



# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**POLAR PLAY ZONE: SHEDD'S FIRST-EVER  
PERMANENT EXHIBIT JUST FOR KIDS**

*Kids Play It Cool in the Incredible World of Nature's Extreme Opposites*

**CHICAGO** – Kids command a kingdom of cool in *Polar Play Zone*, Shedd's first permanent exhibit designed just for children. The exhibit, designed for 2- to 7-year-olds, opens on Friday, May 22, as part of the highly anticipated Oceanarium reopening. The hands-on experience explores the extremes – from big to small, scaly to smooth, cold and warm – by letting kids climb, touch, imagine and play with engaging features like touch pools, dress-up areas, a submarine and a playscape.

*Polar Play Zone* features touch pools sized just right for kids, inviting playscapes and imagination stations to display Mother Nature's polar opposites. Inspired by the popularity of past child-focused temporary exhibits like *Sea Star Quest* and *CRABS!*, Shedd transformed its underwater viewing gallery into a sensational exhibit that invites young guests and their families to learn through play. Families can take in underwater views of Shedd's most popular residents – the returning beluga whales, Pacific white-sided dolphins, penguins and sea otters – and discover new animals and programs, too.

In addition to new family amenities, including restrooms, and food and seating tailor-made for families, the exhibit will feature four separate areas, each dedicated to an extreme environment representing Shedd's Oceanarium animals:

**Shallow Ocean**

Get close to the coast! The touch stations in Shallow Ocean bring guests close enough to touch. A touch tide pool invites children to roll up their sleeves and feel the rough, scratchy surfaces of sea stars. New designs around the sea otter habitat also allow guests to get a closer view of Shedd's furry friends.

**Deep Ocean**

Explore the seemingly endless depths of the waters in *Polar Play Zone's* Deep Ocean. Filled with cozy spots for families to eat, the Deep Ocean area provides a serene setting to watch the Pacific white-sided dolphins swimming throughout Whale Harbor. While parents unwind and enjoy the view, children learn about the opposite elements of the dolphin world, such as leaping up to 20 feet in the air, then diving down below as fast as a car.

**Icy South**

Younger guests will play like penguins – literally! The Icy South's Penguin Playscape helps kids learn to care about penguins by pretending to be one of these birds. While watching Shedd's popular penguins jump, slide and play in Penguin Panorama, children will jump, slide and dress up like a penguin, too. A play area features a slide and a station to build nests and care for (mock) eggs, just like a penguin would.

### **Icy North**

*Polar Play Zone's* Icy North spotlights the mysteries of the frigid northern waters. The Sea Sub Discovery invites young deep-sea explorers to submerge into a unique world of sea life that depends on the icy waters to survive. Dig into the seafloor with a mechanical arm, control the submarine's speed, and check out the surface above through an interactive periscope. The Icy Cave Quest in the exhibit allows guests to uncover the secret of how animals use the ice to stay alive. Located near the beluga whale habitat, families will gaze at these calm "canaries of the sea" while gaining insight into the animals' natural environment.

"At Shedd Aquarium, we believe connection leads to conservation. *Polar Play Zone* encourages our youngest guests to connect with animals through play, which is how they learn," said Bryan Schuetze, senior director of planning and design. "This inspires them to care, which is the first step toward making a difference. Getting their hands wet is the most effective way to create a meaningful experience. The interactive activities throughout this unique exhibit allow kids to explore through touch and experience nature's amazing opposites, introducing them to the wonders of our world."

Polar Play Zone is partially funded through a generous grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism – "Illinois, Mile After Magnificent Mile."

### **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.*