



CHANGE THE LIFE OF A TEENAGER

Donate to the Ocean for Life program where students have amazing experiences that challenge them to think about ocean conservation and their world in a global way.

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Allison Alexander, Vice President
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 501, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Phone (301) 608-3040 ext. 3 | Email allison@nmsfocean.org | www.NMSFocean.org

The Ocean for Life program is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, The GLOBE Program and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation in collaboration with Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society and American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking



Ocean for Life 2013 Evaluation Summary

One Ocean Connects Us All



Understanding the ocean and how we are all interconnected promotes closer, stronger relationships.



National marine sanctuaries are living classrooms that help students bridge cultural divides.



Problems facing the ocean today cross national boundaries and require global solutions.



Ocean for Life 2013

On September 11, 2001, three sixth-grade students, their teachers and two National Geographic staff boarded a flight in Washington, D.C., bound for a week of exploration and discovery in Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. They never reached California. American Airlines flight 77 was hijacked and hit the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. In honor of the three young students and all of the lives lost on that significant day in our nation's history, an inspiring program emerged that promotes cultural understanding and acceptance in the context that we are one world connected by one ocean.

This program — Ocean for Life — brings together Middle Eastern and North American high school students of diverse cultures and backgrounds to study ocean science, breaking down stereotypes and strengthening our global relationships. During summer 2013, 15 high school students from the Near East and North Africa region joined 15 students from the United States to participate in this international ocean science and cultural exchange program. The program is sculpted around three main themes: 1) sense of place, 2) interconnectedness, and 3) ocean conservation and stewardship. These students use America's national marine sanctuaries as living classrooms, where they discover how one ocean connects us all and how, by connecting to the ocean, we enrich our lives together.

The 2013 Ocean for Life students gained a sense of place by learning about the temperate Pacific Ocean off the coast of California, the kelp forest ecosystem and the marine life found within our local waters. Students participated in several stewardship activities, such as beach cleanups and sand crab monitoring. The Ocean for Life students acted as ambassadors and mentored local elementary and middle school students about the issues of plastic pollution and marine debris. At the end of the field study, each student developed an Ocean for Life Action Plan highlighting how they plan to enhance cultural understanding and increase ocean conservation and stewardship at their schools and in their local communities.

A total of 115 students from 17 countries in the Greater Middle East, Europe, Australia, Canada and locations throughout the United States are now Ocean for Life alumni and considered ambassadors of change. By sharing their experiences with others around the globe, these students are laying the foundation for a safer, more tolerant society and a healthy, more sustainable world.

Since Ocean for Life began in 2009, NOAA has conducted formative and summative evaluations of the Ocean for Life program with periodic follow-up of alumni. These evaluations have determined that this unique international ocean science and cultural exchange program has lasting effects on the student participants, their classmates, schools and local communities in terms of enhanced cultural understanding and increased ocean awareness, conservation and stewardship.

Throughout the Ocean for Life experience, students' stereotypes, attitudes and misconceptions of different cultures and backgrounds vanish before our eyes. The positive impact of Ocean for Life can be seen in the lasting commitment of its alumni to be a force for change in each of their communities.

Prestigious “Sea to Shining Sea” Award Given to Ocean for Life Team

In November 2013, the team that planned and executed the 2013 Ocean for Life program was recognized with the prestigious “Sea to Shining Sea” Award for Excellence in Interpretation and Education. The Ocean for Life team was led by Claire Fackler and Tracy Hajduk with support from Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary staff. The team, also including Rocio Lozano-Knowlton, Laura Francis, Julie Bursek and Michael Murray, demonstrated success in enhancing ocean and climate literacy and conservation through national marine sanctuaries, positively influencing changes in attitudes and behavior, demonstrating innovation and creating solutions for successfully enhancing the public's understanding of the National Marine Sanctuary System and the resources it protects.

The Ocean for Life team has worked tirelessly since 2008 to create this long-standing, multi-year program, where participants become leaders armed with the tools to make change, inspire others, and improve the environmental and cultural understanding at their schools and in their home communities.



Beautiful whale tail sculptures and certificates were presented to Claire Fackler and Julie Bursek who represented the 2013 Ocean for Life Team. Also pictured, Jennifer Stock, receiving the individual award. Photo: Kate Thompson, NOAA

Long-term evaluation has found that Ocean for Life has a profound impact on the participants, and these students use what they learned during the program to orchestrate ocean conservation and stewardship activities like beach cleanups, habitat restoration work, recycling efforts and more. Alumni have talked to their families and friends, secured grants for school conservation projects, and even begun working with their local or regional governments on environmental issues. Through participation in the program, each student has a better understanding of their personal impact on the

environment, how to promote ocean conservation and stewardship, as well as enhance cultural tolerance and understanding in their communities around the world.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' “Sea to Shining Sea Award” was presented in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service's “Gifford Pinchot Award,” the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's “Sense of Wonder Award,” the National Park Service's “Freeman Tilden Award,” the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' “Hiram M. Chittenden Award,” and National Association for Interpretation's “Master Front-Line Interpreter” and “Master Interpretive Manager” awards. Some of these awards have been given for more than 30 years. It is fitting for national marine sanctuaries to be at the forefront for interpretation and education alongside some of the country's best interpreters.

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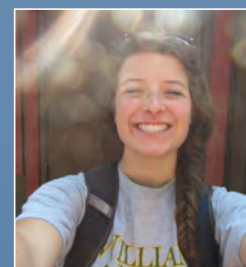
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The Ocean for Life program would not be possible without the continued support of many individuals, corporations and other donors.



Initial Thoughts from Ocean for Life 2013 Alumni



Beth Scrutton, California · United States

I wouldn't change this experience for the world.

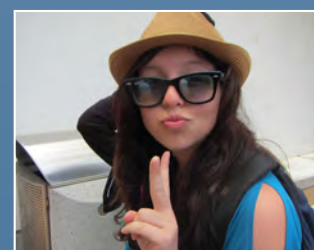


Fiona McRaith, Illinois · United States

Thank you all so so very much for organizing all of this. It was honestly life-changing, and I hope to not only stay in touch with all of the students, but also with you (the staff).

Nakoa Farrant, Hawai'i · United States

Ocean for Life provides young adults with a strong foundation of cultural understanding that could help to solve international problems, especially those pertaining to the ocean, which is why this program is so valuable.



Viridiana Rocha Dannenberg, California · United States

The Chumash Village [was my favorite part], because there I felt connected to the culture of the people in a way I hadn't before. Even being on the island made me feel connected to the people, the ocean and the Earth more.



Victor M. Cabrera, Florida · United States

Thank you all for providing me with this unforgettable experience. I learned, lived and loved. I feel like the connections I made will last me a lifetime.

Ayyad El Masri, Lebanon

[My favorite part was] being able to bond with people from around the world and introducing [my] culture to them.



MennaTallah Elboraey, Egypt

It was great to know about other culture[s], language[s], and traditons other than my own.

Lola Boone, New York · United States

[My favorite part was] making new friends because I feel like I'll be connected with these people forever.



Increasing Cultural Understanding

Following the Ocean for Life field study, 93.3% of students said they believe their perceptions about other cultures were changed as a result of the program. 96.7% gained a better understanding of different countries and cultures as a result of the Ocean for Life program.



Ocean for Life students share with each other a piece of their country and culture during a Community Circle activity. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA



Students immerse in one of America's underwater treasures. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA

Cultivating Ocean Advocates

Following Ocean for Life, 93.4% of the students stated that the program made them feel like they are an advocate for ocean conservation and stewardship, and 96.7% gained enhanced knowledge of this topic. Prior to the field study, a mere 16.7% of students strongly agreed that they have the knowledge to teach their friends, family and community about issues facing the ocean, as compared to 80.0% after participating in the Ocean for Life program.

Pursuing Studies and Careers in STEM

There was a 40.0% increase in participants stating they “strongly agree” they have plans to pursue studies or a career related to ocean or environmental science as a result of the Ocean for Life program. There was a 16.6% increase in students indicating their plans to pursue environmental studies (environmental law, policy, computation, ethics, etc.). There was also a 13.4% and 20.0% increase in cultural/international studies and media (photo and/or video) work, respectively.



Science and technology activities take place throughout the entire Ocean for Life field study to encourage engagement in STEM. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA



New Friends: Chumash native, Carmen of California and Ali of Qatar. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA

One Ocean Connects Us All

Prior to the field study, only 46.7% of students strongly agreed that choices made by their household can help improve the health of the ocean, but afterwards 76.7% strongly identified with this statement. Prior to participation in the Ocean for Life program, 36.7% of students stated they are aware of how their everyday decisions impact the ocean, and following the program that number increased to 80.0%.

Enhancing Ocean Literacy

The students’ knowledge about watersheds was limited prior to becoming Ocean for Life alumni. Only 6.7% strongly agreed that they knew how to reduce their impact on watersheds and the ocean before the field study, jumping up to 66.7% after the field study. There was a 26.7% increase of students strongly agreeing with the statement, “No matter where I live, my actions impact the ocean.” 96.5% of the students have a better understanding that their local actions impact the ocean no matter where they live.



Victor of Florida learns more about the Pacific Ocean. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA

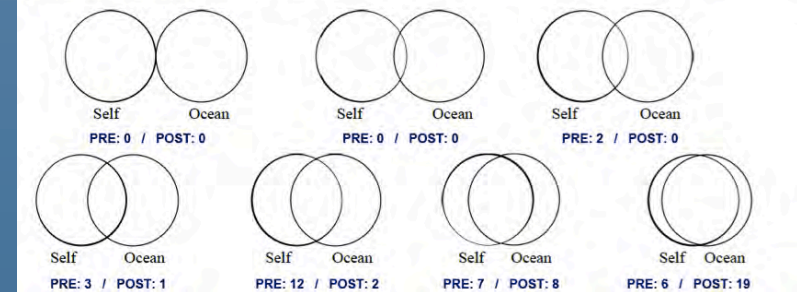


For many students this was the first time they had experienced the ocean in a recreational way. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA

Relationship to the Ocean

Twenty of the 30 students demonstrated they think their relationship with the ocean is closer after having participated in the 2013 Ocean for Life field study (see Q56 below). In the pre-field study evaluation, only six students identified near overlap with the ocean and after Ocean for Life the number was up to 19 students.

Q56: Think about your relationship with the ocean following the Ocean for Life program and circle one of the pictures below that best shows your relationship.



Intention to Act

Ocean for Life students clearly documented their intentions to increase their environmental stewardship. Prior to the Ocean for Life program, only eight students indicated that they always ask their family to recycle some of the things they use, but after the field study, 17 participants have plans to always ask their families to do this. There was also a 30.0% increase in students indicating they plan to always participate in water sports, such as snorkeling, scuba diving, kayaking and surfing, following the Ocean for Life program. There was also a 33.3% increase in students planning to participate in coastal or watershed stewardship activities (e.g., planting marsh areas, beach cleanups). There was a 16.7% increase in students always intending to avoid using single-use disposable plastics and a 23.3% increase in the likelihood that they will always pick up trash when they go to the beach or a park.



Stewardship activities like sand crab monitoring engage students in making change. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA