



Information: Jim Graves, (949) 719-0588
Ana Rothwell, (949) 496-2274, ext 414

Ocean Institute to Welcome Laguna Niguel Officials, 6th Grade Students for New Ocean Institute/UCI Watershed Program

Dana Point, CALIF., October 25, 2007 – The Ocean Institute will welcome officials from the City of Laguna Niguel and over 400 6th grade students from Niguel Hills Middle School in Laguna Niguel on Wednesday, November 7, for the official launch of its new Adopt-a-Class Ocean Institute/UCI Watershed program. The one-day program introduces students to the science of the watersheds, or land area that drains into a body of water, such as the ocean.

“It’s our goal to impact students and the communities in which they live, encouraging them to be good stewards of our environment,” remarked Jonathan Witt, who coordinates the program. “They learn how pollutants, improperly disposed of, will negatively impact our beaches and oceans and their marine inhabitants.”

The watershed program is presented annually to 5th graders. This new, one-day version of the program reaches out to 6th graders, with the help of the leaders of the communities in which they live. Guests to the Institute on November 7 will include Gary Capata, mayor of Laguna Niguel, Laguna Niguel city council members, other elected and appointed officials involved in waste management and representatives from private firms in the field.

The 6th grade program also includes collaboration with UC Irvine scientist Amy Townsend-Small, who analyzes the radiocarbon and stable isotopic composition of organic matter in river waters. Ocean Institute staff members leading students in the program will be taking samples for Townsend-Small’s research work; the scientist indicated that she would be available to consult with students.

The major sponsor for the November 7th event is the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association. Other sponsors include CR&R Waste and Recycling Services and WaMu Home

Loans. Upcoming 6th grade watershed programs for students and elected officials in other communities are being planned.

Founded in 1977, the Ocean Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to ocean preservation through education, setting the standard for educational excellence and serving as a leading resource for universities, museums, teachers and all others seeking to increase their knowledge of the ocean. The Ocean Institute is open to the general public on weekends, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Cost: \$6 adults, \$4 children (ages 4-12), Ocean Institute members free. Unique maritime and ocean-themed items are available in the Chambers Gallery everyday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Institute address: 24200 Dana Point Harbor Dr., Dana Point. Website: www.ocean-institute.org.

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