

# The Art Mitchell Scholarship Fund

Helping today's students become tomorrow's environmental stewards



The **Art Mitchell Scholarship Fund** was created to encourage and enable students from Title I schools to attend MarineLab programs. Art Mitchell was the original MarineLab Director; he created the MarineLab program that is still presented to this day, and he captained our vessels and our programs for years. Art knew that using the ocean was a powerful tool to teach science.

The students who would most benefit from a MarineLab program often cannot afford our modest fees. Lower income students, such as those in Title I schools, are not able to access off-campus enrichment opportunities that are available to students from middle or higher income families. There are teachers who are eager and motivated to help their students have these experiences, but face the realities of economic disadvantage that their students and their families face.

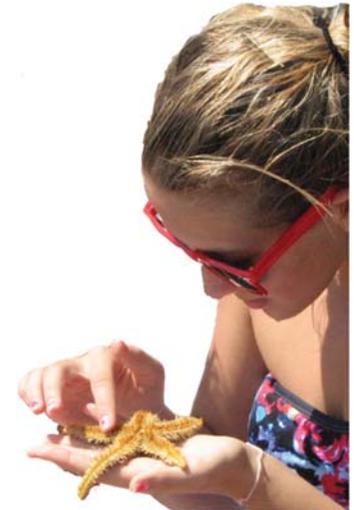
MarineLab's outdoor education programs provide unique learning experiences outside the classroom; after an introduction to the ecology, fauna, and flora of a marine bottom community, the students are taken out in boats to snorkel in that very habitat. Guided by marine science instructors, the students explore firsthand the underwater world of the seagrass beds, mangrove creeks and coral reefs just offshore Key Largo.

Recent research has found the effects of outdoor learning go far beyond increased retention of the facts and concepts taught in the actual lessons and activities<sup>1</sup>; just being outdoors has a positive impact on students' critical thinking skills, reduces stress, anxiety, and ADHD,<sup>2</sup> and creates a connection with nature that is critical to fostering conservation ethics.<sup>3</sup>

**MarineLab Makes a Difference.** Carol Bridges, a teacher at Nova Eisenhower Elementary (Broward County, FL), sent us this report about their MarineLab trip.

*Nova Eisenhower has been attending MarineLab annually for over 20 years. The trip has become a fifth grade tradition. From the time the students are in the first grade, they look forward to the trip: "I can't wait until I'm a big kid and can go on the ocean trip," said Sarah S. at Meet & Greet this past fall. Not only has the trip become a beloved tradition at Nova Eisenhower, it has truly opened students' eyes to all that the ocean is and can be. Although many of these children live only a few miles from the beach, this is the only time they have had the opportunity to not only go on a boat, but to even swim in the ocean.*

*"This is better than video games!" said Nicholas, a student who has had very limited access to the ocean. Another child decided to paint her room the color of the ocean "because the ocean is so awesome, there are so many things that live in it." Every year the students come back from the trip talking about all they have learned from the different mangrove trees and the order in which they are found, to the different kinds of plankton that are found during plankton lab. This trip has made such an impact it was mentioned in a speech at high school graduation last year; not only did the student recall all she had learned, she recalled how empowering the trip was in reference to being away from home and being responsible for her snorkel gear and taking care of the ocean. MarineLab is truly an invaluable experience for all students and the trip of a lifetime.*



## BUDGET & FUNDING

MRDF is largely supported by the fees charged to schools for our MarineLab programs. Fundraising has been largely concentrated in a boat donation program. The funds raised from boat donations are being allocated to a capital improvement fund. We also receive grants for specific programs, such as local school outreach programs. Current fundraising efforts, such as our participation in the Smile.Amazon program, will be allocated to the Art Mitchell Memorial Fund, but more money will be needed to implement the program.

Funds will be distributed to the recipient school as a subsidy to the students to offset the standard program cost. The goal of the award is to enable students who otherwise would not be able to attend; teachers may request a specific number of individual scholarships. The amount of the award may be limited based on the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches at the requesting school. The 2020 cost of a 3 day 2 night MarineLab program is \$475 per child, which includes meals and accommodations, all program activities, and snorkel gear. We also have shorter, less expensive programs. Schools need to make transportation arrangements in addition to the MarineLab fee, so the cost per student is usually higher than that.

As of April 2019, we have provided scholarships to about 20 students. Starting with a free weekend workshop for Broward and Palm Beach teachers from Title I schools, we have launched a campaign to inform Florida Title I school teachers of this opportunity.

## MAKE A DONATION TODAY

**MarineLab makes a difference. You too can make a difference!** Please donate to the Art Mitchell Scholarship Fund. Payments are accepted on our website via the donation page, or you may send a check directly to MRDF at PO Box 787, Key Largo, FL, 33037.

### ABOUT US

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*I went to MarineLab back in 1991 with my Jr. High School life sciences class and teacher. I was inspired by that trip and went on to get my undergraduate in marine science and became an ocean law attorney. I cannot thank my teacher and all at MarineLab who made this young girl's heart turn blue with love for the ocean! - Sarah Winter Whelan*

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Marine Resources Development Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization and was founded in 1970 by Ian G. Koblick, who is still the President and Chairman of the Board of Directors. In its early years, the Foundation conducted several projects with undersea habitation that were funded by the governments of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Upon relocating to Florida, the Foundation decided to focus on education. Funds were raised by accepting boat donations, and in 1985 it acquired a run-down, fire damaged resort in Key Largo, the former Tahiti Village. The existing buildings were adapted to serve the needs of the budding MarineLab program.

**MarineLab** exists to foster stewardship of marine resources, stimulate interest in science as a career, and enhance students' cognitive skills using education and adventure in the Florida Keys marine ecosystem. Since 1985, the first year of the MarineLab snorkeling programs, we have hosted an average of 4,000 students and teachers every year from 5<sup>th</sup> grade through college.

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<sup>1</sup>What does the research say about outdoor learning? Summaries of key findings from reviews of research and major studies. *English Outdoor Council* 11/03/2015. <http://www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org/research.in.outdoor.learning.html>

<sup>2</sup>There's a reason they call it the great outdoors. *National Wildlife Federation*, 10/29/2015. [http://www.nwf.org/pdf/Be%20Out%20There/MindBodySpirit\\_FactSheet\\_May2010.pdf](http://www.nwf.org/pdf/Be%20Out%20There/MindBodySpirit_FactSheet_May2010.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Kids in Nature. *The Nature Conservancy* 10/29/2015. <http://www.nature.org/newsfeatures/kids-in-nature/>

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