

Aquarium hosts Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference

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Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water... sharks invaded Shedd Aquarium! More than 2,000 people visited Shedd Aquarium after hours during "Sharks," a special event held Nov. 11 and 12. They enjoyed crafts, activities for children, lectures by internationally known shark experts Dr. A. Peter Klimley and Jean de Marignac, and a special shark feeding presentation in the Coral Reef Exhibit.

Guests of all ages sifted facts from fantasies about sharks by exploring the six Aquarium galleries, each representing a different shark theme. Topics included reproduction, conservation, history and anatomy as well as a "fins-on" demonstration of shark adaptations at the "dress-like-a-shark" station.

On Sunday, Nov. 13, renowned author and illustrator Richard Ellis lectured on great white sharks, then signed copies of his books. An unexpected highlight of the weekend program occurred when the female bamboo shark, located in Gallery 2, laid egg cases.

Visit any Chicago neighborhood and you'll find kids who could use a hand, a role model, an adult to help them through the trials of growing up. Living in those same neighborhoods are adults who want to help, to make a personal contribution to their community. The 160 or so Chicago tutor and mentor organizations, mostly small, volunteer-run and rich in enthusiasm, connect the two.

At the Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference, held at Shedd Aquarium Nov. 11 and 12, 200 representatives from these organizations, as well as members of support groups from museums and universities, met to showcase some of their best work, share skills and ideas, and offer training to staff and volunteers. The conference was organized by

Cabrini Connections, which offers one-to-one mentoring in the Cabrini-Green area, and trains volunteers and organizes support for

tutor and mentor organizations throughout Chicago.

Dan Bassill, president and CEO of Cabrini Connections, stated the case for tutor/mentor programs: "Each day 20 million adolescents decide how they will spend at least five of their waking hours when they are not in school.... For too many, the street is an attractive alternative.... These programs focus on the positive — the talents, knowledge and dreams of young people."

Mayor Daley proclaimed Nov. 6-12 as Tutor/Mentor Week in Chicago. Dr. Leonard Dominquez, deputy mayor for education, presented the conference's keynote address, sharing stories of his youth and the adults who made a difference in his life. The program leaders took workshops in strategic planning, fund-raising, and recruiting and retaining volunteers. The second day was for the volunteers themselves, with hands-on activities in reading, science and math.

In hosting the conference, the Aquarium provided a large, comfortable exhibit and workshop space in stimulating surroundings (where else can speakers have sharks and barracudas on the walls looking down at their flip charts?) and found an opportunity to intro-

duce the institution as a valuable resource for the one-on-one learning these programs promote. The Aquarium's table of materials, outlining our intern program and providing information on services to groups such as these, was well received. The conference also allowed us to organize a planning team for a tutor/mentor training program here.

An even larger conference is scheduled for May 19 and 20, in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Uptown. It will repeat the basics of how to build a successful tutor/mentor program and highlight summer opportunities. Aquarium representatives will be there, publicizing our new community programs and seeking additional collaborations.



Dr. Leonard Dominquez, Chicago's deputy mayor for education, addresses the Tutor/Mentor Leadership Conference held at Shedd Aquarium.