

NEWS RELEASE

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Virginia Aquarium Foundation Receives Highest Possible Rating for Third Consecutive Year

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation has earned a third consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. Only a quarter of charities evaluated by Charity Navigator receive the distinction of a 4-star rating, indicating that the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation executes its mission in a financially efficient way and outperforms most other charities in America.

Since 2002, using objective, data-driven analysis, Charity Navigator has awarded only the most fiscally responsible organizations a 4-star rating. In 2011, Charity Navigator added 17 metrics, focused on governance and ethical practices as well as measures of openness, to its ratings methodology. These "Accountability & Transparency" metrics, which account for 50 percent of a charity's overall rating, reveal which charities have best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and highlight whether they freely share basic information about their organization with their donors and other stakeholders.

"The prestige of a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator demonstrates the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation's dedication to fiscal responsibility and transparency," said Russell Turner, Director of Development for the Virginia Aquarium Foundation. "We want our donors to know that they are giving to an important cause, and one that will handle their donations appropriately."

The Virginia Aquarium Foundation is a 501 (c) 3, nonprofit. The purpose of the Foundation is to support the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center in its mission to inspire conservation of the marine environment through education, research and sustainable practices. Founded in 1981, the Foundation is dedicated to the success of the Aquarium which opened its doors to the public in 1986. Over the years, the Foundation's role in support of the Aquarium has not only included garnering financial support to pay for the Aquarium's exhibits, animals and habitats, but it has expanded to include funding of education programs, and research and conservation efforts such as the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response and Sensible Seafood™ programs.

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