

The Whale of the World Program (WOW)

The WOW program was started in 2007 with a grant from the California Coastal Commission and has continued with funding from community foundations and corporations.



The WOW program is an outreach program for children from Title I elementary schools grades 2 through 6. It offers children, from low socioeconomic areas of our community, an opportunity to expand their outlook while creating a positive learning environment.

The program introduces the children to a rich curriculum covering the Peninsula's geological history, its people, habitat and animals that they would not otherwise be exposed. The classes have the opportunity to visit one of three sites, The Point Vicente Interpretive Center (PVIC), Abalone Cove Tide Pools or the Forrestal Preserve.

Selected classes also have an opportunity to participate in the Memory Book project wherein each student contributes a picture and a short story of their field trip experience. The book is then professionally published with each student receiving a free copy. The Memory Book project has shown to be a great educational motivator for disadvantaged children providing them with a positive reinforcement of the educational material.

The program has expanded over the years. This year 19 schools are participating in the program representing just under 1,300 children.

The program is designed around the concept of providing a helping hand to the underserved of our community and not a handout. The objective of the program is not only to help educate the children but to motivate them and to open the minds to what they can achieve through education.



The teacher responses have been overwhelmingly positive with many returning each year. Children that have resisted learning have been motivated. One teacher reported that she had two students that resisted learning to read or write. She was so amazed that when it came time for the class to develop their memory book these students were so motivated that they kept writing and rewriting their pages until they were perfect.

Similar programs at the PVIC have shown that the children typically improve their knowledge of the subjects presented by approximately 20%. This is not a small

achievement where the majority of the children come from low socioeconomic families and the children are receiving free or reduced meals at school.

This year 67% the children from 18 of the 19 schools are receiving free or reduced meals at school. Eight of the schools are 100%

The program has three elements, a pre visit at the school, the field trip and the Memory Books.

Pre Visit

A docent visits the school prior to the field trip with a Power Point presentation and artifacts. Experience has shown that the children are motivated more and absorb more of the material if they know what they will experience on the field trip.

Field Trips



At the Point Vicente Interpretive Center the children will be able to see the habitat and artifacts of the area.

During the Abalone Cove Shoreline Park and Ecological Preserve field trip the children will explore the tide pools and trails crisscrossing the area.



On the Forrestal Preserve field trip, docents will explore with the children the natural and ecological history of the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

The educational aspect of the program has an environmental element. Thousands of children enjoy the coastline and coastal waters every day. However, most of them, especially low socioeconomic disadvantaged children, are unaware of how their daily activities can endanger a species or destroy habitat. Just the act of not properly

disposing of garbage can impact the plants and animals on and off our shores. The program will educate these children to preserve, for the future, our coastal resources.

It is important that young children are involved in the concept of conservation at an early age so that they understand what makes life possible, how life evolves and changes, and how life forms interact with one another. It is hoped that this understanding will inspire, motivate, and encourage them to value and preserve this national treasure for future generations.

A second element of the program is motivation. Due to the limited income of the families, student's experiences and extracurricular activities are limited. The majority of the parents are not high school graduates. As a result they face challenges just to support their children and success is low. The WOW program provides the students with a motivating experience of a lifetime.

As you know, recent funding constraints and teacher performance requirements have limited instruction to only the material that appears on the state required exams. An opportunity to learn a rich curriculum is being lost. Learning is being reduced to a narrow focus of subjects. Especially impacted are the economically disadvantaged children of our community. The WOW program will allow these children an opportunity to broaden their horizons, experiencing the ocean and its wonders, some of them for the first time.



The overall goal of the WOW outreach program is to use the allure of the ocean, its animals, nature preserves and the PVIC to impact youngster's attitudes towards education, conservation and their environment. The program tries to broaden low socioeconomic children's view of the world providing them with real experiences, visuals and background necessary for their academic growth and to become productive future citizens.