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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 25, 2009

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**THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS: 86 DAYS UNTIL OPENING CELEBRATION  
FOR SHEDD'S BELUGAS, DOLPHINS, OTTERS AND OCEANARIUM!**

*Reimagined Oceanarium Reopens May 22 – Just in Time for Memorial Day*

**CHICAGO** – Today Shedd Aquarium unveiled the much-anticipated visual renderings of the soon-to-be-completed Oceanarium renovation and announced the date of the public reopening of the world's premier marine mammal pavilion: Friday, May 22. In only three months – 86 days to be exact – guests will be able to explore the new Oceanarium and welcome home their favorite animals, which have been “on vacation” since last September. Shedd also announced that advance tickets to be one of the first to visit the Oceanarium will go on sale starting February 25, and Shedd's membership program is offering advance opening previews and exclusive visiting hours throughout the coming year.

From getting reacquainted with beluga whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Alaskan sea otters, sea lions and penguins, to being among the first to experience new exhibits like Polar Play Zone and the Grainger Beluga Encounter Habitat, and witnessing the magic of Shedd's new marine mammal show (debuting late summer), guests have plenty to see and do in Shedd Aquarium's renovated Oceanarium.

“Eighteen years ago Chicagoans explored the new Oceanarium for the first time. It has since become one of the most popular marine mammal pavilions in the world. Now millions of guests will have the rare opportunity to again create new, first-time memories with the reopening of the Oceanarium, starting on May 22,” said Ted A. Beattie, Shedd's president and CEO. “We've remained true to the core essence of the popular exhibit and are welcoming everyone's favorite animals back. But we're also introducing some new animals, enhancing our guest experience, better connecting guests with animals, opening new exhibits designed for kids and adults, and later this summer, we will unveil a new marine mammal show not equaled anywhere in the world. It's an exciting year for Shedd Aquarium and Chicago, and we encourage our friends from around the world to plan their visits now.”

Visitors will learn about the animals by exploring the surprising variety of interconnected habitats that make up the Pacific Northwest – temperate rain forests, rivers, tide pools, the rocky ocean coast and open water. According to Beattie, even with all the new animals, features and programming, one thing remains constant: Shedd continues living its conservation mission by guiding Oceanarium visitors to see how their positive actions can help the wild animals that live in the Pacific Northwest.

Here are a few highlights of the many new changes coming when the Oceanarium reopens on May 22:

*Polar Play Zone*

Climbing, imagining, building, exploring, sharing, pretending – kids can do it all in this spectacular new exhibit! Shedd transforms the former underwater viewing gallery into its first-ever permanent exhibit for children, chock-full of hands-on activities for busy hands and minds. In its four sections – Shallow Ocean, Deep Ocean, Icy North and Icy South – kids splash in water, dress up like an otter, build a penguin nest of rocks and even board a submarine to explore under the Arctic ice. See enthralling underwater views of the otters, penguins, dolphins and belugas, too.

#### The Grainger Beluga Encounter Habitat

If you've ever wanted to get nose-to-nose with a beluga whale, this is your chance! In Shedd's new premium encounter experience, guests don wader boots and climb into the Grainger Beluga Encounter Habitat to see firsthand the top-notch care Shedd gives its beluga whales. Guests will treasure the unforgettable experience of seeing a whale up close, feeling its skin and trying training techniques learned from Shedd's professional animal trainers.

#### ITW Beluga Trail, featuring River Mouth Habitat

Water tumbling over moss-covered rocks along the ITW Beluga Trail will lead to the river mouth, a new habitat at Shedd that bridges freshwater rivers with the salty sea. A wide variety of salt-tolerant fishes and invertebrates live there, taking shelter from the tumble of ocean waves.

#### Regenstein Otter Trail and Otter Habitat

Twenty years after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Shedd's otters continue to be a national focal point for otter rehabilitation, conservation and education. The newly upgraded otter habitat, walking trail and expanded pup nursery behind the scenes ensure Shedd's guests connect with these endearing animals.

#### Tide Pool Habitat

Visitors discover intriguing species of fishes, anemones, mollusks, sea stars, urchins, crabs and more. The abundant tide pool offers a close-up "in-the-wild" experience for curious guests.

#### New Marine Mammal Show and Amphitheater

While the actual show details remain behind the curtain until its debut in the summer of 2009, the marine mammal amphitheater has been updated with the latest visual and acoustic technology, rivaled only by Broadway. Extra seating has been added and sightlines have been improved, ensuring guests will not miss a moment of the new show.

#### New Food Service

Shedd is upgrading and expanding the food service areas—increasing seating capacity and improving ambiance. The brand new north terrace has one of the best views of Chicago's skyline and provides guests with additional seating from BubbleNet, as well as provides a beautiful space on the lakefront for special events.

#### Guest Amenities

New lockers, restrooms, preparation space and elevators—Shedd is thinking of it all for their guests! New amenities throughout the building will provide better access and ease for visitors to see and enjoy our amazing animals.

#### Pacific White-Sided Dolphins

The dolphins are back, and they are the main attraction when the dolphin show starts later this summer! In the meantime, guests can visit them while they adjust to their renovated home. Swift and agile, these sleek swimmers keep visitors on their toes, waiting for the dolphins to break the surface with their high jumps and acrobatic spins.

#### Beluga Whales

Shedd's massive yet graceful beluga whales captivate with their stark white color, natural "smile" expression and high-pitched vocalizations. Of course, calves Miki and Bella return, now age 2 and 3, respectively.

#### Sea Lions

The expanded habitat will show off these engaging animals – whether they are using their strong flippers to swim, pose, or haul up on shore to rest on the rocks.

#### Sea Otters

See these high-energy animals swim, dive and play from both above in the Oceanarium and below in *Polar Play Zone*. Their habitat has been redesigned so visitors can get an even better view than before.

### Penguins

Thanks to their formal “attire” and decidedly informal attitude, penguins are everyone’s favorite. Watch them jump, slide and glide in their Icy South home in the new *Polar Play Zone* exhibit.

### **Advance Oceanarium Tickets Now On Sale; Shedd Memberships Offer Exclusive Previews and Programming**

Shedd’s Oceanarium reopening is one of the most anticipated events of 2009, so advance tickets or memberships are recommended.

### **Pre-Sale Tickets to Oceanarium Homecoming**

Be one of the first to welcome back the beluga whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Alaskan Sea Otters, California Sea Lions, and penguins, as well as meet new animals at Shedd’s Animal Homecoming, May 22 – June 28.

Purchase now and save! Starting Feb. 25, advance Total Experience Passes are available for the Animal Homecoming for only \$25.00 for adults and \$18.00 for children and seniors – a \$3.95 savings! Purchase now by visiting [www.sheddaquarium.org](http://www.sheddaquarium.org) or by calling Ticketmaster at 1-800-982-2787. Discount pricing on sale through May 21, 2009. Animal Homecoming tickets must be used from May 22 – June 28, 2009.

Starting May 22, the Total Experience Pass, which include access to all exhibits – including the *4-D Special FX Theater* –, will be regularly priced at \$28.95 for adults and \$21.95 for children and seniors. Children under the age of 3 are free. Chicago residents receive a discount everyday.

### **Members-Only Specials**

Want to see the Oceanarium before anyone else? A Shedd membership has its privileges and is a great way for Shedd friends and families to support the animals and mission while having unlimited admittance to the “World’s Aquarium.” All members will be invited to the exclusive Members-Only Oceanarium Preview Days scheduled for May 16 and 17, days before the public opening on May 22. Exclusive members-only hours will be scheduled throughout the year as well.

### **Aquarium and Wild Reef Ready for Spring Break and Beyond**

Don’t wait until May 22 to get your fish fix! The aquarium remains open, with exhibits like the award-winning *Wild Reef*, *Amazon Rising*, the Caribbean Reef, Waters of the World in the original galleries, the Great Lakes Invasive Species exhibit and the 4-D Experience. And check out one of the most popular new features at Shedd – the Dog Show! These friendly four-footed furballs, all rescued from Chicago-area shelters, show you that “the Shedd way” of animal training is just as effective for dogs as for dolphins. Check out Shedd’s dogs in action on this video: <http://interactive.sheddaquarium.org/2008/10/pet-training-th.html>.

### **About the Oceanarium Renovation**

For the first time since its opening in 1991, the popular 3-million-gallon saltwater Oceanarium is undergoing major renovations. All five pools are being recoated, animal habitats are receiving routine maintenance, and the latest technology in animal life-support, heating and cooling systems is being installed. Closer to the reopening date of May 22, the beluga whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins and other animals return to Chicago from their temporary

locations at partnering aquariums and zoos accredited by the same organizations that accredit Shedd: the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

### **About Shedd Aquarium**

Since 1930, the John G. Shedd Aquarium has been connecting the human world to the aquatic world through its majestic and unique animals, award-winning exhibits, leading conservation and research initiatives and world-class educational programming. Caring for more than 32,000 animals, representing nearly 1,600 species from around the world, Shedd Aquarium is the “world’s aquarium.” From its architecturally historic aquarium galleries, to its world-renowned marine mammal pavilion, the Oceanarium, to the colorful and exciting *Wild Reef* exhibit, Shedd Aquarium is one of the preeminent aquariums in the world. Shedd ranks as Chicago’s top-attended cultural attraction and one of the top-attended aquariums in North America – welcoming 2 million guests every year. For more information, visit [www.sheddaquarium.org](http://www.sheddaquarium.org).

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*Shedd Aquarium is supported by the people of Chicago and the State of Illinois.  
Shedd Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the  
Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums.*