



**Lake Superior Center Authority**  
**2018 Annual Report to the Legislature**

Submitted March 2019

*Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 85B.06; 1990 Minn. Laws Chap. 535  
Sec. 6 Lake Superior Center Authority must submit an annual report to  
the legislature detailing the activities, funding and organizational  
operations for Lake Superior Center dba Great Lakes Aquarium.*

On behalf of the Lake Superior Center Authority, we are pleased to provide this annual report on the activities carried out by Lake Superior Center dba Great Lakes Aquarium in 2018. This year was a record-breaking year with more than 176,000 guests visiting the Aquarium from January – December 2018. The attendance represents an 8.6% increase over 2017. These guests had personal interactions with animals, participated in interpretive programming, camps and classes and socialized with friends, family and the public in our dynamic learning space.

Great Lakes Aquarium currently employs 26 full-time staff and approximately 30 part-time staff. These numbers vary seasonally. Operational changes in 2018 included the resignation of Executive Director Joe Montisano. He was replaced by Director of Operations, Jay Walker, as the Interim Executive Director. Senior Aquarist, Darin Reinke became the Interim Director of Husbandry. These changes took place in November 2018. Additional information related to funding sources, assets, liabilities and administrative expenses is attached to this letter (Appendix A).

In 2018, we opened three touch pools at the Aquarium. These interactive exhibits give our guests opportunities to connect with various forms of marine life, and have been a very popular feature of the experience. We hired five new part-time staff to attend to these pools and interact with guests. Looking ahead we will focus our energy on two new exhibits. In 2019, we will complete *Raptor Ridge*, a display that will showcase a bald eagle and a turkey vulture. In 2020, we are planning to open an exhibit on the properties of water, watersheds and human use of water.

In 2018, we held a fundraising event for the Aquarium, called *AquaAffair*. This formal event, included music, raffle prizes, and a variety of food and drink donated by local vendors and artisans. Guests had a very positive experience and pledged to return to the 2019 gala.

Great Lakes Aquarium continued in 2018 to be a consistent community partner for a variety of initiatives, activities, and events. Each year, the Aquarium renews on-going relationships and builds new bridges with partners in the areas of environmental education, stewardship, inclusion, and business. Examples of such partners in 2018 include: North Shore Scenic Railroad, Vista Fleet, Lake Superior Zoo, Duluth Children's Museum, Bentleyville Tour of Lights, Duluth Public Schools, University of Minnesota Duluth, Minnesota Power/ALLETTE, Greater Downtown Council, Duluth Chamber of Commerce, Visit Duluth, Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC) and the Canal Park Visitor Association.

The future looks to be exciting as new features, new partnerships and new resources strengthen the Aquarium's positive impact on the region. Please feel free to contact us with additional information at any time.

Sincerely,

Jay Walker  
Interim Executive Director  
Great Lakes Aquarium

Elaine Hansen  
Chair  
Lake Superior Center Authority

## Appendix A – Financial Statements

### Income Statements

Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
4000 · Admissions	1,573,106.29
4050 · Membership Income	172,527.70
4400 · Education Income	134,282.97
4200 · Donations	63,653.12
4300 · Retail Sales	465,705.68
4250 · Facility Rental \ Special Event	71,192.01
4600 · Parking Income	157,800.69
4500 · Miscellaneous	<u>19,635.70</u>
Total Income	2,657,904.16
Total Cost of Goods Sold	<u>250,878.04</u>
Gross Profit	2,407,026.12
Expense	
51100 · Freight and Shipping Costs	706.26
5100 · Admin. - Expenses	119,284.01
5101 · Admin Payroll	329,661.91
5200 · Education - Expenses	24,288.57
5201 · Education - Payroll	529,042.68
5300 · Husbandry - Expenses	132,051.67
5301 · Husbandry - Payroll	460,000.86
5400 · Operations -Facility- Expenses	472,245.41
5401 · Operations -Facility-Payroll	290,499.11
5700 · Operations-General Expense	212,485.07
5701 · Operations-Guest ServicePayroll	136,296.24
5500 · Facility Rental / Special Event	14,546.62
5600 · Store - Expenses	10,782.97
5601 · Store - Payroll	<u>63,759.44</u>
Total Expense	<u>2,795,650.82</u>
Net Ordinary Income	-388,624.70
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
7304 · MN Power Match	7,563.70
7303 · Flood Damage	60,349.63
7000 · Purchase Discounts	364.93
7100 · Tourism Tax Operational Support	<u>360,000.00</u>
Total Other Income	428,278.26
Other Expense	
9050 · Rebate Expenses	3,383.84
9040 · River Trek Expenses	4,172.85
9003 · Changing Exhibit Expenses	57,699.44
9002 · Flood Damage Expense	<u>44,211.13</u>
Total Other Expense	<u>109,467.26</u>
Net Other Income	<u>318,811.00</u>
Net Income	<u><u>-69,813.70</u></u>

## Balance Sheet

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

##### Checking/Savings

1000 · Cash and Cash Equivalents 115,559.11

Total Checking/Savings 115,559.11

##### Accounts Receivable

1152 · Pledges Receivable 3,584.62

1150 · Accounts Receivable -2,164.81

Total Accounts Receivable 1,419.81

##### Other Current Assets

1300 · Other Current Assets 35,856.22

1380 · Undeposited Funds 42,554.03

Total Other Current Assets 78,410.25

Total Current Assets 195,389.17

#### Fixed Assets

5999 · Gain/Loss on Disposal of Assets 2,090.98

1200 · Fixed Assets 2,354,617.51

1250 · Accumulated Depreciation -1,111,840.06

Total Fixed Assets 1,244,868.43

**TOTAL ASSETS 1,440,257.60**

### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

#### Liabilities

##### Current Liabilities

##### Accounts Payable

2007 · Accounts Payable, General 74,863.81

##### Credit Cards

2700 · Employee Credit Cards 18,457.33

##### Other Current Liabilities

2530 · Capital Lease Payable-Current 2,223.08

2500 · Other Current Liabilities 182,375.62

2900 · Deferred Revenue 104,111.06

2901 · Deferred Revenue - Authority 1,450.00

2520 · City Revolving Loan Payable 250,000.00

Total Other Current Liabilities 540,159.76

Total Current Liabilities 633,480.90

##### Long Term Liabilities

2300 · Long Term Liabilities 150,000.00

2301 · Capital Lease Payable 9,761.65

Total Long Term Liabilities 159,761.65

Total Liabilities 793,242.55

#### Equity

3001 · Fund Balance -635,517.45

3200 · Unrestricted Net Assets 1,352,346.20

Net Income -69,813.70

Total Equity 647,015.05

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY 1,440,257.60**

## **Appendix B – 2018 Accomplishments**

### **Learning and Engagement**

GLA provides on-site and outreach educational programming to learners of all ages. Daily interpretive programs give guests the opportunity to learn more about resident animals while watching them eat, play, or interact with our staff.

Classes and formal programming are provided to youth, while teacher workshops and visiting speakers provide enriching experiences for adults. Outreach programs bring the wonder of GLA to the community, especially those for whom a visit to the Aquarium is not feasible.

#### **2018 Accomplishments:**

- Annually provided programming for over 10,000 youth, 6,000 of whom are K-12 students through on-site field trips. More than 1,000 registered MN and WI teachers and school staff receive free admission each year.
- Visited schools, hosted outdoor classes and outreach programs, bringing learning experiences and animal encounters to approximately 1,500 students off-site.
- Offered twelve weeks of summer camp programming focused on animal care, natural history of the Lake Superior region and STEM.
- Approximately 500 youth ages 3-18 participated in structured and guided learning experiences such as Whirligigs Preschool Program, Polliwogs Kindergarten Program, day camps, overnights and after-school programs.
- Served 200+ teachers through professional development workshops between the Aquarium's *Science Institute for Educators* and other organizations' workshops and conferences hosted in the Discovery Center with Aquarium staff support.
- Collaborated with the Autism Society of Minnesota on a week-long camp to serve children on the autism spectrum.
- Welcomed more than 500 youth and adults to Toddler Tuesday programming during the winter months.
- During Fall 2018 the learning team at the Aquarium launched new early childhood offerings to meet demand for nature based play and early learning in the Twin Ports.
- The engagement team grew to include additional interpretation and animal encounter ambassadors to work directly with visitors on the exhibit floor. This growth was related to the new *Feel Connected* touch pools that opened in June 2018.
- Increased the number of special event and meeting rentals of Aquarium's spaces by 50%.
- In late August and early September, Aquarium staff installed and staffed a Lake Superior and Climate Change exhibit in the EcoExperience Building at the Minnesota State Fair. This project was designed and constructed by Aquarium staff. Some funding and logistical support was provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for printing and fabrication.

### **Exhibits/Husbandry**

Great Lakes Aquarium features individual animals from over 400 unique species found within the Great Lakes Basin, other freshwater ecosystems, and saltwater habitats.

#### **2018 Accomplishments:**

- Designed and fabricated three new touch pool experiences for visitors (moon jellyfish, horse shoe crab/sharks, Pacific Northwest tide pool).

- Added seven new displays featuring dwarf seahorses, comb jellyfish, sea nettles, American alligators, pipefish and terrestrial invertebrates.
- Repainted exhibit galleries and updated signage throughout the building to include new animals, updated styles and information. There is some level of updating that is on-going.
- Updated life support systems (i.e. water quality maintenance and upkeep) to increase efficiency and reduce energy consumption.
- Updated lighting fixtures throughout the exhibit halls to long-lasting, energy efficient LED alternatives.
- Repainted exhibit galleries and updated signage throughout the building to include new animals, updated styles and information. There is some level of updating that is on-going.
- Our husbandry staff has updated the animal data tracking process from using excel to using a specialized database program called, *Species 360*, by Zims. This software follows standards set forth by AZA for animal tracking.
- We received a Turkey Vulture from the Wild Center in Tupper Lake, New York. This vulture will be on display with our Bald Eagle in the *Raptor Ridge* exhibit opening in 2019.

### **Community Outreach**

GLA staff, board, and volunteers are present in the community and actively participate in activities that support the Aquarium's mission. Tickets are provided to individuals and groups to support charitable events in the community. GLA makes its facility available to individuals, businesses, and community groups that are looking for unique meeting and events spaces.

### **2018 Accomplishments:**

- Donated over 2,000 passes and 50 memberships to community silent auctions and charity events. In addition, GLA distributed 800 free family passes to community members during the Twin Ports Thanksgiving Buffet event at the DECC; 242 of the tickets were redeemed in 2017. Plans are underway for our participation in the 2018 event in November.
- Continued the *Sensory Friendly Saturday* program for visitors who experience anxiety in our hyper-stimulating space.
- Participated in a variety of school based science nights, PBS Kid's Club Carnival, the NCAA Juneteeth Event, Imagine Duluth 2035 Pop-up Playscape, Children's Museum Bubble Festival and a number of other community events that engage local families.
- Awarded twenty-five mini-grants to fund over 1,100 students' transportation from their schools to the Aquarium for field trip visits in 2018.
- Organized Aquarium staff volunteers for PBS Pledge Drive 2018, collecting individual donations towards public programming. In addition, staff introduced several animal guests to audiences during the pledge drive.
- Maintained membership in the Duluth Area Attractions Council, Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce, Eco Rotary, Greater Downtown Council, and Canal Park Business Association.
- Joined and active participant in Hermantown Chamber of Commerce, Superior Area Chamber of Commerce and Harbortown Rotary.
- Hosted and staffed a family activity space at Duluth-Superior Pride Festival in 2018.
- Collaborated with Minnesota Sea Grant and the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) on the Partners in Education Program to provide free Lake Superior programming to more than 1,500 elementary school youth in Duluth.
- Conducted a training for more than 100 YMCA Out of School Time Leaders and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant Recipients on instructional techniques and the use of free Aquarium teaching kits at sites across Duluth.

## **Inclusion**

At the Aquarium, we are committed to creating a culture of diversity, inclusion, and accessibility for visitors, employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders of the organization. This is both to create the best experience possible for all visitors and to create a workplace that allows staff and volunteers to thrive. In order to make these values a reality, GLA has outlined inclusion and accessibility as objectives in our current strategic plan and dedicated a staff position to focusing on these efforts. This has allowed us to create the time and space to begin researching and aligning our attention to areas of opportunity and action.

Efforts around inclusion, accessibility, and equity are vital to helping us advance our mission and ensuring all people have the opportunity for a meaningful and educational experience at our organization. Our vision is to be a unique destination for people from across Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the greater mid-west region, by creating experiences for people with different needs, abilities, and resources. We also envision working in-step with our attraction and nonprofit partners in Duluth to create similar experiences. One hope we have for 2019 is developing an ADA Advisory Committee to provide their expertise and experiences to attractions, businesses, nonprofits, etc. in creating an inclusive and accessible community.

## **Development, marketing and strategic planning**

GLA is committed to increasing support for the Aquarium by re-engaging with individuals and the funding community, planning for its long-term future, and maintaining a brand that supports its mission and is easily identifiable to the public.

Developed a new 30-second TV commercial in collaboration with The Cultural North. GLA is committed to increasing support for the Aquarium by re-engaging with individuals and the funding community, planning for its long-term future, and maintaining a brand that supports its mission and is easily identifiable to the public.

Marketing in 2018 focused on *Feel Connected* – the opening of three new touch pool experiences for visitors. This unique opportunity, striking graphics and strategic placement of marketing dollars in the Twin Cities market has contributed to increased attendance during the summer of 2018. The new touch pools were well received from tourists and locals alike. This new addition also resulted in the addition of 5 new part-time equivalent staff positions.

In terms of diversifying our funding base, we hosted our first annual fundraiser called *AquaAffair: Water, Whiskey, and Wine* on November 3, 2018. The intent of this event was to support animal care, educational programming and exhibit design at the Aquarium.

In particular, proceeds from this event support the completion of an indoor/outdoor exhibit for the resident bald eagle and turkey vulture. It also provided a new opportunity for supporters and community members to see the Aquarium at night in a casual adult setting while enjoying live music, local food and libations. Minnesota Power sponsored this event to offset the initial costs.

## **2018 accomplishments:**

- Recorded the highest visitor attendance in both 2017 and 2018 since 2002.
- Reached over 10,759 followers on Facebook, 2,497 followers on Instagram, and 1,522 followers on Twitter.
- Received widespread press coverage for all major Aquarium events.
- Partnered with North Shore Scenic Railroad and Vista Fleet to offer the Must-See Duluth Pass for discounted admission for all three local attractions.

- Received media coverage in the Twin Cities market related to the Lake Superior exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair.
- Secured sponsorship support and collaboration from local businesses for upcoming AquaAffair.

### **Sustainability - Energy Efficiency**

For the past 6 years the Aquarium has committed to working towards reducing our energy consumption. Working with Minnesota Power and Energy Insights, we developed an energy reduction plan. The plan included equipment upgrades such as:

- Equipped exhibit and HVAC pumps with variable frequency drives
- Replaced chillers with heat exchangers
- Replaced incandescent lights with LED fixtures and bulbs
- Installed occupancy sensors in rooms

These changes among others have dropped our energy consumption by 15 percent. Future plans include using harbor water to cool the building and exhibits, utilizing heat produced in our building's mechanical rooms to heat Aquarium water, and exploring the potential of installing a solar array on our building and a portion of the parking lot.

### **Other Efforts**

The work towards energy efficiency has merged into an Aquarium-wide vision of becoming a sustainable organization in all aspects of our facility. This past year was no exception as we continued to replace infrastructure and fixtures with more energy efficient products.

The Sustainability Committee has also continued to identify opportunities to reduce our environmental impact and facilitate behavior change in the community.

### **2018 accomplishments:**

- Installed water bottle filling stations at water fountains throughout the Aquarium.
- Eliminated plastic beverage bottles from the gift shop.
- Increased the number of sustainable and local products in the gift shop.
- Implemented a plastic film recycling system for Aquarium staff and visitors.
- Collaborated with Bag It Duluth on a public film screening, awareness event and reusable bag drive for CHUM