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A SCHOOL OF FISH: OCEARCH FOUNDER, CHRIS FISCHER, VISITS ZOO TO TEACH LOCAL SCHOOLS ABOUT SHARK CONSERVATION

March 31, 2016 – Jacksonville, FL – The room was deafening as the little voices of children were chatting and squealing with excitement knowing they were about to learn about the ocean's most revered predator, the Great White shark.

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) is partnering with the shark tagging organization, OCEARCH, to help educate children and the Jacksonville community about the importance of sharks in the ecosystem.

At the presentation, over 100 students from Discovery Montessori School and Seaside Community Charter School got the chance to meet Chris Fischer and hear about his exciting adventures around the world working with sharks by learning where they go throughout their lives.

"We must engage and educate future generations of ocean stewards and scientists in order to have a sustainable path forward for sharks and the ocean," said OCEARCH Founding Chairman and Expedition Leader Chris Fischer. "The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens made it possible for kids to experience ocean exploration and science firsthand. We are kid and science focused, like the Zoo, and are thrilled to have partnered on this event."

As the five- to ten-year-olds watched the first video, you could see the awe and inspiration on their faces. Every time the shark moved, a unanimous 'COOOOL!' and 'AWESOME!' resonated in the room.

JZG is also hosting part of Robert Snow's photography exhibit in the Palm Plaza Restaurant in the Range of the Jaguar. Guests have the chance to put themselves in the researchers' shoes as they admire the incredible photos from OCEARCH's 23 expeditions around the world.

The OCEARCH boat departed for the 24th expedition on Wednesday, March 16 and has been off the coast since then. Upon return, Chris Fischer will speak at JZG again for an evening dinner on Saturday, April 2. Tickets can be found at jacksonvillezoo.org.

Photo Credit: Robert Snow

About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.

About OCEARCH

OCEARCH is a non-profit organization with a global reach for unprecedented ocean-based research on keystone species such as Great White and Tiger Sharks, supporting leading researchers and institutions seeking to attain groundbreaking data on the movement, biology and health of apex predators to protect their future while enhancing public safety. The researchers OCEARCH supports work aboard the M/V OCEARCH, a 126' Cat powered vessel equipped with a 75,000 lb. hydraulic research platform, where the ship serves as both mothership and at-sea laboratory. Scientists have approximately 15 minutes of access to live, mature sharks to conduct up to 12 studies. The sharks are measured, tissue and blood samples are collected, and satellite and acoustic transmitters are attached. OCEARCH expeditions are largely supported by Caterpillar Inc., as part of a socially innovative multi-year partnership to impact ocean sustainability. Additional partnership support is provided by Costa Sunglasses, DYT Yacht Transport, Contender, Yamaha, SAFE Boats, MUSTAD, and Landry's Inc.