

National Aquarium, Baltimore MD

“Watershed Moments”

Running time: 9:12

OUR AQUARIUM OPENED IN 1981, AND WE WERE REALLY TRYING TO MOVE FROM BASIC BIOLOGY TO INCLUDING CONSERVATION MESSAGES. AND AS WE'VE MOVED THROUGH THE YEARS, WE'VE REALIZED THAT THOSE CONSERVATION MESSAGES HAVE TO BE ONES THAT AREN'T NECESSARILY DEPRESSING, BECAUSE YOU CAN TELL PEOPLE HOW MUCH-- YOU KNOW, HOW MANY SPECIES ARE DISAPPEARING OR HOW MANY ACRES OF RAIN FOREST ARE DISAPPEARING. AND ALL THAT WILL LEAVE THEM WITH IS A GLOOM AND DOOM FEEL. SO WE'VE NOW MOVED INTO THE EMPOWERMENT AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE THAT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

WELL, THE GOOD NEWS IS, THERE'S PLENTY YOU CAN DO, AND YOU'RE PROBABLY DOING SOME OF IT ALREADY. HOW MANY OF YOU RECYCLE?

YOU'RE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT, WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC THINGS WE CAN ASK PEOPLE TO DO? YOU WANT THEM TO BE THINGS THAT THEY FEEL CAPABLE OF AND THINGS WHERE THEY CAN SEE A DIFFERENCE. FOR YEARS, WE'VE BEEN TELLING KIDS, IF YOU WANT TO SAVE THE RAIN FOREST, RECYCLE ALUMINUM CANS. WELL, FINE, THEY'RE RECYCLING, AND THEN THEY LOOK AT THE NEWS AND GO, "WELL, THE RAIN FOREST IS STILL DISAPPEARING," SO YOU'VE LOST YOUR CREDIBILITY. THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED, THAT'S THE AREA WE REALLY WANT TO HAVE AN IMPACT ON.

WATERSHED IS A NEW TERM FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE. THEY DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS. SO IT'S OUR CHANCE TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION BETWEEN WHERE THEY LIVE, WHAT THEY DO IN THEIR OWN BACKYARDS, AND THE WATER THAT IS-- SURROUNDS EVERYBODY HERE IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY.

WE KNEW WE HAD AN END IN MIND, WHICH WAS, HOW CAN WE IMPACT PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOR, CONSERVATION BEHAVIOR? BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE A METHODOLOGY IN MIND, AND THAT WAS WHAT WAS, I THINK, THE INTERESTING REQUEST TO IMLS WAS, WE SAID, "TRUST US ON THIS JOURNEY." OUR AUDITORIUM WAS AN UNDERUTILIZED RESOURCE, BUT WE DIDN'T KNOW IF WE WANTED TO DO A MEDIA PIECE OR A THEATER PIECE, PUPPETRY, KABUKI THEATER, I DON'T KNOW. WE WEREN'T QUITE SURE.

LURKING IN THE MURKY WATER IS THE PREHISTORIC STURGEON.

AND WE DID SOME FORMATIVE EVALUATION WITH VISITORS AS WE WERE GOING THROUGH THIS TO SEE, HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR? WE KNOW WE CAN DO PROGRAMS. WE KNOW WE CAN MAKE

PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, BE ENTERTAINED AND ENGAGED, BUT HOW DO WE HAVE A LONGER TERM IMPACT? THAT WAS OUR BIG QUESTION.

WE ASKED OUR VISITORS-- THERE WERE EIGHT DIFFERENT CHOICES-- TO KIND OF SELECT THE ONES THAT THEY CURRENTLY DO AND SET THEM ASIDE. SO MANY PEOPLE DID "RECYCLE YOUR TRASH," "THROW LITTER IN THE TRASH CAN," OR, "PICK UP TRASH THAT YOU FIND." AND WE SAID, "OKAY, THOSE ARE THE THINGS YOU DO NOW. JUST SET THEM TO THE SIDE." AND THAT LEFT YOU A COUPLE MORE OPTIONS, AND WE ASKED THEM TO LOOK AT THOSE OPTIONS AND KIND OF PUT THEM IN ORDER OF THE NEXT ACTIONS THAT THEY COULD TAKE TO HELP THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED.

TAKE A MOMENT. TURN TO THE PEOPLE NEXT TO YOU, BEHIND YOU, IN FRONT OF YOU, AND SAY HELLO TO YOUR WATERSHED NEIGHBORS. EVERYONE WHO WAS INVOLVED WITH THIS PROGRAM PUT THEIR HEART AND SOUL INTO THE PRODUCTION. WHOO! I AM JUST CRAZY ABOUT STURGEON. I THINK I AM THEIR NUMBER ONE FAN. IT'S DEFINITELY MORE THEATRICAL. IT TAKES A LOT OF ENERGY TO GET THE PROGRAM TO WHERE IT NEEDS TO BE.

OUT OF THE WATER ONTO THE DECKS OF BOATS.

MY FAVORITE PART WAS STEWIE THE STURGEON. AND I'LL TELL YOU WHY. WE HAVE AN EXHIBIT HERE THAT'S CALLED "TO SURVIVE AN EXHIBIT." I LIKE LOOKING AT THE STURGEONS BECAUSE THEY REMIND ME OF PREHISTORIC FISHES YEARS AGO. SO WHEN STEWIE CAME HERE, I WAS LIKE, "OH, BOY." THAT WAS A CONNECTION THERE.

WE ARE ALL GOING TO BE RECITING A WATERSHED PLEDGE ON BEHALF OF STEWIE THE STURGEON.

"WATERSHED MOMENTS" ACTUALLY HAS A PART IN IT NEAR THE END WHERE WE ASK THEM TO DO A SPECIFIC ACTIVITY SO THAT THEY ARE MORE INCLINED TO GO BACK AND CHANGE HOW THEY HANDLE THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES.

I CAN PICK UP TRASH. all: I CAN PICK UP TRASH.

I CAN PLANT TREES. all: I CAN PLANT TREES.

WE CAN ALL DO SOMETHING... all: WE CAN ALL DO SOMETHING...

TO PROTECT THE WATERSHED. all: TO PROTECT THE WATERSHED.

THIS WAS AN EXCELLENT AUDIENCE. THEY WERE VERY ENTHUSIASTIC TO BE THERE, ROWDY BUT NOT TOO ROWDY, AND THEY DEFINITELY GOT THE POINT OF THE PROGRAM. AND SO NOW YOU'RE PROBABLY ASKING YOURSELF, "SELF, WHAT CAN I DO?" RIGHT? RIGHT? all: RIGHT!

I THOUGHT SO.

I NEVER WAS AWARE OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED. I WASN'T AWARE WHAT SOME OF THE THINGS THAT I WAS DOING WAS AFFECTING THE BAY. FERTILIZING MY LAWN, I NEVER THOUGHT, "HEY, THAT'S GONNA WASH DOWN IN THE BAY." AS I GRADUALLY GOT INVOLVED WITH THE WATERSHED, I SAID, "HEY, SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE. I SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS."

THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE THAT WE FOCUSED ON WERE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, BECAUSE WE ALSO KNOW IN SOME STUDIES THAT KIDS IN THAT AGE LEVEL ARE THE DRIVERS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION IN THE FAMILY. THERE'S NOTHING MORE HEARTBREAKING THAN HAVING A SMALL CHILD LOOK AT THEIR PARENTS AND GO, "WHY AREN'T WE RECYCLING?" [cheers and applause] THE PROGRAM THEN MORPHED INTO A SCHOOL GROUP PROGRAM, AND THEN THE OPPORTUNITY CAME UP TO CONVERT THE THEATER TO A 4-D THEATER WHICH IS A REVENUE GENERATOR. AND IT DOESN'T JUST GENERATE REVENUE. IT GENERATES A LOT.

WHEN THEY COME IN, THEY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE DOLPHIN SHOW. WHERE'S THE 4-D? WHERE'S A PLACE TO EAT AT? AND WHEN YOU TRY TO TAKE THEM OFF THAT PATH, SOMETIMES IT GETS A LITTLE DIFFICULT.

SO AT FIRST, WE WERE GONNA KEEP "WATERSHED MOMENTS" IN THERE AT THE SAME TIME SO YOU HAD YOUR CHOICE OF GOING TO ONE OF THOSE 4-D SPECIAL EFFECT PROGRAMS, OR WE WOULD STILL HAVE "WATERSHED MOMENTS." AND IT JUST BECAME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT IT WASN'T GOING TO SURVIVE IN THAT FORMAT. WE HAD TO TAKE A STEP BACK AND THEN LOOK AT HOW WE WERE GONNA DO THIS IN SOME OTHER WAYS.

AND ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH HOW MANY STATES ARE INCORPORATED IN THE WATERSHED?

UH, THREE?

THREE--LOOK, I'LL GIVE YOU A HINT BACK HERE.

OH, WAIT.

[chuckles] WE'VE GOT SIX--YEAH, SIX. STARTS ALL THE WAY UP IN COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK.

WOW.

SO EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T PUT OUR TOES ALL THE WAY IN THE BAY MOST DAYS, EVEN WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR BACKYARD AFFECTS WHAT HAPPENS IN

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY. SO WE'RE ALL PART OF THE LARGER WATERSHED. IF IT RAINS ALL THE WAY FROM NEW YORK OR PENNSYLVANIA AND WEST VIRGINIA, IT ALL ENDS UP OUT HERE IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY. WELL, THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING AND PUTTING YOUR MARK ON THE MAP.

AS WE PREPARED OUR CURRENT DOLPHIN SHOW, WE ADDED IN A SECONDARY NARRATOR.

WE MUST ALL HELP TO PROTECT THE WATERS WHERE DOLPHINS AND OTHER CREATURES LIVE.

AND THE CONSERVATION MESSAGE IS, YOU MAY BE ASKING, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP? WELL, HERE ARE A FEW THINGS, AND THEY'RE TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM "WATERSHED MOMENTS."

HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS, AND YOU'RE PROBABLY DOING SOME OF THESE ALREADY. FIRST, DISPOSE OF YOUR TRASH PROPERLY SO IT DOESN'T GET INTO THOSE WATERWAYS WHICH LEAD INTO THE OCEANS. I'M VERY HAPPY TO HEAR THAT THEY ARE CONCERNED. LIKE, "OH, YOU HAVE THESE MAGNIFICENT ANIMALS, BUT HOW CAN WE HELP SAVE THEIR COUNTERPARTS OUT IN THE OCEAN?" SO THEY ACTUALLY COME UP TO US SAYING, "WELL, WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO?" PLANT NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS BECAUSE THEY USE LESS FERTILIZER. TOO MUCH FERTILIZER CAN RUN OFF INTO WATERWAYS.

WE'VE ALSO USED THAT TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCE JOURNEY IN A LOT OF OTHER PROJECTS.

AND THIS ONE HERE IS TALKING ABOUT SEA LEVEL RISE, AND ALL THE PLACES IN RED IN THE NEXT 100 YEARS ARE GONNA BE THREE FEET OVER WITH WATER. SO ALL THE RED SPOTS ARE GONNA BE UNDERWATER. YOU CAN SEE FLORIDA'S COMPLETELY FLOODED OUT.

OUCH.

AND DOWN IN MEXICO IS, SO...

HOW MANY YEARS IS THAT?

ABOUT 100.

OKAY.

THE SEA LEVEL RISE WILL RISE ABOUT THREE FEET.

WOW.

WE PAIR THIS WITH THE ECO HOUSE A LOT, BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT, HERE'S A BIG GLOBAL THING WHICH CAN BE A LITTLE PARALYZING, AND THEN YOU LOOK AT THE SUCCESS WE HAVE WITH THE ECO HOUSE AND PEOPLE GOING, "WELL, I COULD DO THAT. I COULD DO THAT. I COULD DO THAT." WELL, THOSE THINGS ALL CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE BIGGER PICTURE. DO YOU GROW VEGETABLES OR ANYTHING IN THE BACKYARD?

A FEW TOMATOES.

SO YOU CAN HARVEST YOUR OWN VEGETABLES. THAT HELPS THE ENVIRONMENT. DO YOU HAVE A RAIN BARREL TO CATCH--

WE HAVE SEVEN.

YOU HAVE SEVEN RAIN BARRELS?

YES.

EXCELLENT. HIGH FIVE. I'M SURE YOU'RE RECYCLING.

YES.

YES.

AND THEN A SKYLIGHT AND SOLAR PANELS.

I'VE BEEN LOBBYING FOR A SKYLIGHT.

WE HAVE 1.4 MILLION, 1.6 MILLION VISITORS COME THROUGH JUST OUR FACILITY EVERY YEAR, AND THEY RANGE FROM PEOPLE THAT JUST WANT TO SEE A SHARK OR JUST WANT TO SEE A DOLPHIN TO THOSE THAT ARE REALLY, REALLY INTERESTED IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. THEY'RE INTERESTED IN SPECIFIC SPECIES AND HOW THEY'RE DOING IN THE WILD. WE WANT TO MOVE EVERYBODY TOWARDS THOSE THAT ARE REALLY INVESTED IN CONSERVATION KNOWING THAT EVERYBODY HAS TO JUST TAKE THAT ONE NEXT STEP. SO WE'RE HERE TO HELP THEM TAKE THAT ONE NEXT STEP.

AND DID I MENTION THAT I LOVE STURGEON?

THE ORIGINAL "WATERSHED MOMENTS" PRODUCT THAT WE DEVELOPED HAS CHANGED. SO WHAT WE'VE DONE IS, WE HAVE TAKEN LESSONS LEARNED, AND THAT'S OUR SUSTAINABILITY FOR IT. WE ARE APPLYING IT IN DIFFERENT FORMATS BECAUSE IT STILL IS ABOUT THAT BEHAVIOR CHANGE. IT'S NOT ABOUT, DID WE GET THIS AUDIENCE IN HERE? DID WE, YOU KNOW, RUN THE PROGRAM THREE TIMES A DAY? THAT SHOULDN'T BE THE SUSTAINABILITY MEASURE FOR US. WE WERE GOING FOR SOMETHING BIGGER.