA, Wash. – Sea turtles. Art-making. Scientists. Ocean talks. Stories, filmmakers, musical sculpture. And a community-made “Turtle Wave” that raises money for ocean conservation.

For the entire month of April, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium will celebrate its new Pacific Seas Aquarium, home to green sea turtles, hammerhead sharks, eagle rays and hundreds of other sea creatures. And the zoo is inviting the whole community to join in.

The Pacific Seas Aquarium Community Celebration isn’t just an event. It’s 30 days jam-packed with events, both inside the aquarium and outside in the community. All events at the zoo are free with zoo admission or membership. Events in the community are free.

“We’re excited to showcase our exciting new aquarium, as well as the work our community does to protect the ocean,” said Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners President Aaron Pointer. “This month-long celebration is a wonderful way to thank the voters of Tacoma who made this amazing experience possible.”

And, of course, the star of the celebration is the 35,000-square-foot Pacific Seas Aquarium itself, home to hundreds of awe-inspiring sea creatures: massive green sea turtles, swooping eagle rays, darting tropical fish, scalloped hammerhead sharks, a giant Pacific octopus and giant Japanese spider crabs. Dozens of new animals have been added since the aquarium officially opened last September.

Among the already-scheduled events during April (with more to come) are:

Dives and Feeds on Mondays and Wednesdays. Guests can watch our aquarists dive inside the 100,000-gallon Northwest Waters exhibit and the 280,000-gallon Baja Bay, as they care for animals and do some cleaning.

Ocean Voices speaker series on Tuesdays. Hear local and global scientists and ocean experts speak about crucial issues confronting our ocean. Ocean Voices venues, all in downtown Tacoma, include Alma Mater, The Grand Cinema and University of Washington, Tacoma.



Storytelling Thursdays. Zoo guests can gather at the Baja Bay exhibit to hear Tacoma children's author Ben Clanton; participate in two Critter Club animal story times; and enjoy a Spanish language story time hosted by students from the Tacoma Science and Math Institute

Art Fridays. Meet and hear from our three Pacific Seas Aquarium public artists Kait Rhoads, Gordon Huether and Maria Jost, plus participate in hands-on art projects, listen to talks about our jellyfish and more.

Weekend Wonders. The exciting lineup includes Vashon Island musical sculpture-performance duo Lelavision, Portland filmmakers Sisbro Studios and the City Nature Challenge.

Ocean-themed community events. There will be a Sea Stories night at the Slater Museum and a Gordon Huether Art+Sci Salon at the University of Puget Sound.

"Turtle Wave." Zoo guests and community members won't want to miss the opportunity to participate in a city-wide Metro Parks Tacoma community art project, culminating art-making and installation at the Zoo. "Turtle Wave" will become a floating sculpture of origami turtles that raises money for ocean conservation.

“We were very proud of the aquarium when it opened on Sept. 7,” said Alan Varsik, director of Zoological and Environmental Education for Metro Parks Tacoma. “And we are even more proud today. Over the last several months, our staff has worked hard to include even more animals, and we are more adept at telling the stories of the inspiring sea creatures inside. It’s time to celebrate, and we invite the community to come and join us.”

The 35,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art Pacific Seas Aquarium was funded largely through bonds approved by Tacoma voters in 2014. Additional monies for construction were provided by The Zoo Society through corporate and individual donors, and grants.

It is the largest capital project in the zoo’s 114-year history.

For more information, go to www.pdza.org/aquarium-celebration.



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