



GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANNOUNCES \$110 MILLION EXPANSION *New Addition Will Be Home to Bottlenose Dolphins*

ATLANTA (May 6, 2008) – When Bernie Marcus opened the Georgia Aquarium in November 2005, he promised that it would always play a role in animal conservation, that it would make an important economic impact on downtown Atlanta, and that it would constantly reinvent itself to continue to “WOW” and attract visitors from around the world. Today, Aquarium founder Marcus and Jim Jacoby, owner of Marineland of Florida and a member of the Georgia Aquarium board, disclosed a key relationship for the Georgia Aquarium with Marineland that ensures those promises continue to be met.

“The Georgia Aquarium will break ground this summer on a \$110 million dolphin exhibit that will open by the end of 2010,” Marcus announced. “For four years, my friend Jim Jacoby has encouraged me to partner with him to bring dolphins to Atlanta, because they are the aquatic animal that most people know and love, and still there is a dire need in this area of the country to help dolphins.”

“Even before the Aquarium opened in 2005, Jim made the incredible offer to lend us up to four trained dolphins on a breeding loan from his world-famous Marineland. With the expansion we are announcing today, we will have an 84,000 square foot space, about the size of two football fields, with a 1.3 million gallon exhibit to accommodate them, and graciously accept Jim’s offer,” Marcus added.

“We have a wonderful group of dolphins at our Dolphin Conservation Center, and breeding is active. A breeding loan, which is common among aquariums and zoos, made perfect sense,” Jim Jacoby added. “Our guests have been educated and entertained by these charismatic animals, some for more than twenty years, and they will be an exciting addition to the family of fish and mammals that are already at the Georgia Aquarium.”

Located on the west side of the present building near the Luckie Street parking deck entrance, the building will encompass areas that include dolphin encounters, viewing windows and dolphin

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shows. The bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) that will initially inhabit the Aquarium's new building will come from Marineland's Dolphin Conservation Center, founded in 2006 to educate and entertain guests through interactive dolphin encounters.

"This is the next 'BIG WOW,' the attraction that will continue to bring millions of people to downtown Atlanta and make it the most interesting and exciting facility in the world," Marcus said.

Construction on the dolphin exhibit is expected to begin in August 2008 and will open to the public winter 2010.

Marcus Announces Aquarium Support of Marine Animal Conservation Field Station

In a second announcement, Marcus said the Georgia Aquarium is making a \$1.5 million contribution for a new marine animal rescue, care and research facility near Marineland outside St. Augustine, FL. The Georgia Aquarium will provide additional support for operational costs of the conservation field station once it has opened in 2009.

"In our discussions with Marineland and government officials, they informed us of an urgent need for a research facility in that area that can rescue and study the many marine animals that get stranded along the coastlines of Georgia and northeast Florida," Marcus explained.

Manatees, whales and dolphins are among the marine animals that have been stranded on those shores either from illness or as a result of injury or age.

The contribution will be used toward initial capital expenditures in the construction of the marine animal conservation station.

"As a member of the Board of Directors since its inception, I have well understood the Georgia Aquarium's commitment to conservation and care of fish and mammals, wherever they might be located," Jim Jacoby said. "Once I shared our awareness of this great need with Aquarium leadership, they asked what needed to be done and how they could help."

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The conservation field station will be dedicated to studying marine animals off the coast of Georgia and northeast Florida and rescuing and rehabilitating stranded animals. According to Jacoby, it will include veterinary facilities, quarantine pools for rehabilitating rescued animals and housing for researchers and volunteers. Animals deemed releasable by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will be released in the ocean after rehabilitation. Animals deemed by NMFS to be unfit for release will be provided a home at Marineland or another facility selected by NMFS.

“One of the species we need to actively study is the dolphin, particularly those off the coast of Georgia and northeast Florida,” said Billy Hurley, General Manager, Marineland. “More work needs to be done in this area of Florida to understand the effects of pollution on dolphins. It is vitally important to be proactive in our care and understanding of this population before it is too late. This conservation field station will make a positive difference to dolphins and many other marine animals in the wild.”

Jeff Swanagan, President and Executive Director of the Georgia Aquarium, said that the dedication to research and conservation programs the Aquarium presently conducts with whale sharks, beluga whales, coral reefs and sea turtles will be applied to the dolphins that are coming to Atlanta.

“The Aquarium is excited about bringing this aquatic animal to Atlanta and educating millions of visitors on the challenges this animal faces in its native habitats,” said Swanagan. “At the same time we have an amazing opportunity to couple the research conducted at the Georgia Aquarium with the research that will be done at the new marine mammal conservation field station.”

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About the Georgia Aquarium

The Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia, is the world’s largest with more than eight million gallons of water and the largest collection of aquatic animals. The mission of the Georgia Aquarium is to be an entertaining, educational and scientific institution featuring exhibits and programs of the highest standards; offering engaging and exciting guest experiences promoting the conservation of aquatic biodiversity throughout the world. The Georgia Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of

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Zoos and Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. For additional information, visit www.georgiaaquarium.org.

About Marineland

Marineland's steel oceanariums were the first structures of their type in the world and were built to house and display multiple species of marine life, replicating the variety of life to be found off the coast of northeast Florida. Marineland continues its tradition of creating state of the art facilities with the Dolphin Conservation Center. Today's guests are able to interact with dolphins from around and within their habitat, even swimming with the animals. Efforts in the disciplines of education and research are shared, as guests view educational signage placed throughout the facility or are introduced to the animals via interactive encounters. In both cases the plights and challenges facing wild dolphins are key messages conveyed to inspire the general public to become informed and active in the conservation of marine animals and their natural environments. For additional information, visit www.marineland.net.