

NEWS RELEASE

717 General Booth Blvd. Virginia Beach, VA 23451



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Joan Barns | 757.385-0252 | jmbarns@VirginiaAquarium.com

June 2, 2011

“SEALver” Celebration Marks Virginia Aquarium’s 25th year

(Virginia Beach, VA) What do the Virginia Aquarium and its oldest harbor seal, Peter, have in common? They both are turning 25 years old! To mark the occasion, a “SEALver” Celebration will be held on **Thursday, June 9, at 10 a.m.** Peter is “hosting” the event in front of his Harbor Seal exhibit outside.

The public is invited to join Virginia Aquarium guests, staff, and volunteers for the event. City of Virginia Beach Mayor Will Sessoms will read a City proclamation and deliver remarks about both occasions. The Mayor will present Peter “keys to the city,” while Peter has a piece of his original art to give the Mayor. Virginia Aquarium Executive Director Lynn Clements and Aquarium Foundation President Dorcas Browning will also address the guests, highlighting the Aquarium’s past achievements and future plans. Nearing completion is the proposed long-range Aquarium & Owls Creek Master Plan.

The actual 25th anniversary of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, formerly known for many years as the Virginia Marine Science Museum, is June 14, 2011. The “SEALver” Celebration begins a year-long effort to recognize the significant milestone.

The Aquarium is the only non-historic Virginia attraction whose annual attendance now reaches over 650,000 guests a year. Since 1986, eleven million guests, one million of them students, have visited the Aquarium.

The Aquarium showcases Virginia’s diverse and unique marine environment. The 89-acre campus includes: two exhibit buildings comprised of 129,000 square feet; a one-third-mile long nature trail; Virginia native plant gardens; an aviary with over 30 species; a 300-seat 3D IMAX[®] Theater; gallons of aquariums; 360 interactive exhibits; live animal habitats and two touch pools. With the addition of the four Restless Planet galleries in 2009, the animal collection grew to approximately 12,000 representing over 700 species. Seasonal boat trips, as well as premium up-close animal experiences, add a deeper dimension to guest visits.

In addition to the Virginia Aquarium’s renowned Stranding Response Program, research and conservation efforts have grown in other ways. The Aquarium was the first certified Green Attraction in the Commonwealth. It has also taken the lead by hosting e-cycling events and developing a Sensible Seafood program.

The Aquarium is a member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, and fulfills these organizations’ exemplary accreditation standards, including those for education, research, conservation and animal care.

###

