

# September

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS

# 2008

# OCEANARIUM



### GREAT ATTENDANCE!

Attendance at Oceanarium Brownsville was outstanding and set a record for the special events center at the Gladys Porter Zoo!

### WALMART VOLUNTEERS

Hundreds of WalMart volunteers from the Rio Grande Valley brought their creativity and excitement to thousands of children at Oceanarium!

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Exhibitors from various organizations help to make Oceanarium a tremendous success!

# OPENING DAY



## Visitors Wait Patiently

The line for admission into Oceanarium began as soon as the Gladys Porter Zoo opened. A steady flow of families extended the line to the length of the building and back around the corner. Admission to Oceanarium was \$1 and was handled by the Gladys Porter Zoo at a table just outside the event center.

## CROWDS QUICKLY BUILD FOR A DAY AT THE ZOO AND OCEANARIUM

The day started with exhibitors arriving at the zoo just after 7:30am. Zoo officials were extremely helpful in guiding exhibitor vehicles onto the zoo property and up to the special events center.

The events center was filled with exhibitors setting up booths and displays in preparation for the event. All the while, the crowd outside the zoo was beginning to build.

USI Inc. provided wristbands for attendance tracking. Gladys Porter Zoo ticket sales handled the distribution of the wristbands and the \$1.00 admission to Oceanarium.

Additionally, USI Inc., Pepsi Cola Inc., and Tony Romas provided and Exhibitor Hospitality Suite with the assistance of the Gladys Porter Zoo. The hospitality suite was well supplied with drink and various food items for event weary exhibitors and volunteers. The Gladys Porter Zoo provided wristbands to exhibitors and volunteers to help track admission to the hospitality suite.

"Everyone was so nice and kind to us." "It was a pleasure so see how well you took care of

us," Mary Helpful, Asst Manger of WalMart. The Hospitality Suite was a bit hit and is a staple of every USI Inc., produced event.

As 9 am rolled around the crowd outside the Gladys Porter Zoo had grown significantly with two long lines that extended down the entranceway and down the block. Excitement was building for many to were waiting patiently in line like Robert Ceballos, "I can't wait to see what's inside!"

Exhibitors and volunteers made their final preparations as Tim Smith, VP USI Inc., made the announcement, "two minutes to opening, all exhibitors should be at their booths!"

The doors finally opened at 10 am and the crowd eager to get a look a! Oceanarium flowed into the events center. There were gasps, smiles and plenty of wows heard from the children who entered.

Soon the events center was full with visitors at each booth. It would stay that way throughout the run of the event with very little down time or reduction in the size of the crowd. A clear sign of a successful event.



## Oceanarium: A place to learn about the oceans

A world of excitement, experiences and learning greeted the families that attended Oceanarium at the Gladys Porter Zoo. The moment children entered the event, they were immersed in hands-on activities, exhibits and displays.

WalMart volunteers along with several other exhibitors had worked with the Urban Science Initiative Inc, to produce educational activities that focused on the oceans and its many related industries. A hands-on, experiential component was a key element of all the learning areas. Each activity areas was designed to first engage children and allow them to explore and extend their knowledge of ocean science.

The response was excellent. Each learning area was crowded with children wanting to take part in the the activities from the beginning of the event down to the closing minutes some seven hours later.

“Oceanarium was an extraordinary event. Children and parents, both seemed to enjoy the event. The looks of children's faces while

attending, both seemed overwhelming. While they were able to treasure hunt, they learned about sea life and actually have a ton of on-hand experience with a variety of sea life. They seemed to enjoy every event and learned something at the same time,” Joe A. Nieto, Store #5165.

“The purpose of the Oceanarium was to create a fun and creative way for kids and adults of all ages to discover the important role that the ocean has in our daily lives. The biggest attribute to the Oceanarium's success was the involvement of the community. Gladys Porter Zoo, IBC, and Wal-Mart were several of the businesses who co-sponsored the event,” Alejandro Barrera, Store #5165.

“What I saw at the Oceanarium was a wonderful thing when I saw all those children with their parents wanting to learn about oceans and sea life. I could see the "Wow" in their eyes when they walked by all the booths where they were learning about all the things related to the oceans.” Tino Vidaurri Store Manager, #5493.



## OCEANARIUM!



### Hands-On Learning

It was clear that the activities that were planned for the children were designed with a “hands-on” approach and were solidly focused on ocean science. Children had the opportunity to participate in numerous activities that challenged and enhanced their knowledge of science.

# EXPERIENCES!



## Unique Experiences Abound!

There were many opportunities for children to experience things that were unique and exciting. Learning cargo on a large interactive map was awesome. Visiting with Captain Crab was a big hit and making your very own weather report video from a hurricane now, that was very cool!

## Volunteers Excited about Oceanarium!

"I had the privilege of volunteering at the Oceanarium over at the zoo. It was a great satisfaction just watching and getting involved with the kids. Even the parents of the young children were getting involved with the arts and crafts we had to offer at our booths," Yolanda Garcia, WalMart #5493.

"Oceanarium was incredible. I never expected to see such a large turnout. Our booth was "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader". Each child walked away with a candy bag regardless of whether they made it or not, so everyone was a winner. This was very educational for them. The parents would listen in to the questions and play along also. Several times the parent didn't get the answer but the child did. It was a great time for all," Ignacio Rodriguez, Jr. Store Manager, WalMart #0397.

I had a wonderful and great experience. It was exciting to see kids of all ages having so much fun and to know I was part of it, meant a lot to me. The kids kept coming back to play the game we had for them to win free fish. I would see the moms wanting to play for them

too. The adults had as much fun as the kids. I hope to be part of it again cause from beginning to end it was the best time I've had," Aida Z. Pharmacy Department Manager, WalMart #1041.

"I was so, lucky to have been chosen to lead this project. I am also, extremely grateful to all my co-workers that joined me to make this event a very successful one. We had 4 activities going on at the same time and it was an experience of a life time. We will be ready for next year," Emily Mercado, Pets Department Manager, WalMart #1041.

"The thing I loved the most about volunteering was seeing so many people interested in this event and wanting their children learn about ocean life," Michelle, Cashier WalMart #0883.

"It was worth every minute of it! Just to see the children light up everytime they received a prize!" Lettie M., Dept. Manager WalMart #0883.

Volunteers from WalMart, Port of Brownsville, IBC Bank, Hygeia, Pepsi Co, AT&T, Sea-Life Center, World Birding Center, UTB, TGLO, Adopt-A-Beach, Sea Turtle Center, among others put in tens of volunteer hours to make Oceanarium happen.



## Exhibits, Exhibitors, Give Aways, and More!

Exhibitors for Oceanarium at the Gladys Porter Zoo provided an exciting array of ocean experiences and learning for the thousands of children who attended the event.

Exhibits provided some rather unique experiences for children and parents alike! Young children enjoyed the Captain Crab puppet show, the IBC Money Machine and the Tornado Generator at the National Weather Service booth.

No doubt, one of the most exciting exhibits was the nearly full-sized Pirate ship along with a gang of "real Pirates!" "As we started construction on our boat display for the Oceanarium, little did we know what would come out of it and the effects it would have with kids of all ages. What seemed to have started like regular day turned out to be a fun full crowded pleasing event," Freddy Salinas, Manager WalMart #5165.

Children and their parents had the opportunity to learn, experience and see ocean science come alive with the many great

activities and exhibits that were present at Oceanarium.

"I had a blast helping the children color there necklaces and photo frames. You could tell that the children were happy. Also the other thing they enjoyed I think was watching themselves on T.V. acting as anchormen. I wish there was stuff like this when I was growing up," Pearl, WalMart Connection Center.

"I feel that the kids really enjoyed themselves. Some really liked doing the weather at the Market Booth and they also enjoyed the scavenger hunt. The adults also had a good time in the money booth. Everyone looked like they had a good time including the volunteers," Adali Cazare, WalMart #1296.

The creativity, excitement and enthusiasm of exhibitors for the program easily carried over to those children and adults who attended the event. Providing "hands-on" experiences is the hallmark of all USI Inc. programs and events. These type of activities engage the student and allow them to explore, extend and enhance their current knowledge and understanding of science concepts.



Taking  
Home some  
Ocean  
Science!

## EXHIBITORS



### Exhibitors Provide Unique Experiences

Getting a close-up look at a "real turtle" shell, seeing a small tornado first hand and exploring ocean life are just some of the exciting experiences exhibitors for Oceanarium 2008 had for the children and adults who attended the event.

# EXCITEMENT



## Give Aways were Awesome!

As scientists and educators we know the power of learning and the importance of having a little something to cement a learning experience with a child. A small token, give-away goes a long way to keeping the memories of a learning experience fresh with a child. Oceanarium exhibitors were simply awesome at this!

## The Power of Knowledge Exchanged at Oceanarium!

"What I saw at the Oceanarium was a wonderful thing when I saw all those children with their parents wanting to learn about oceans and sea life. I could see the "Wow" in their eyes when they walked by all the booths where they were learning about all the things related to the oceans," Tino Vidaurri Store Manager #5493.

"As a helping hand in our store's booth, my son and I, both had a great time. He stopped at every single booth and acquired few facts from every single one. After getting home from the event, he was quick to tell his Grandma the difference between a turtle and a tortoise, to which goes to show you that he learned while he had fun," Alejandro Barrera, WalMart #5165.

"The looks of children's faces while attending, both seemed overwhelming. While they were able to treasure hunt, they learned about sea life and actually have a ton of on-hand experience with a variety of sea life," A. Nieto, Store #5165.

"I took my son and he enjoyed all the games and all the educational booths that were there. It also gave me the opportunity to take

him around the zoo for the very first time," Valerie Sal., Store #5165

"It was a great satisfaction just watching and getting involved with the kids. There was no limit of age into getting involved we had kids from 3 years old to about their late teenage years," Yolanda Garcia (Claims).

No doubt, the excitement was in the air from the moment Oceanarium opened its doors. When children are excited about a subject it has been shown that they learn quicker, easier, and retain what they learn.

The primary factor in the excitement was the ability to touch, work with and in some cases hold the science right in the palm of your hand. This is what makes science fun and what makes Oceanarium a hit with children and their parents.

"After the event on the way home there wasn't anything better then talking to my son Branden and how much fun he had with all the Wal-Mart booths, he was most excited with the gold fish he got from store 1041 and all the zoo animals." Freddy Salinas, Manager #5165.



## Exhibitors Spread Science Knowledge and Fun

Oceanarium 2008 had a wonderful cadre of exhibitors who volunteered to present a world of ocean knowledge for children and parents. Each exhibitor provided a unique perspective of ocean science.

Children had the opportunity to explore, examine and get close-up to ocean life, ocean treasures, and much more. Unique opportunities to learn was the main focus at Oceanarium.

David Hicks with the University of Texas Brownsville, provided a series of small microscopes for children to examine and engage their scientific quest for knowledge about sea life.

This engaging activity provided the opportunity for many children not only to explore ocean life but to use and look through a microscope.

Looking for treasure and the ocean just about go hand in hand. Steve Hathcock opened the world of "beachcombing" to students as they visited his booth.

"While they were able to treasure hunt, they learned about sea life and actually have a ton of on-hand experience with a variety of sea life. They seemed to enjoy every event and learned something at the same time," Joe, WalMart #5165.

Bill Doan, owner of B&S Kites provided a spectacular display of kites, including a nearly two story tall box kite. The biggest hit with children was a hand-thrown kite/plane that they could launch across the exhibit area!

Exhibitors at the AT&T booth had a great interactive fish tank! Children would come by and choose a fish from the tank, turn it over and answer a special ocean question to get a prize!

Imagine walking up to a booth and seeing someone wearing a turtle shell! Jeff George, curator of Sea Turtle Inc., made children gasp with surprise when they saw him and his really interesting exhibit items.

Oceanarium exhibitors clearly made the event a wonderful success with their enthusiasm, energy, great exhibits and incredible interactive ideas!

"I loved watching the kids learning about ocean life and having fun all in the same time! It was a nice day!" Ester B. Cashier, WalMart.



## EXHIBITORS!





**ADULTS LEARN  
OCEAN SCIENCE TOO!**



**Oceanarium provides learning opportunities for both adults and children!**

Children weren't the only ones having fun and learning about the ocean and its varied lifeforms. Parents were enjoying the many opportunities to get up close, first hand experiences along with their children.

"I walked around checking out the other booths and we all had different activities going on. Overall the experience was awesome," Darlina, Toy Department Manager, WalMart.

"The adults had as much fun as the kids. I hope to be part of it again cause from beginning to end it was the best time I've had," Aida Z., Pharmacy Department Manager, Walmart.

"Even the parents of the young children were getting involved with the arts and crafts we had to offer at our booths. There was no limit of age into getting involved we had kids from 3yrs old to about their late teenage yrs," Yolanda Garcia, Claims WalMart.

"The adults also had a good time in the money booth. Everyone looked like they had a good time including the volunteers," Adali Cazares, WalMart #1296.

Clearly, Oceanarium provided as much fun and excitement for parents and volunteers as it did for the children. New experiences fuel the learning process with everyone, young or old. These experiences provide

the encouragement for additional learning and exploration outside of the event.



# CHARACTERS!



**Krusty  
Characters of  
Oceanarium!**

## Oceanarium hosts Characters!

Wow! Its Captain Crab and his buddies! Adding to the excitement of the wonderful interactive booths and activities were an incredible group of characters that charmed the thousands of children attended Oceanarium.

Krusty the Crab along with his friend spread the message of keeping out beaches clean through entertaining puppet shows.

Shiver me timbers! Its Pirates! Yes sir, the crew of the Black Pearl swashbuckled their way around Oceanarium seeking clues to buried treasure somewhere in Oceanarium. The pirates came ashore on their custom Pirate ship and posed for pictures with many in the crowd. "As we started construction on our boat display for the oceanarium, little did we know what would come out of it and the effects it would have with kids of all ages. what seemed to have started like regular day turned out to be a fun full crowded pleasing event," Freddy Salinas, WalMart #1565.

Aye Captain, there be "mermaids!" Yes, you heard right! What would an ocean event be without a mermaid!

"It was a great event for the kids, and my daughter enjoyed being the Mermaid and bringing smiles to so many kids faces. It was great to see such a great response from the kids." Cynthia Garcia, WalMart.

The "Cracker Jack" man was also at Oceanarium helping to raise awareness of the Ocean and handing out a few goodies at the same time.

WalMart's Mascot, Pato Sal also made a grand appearance at Oceanarium exciting the volunteers as well as the children.

All in all, the cast of characters brought an added level of excitement and interest for the many children who attended Oceanarium. Their willingness to "dress up" and bring their respective characters to life was a great addition to the event.

**"WOW!" is  
that a real life  
pirate?"**

# OCEANARIUM IS A SUCCESS!

The success of Oceanarium at the Gladys Porter Zoo can be traced back to the excellent support and assistance of zoo personnel, the wonderful support of WalMart volunteers, and the generosity and support of the Port of Brownsville, IBC Bank, Pepsi Cola, AT&T, and Tony Romas. Most importantly, the generous and kind support of our exhibitors also played a significant role.

## Alex Garcia

President  
Urban Science Initiative Inc.  
19118 Nature Oaks  
San Antonio, Texas  
[www.urbansciencelive.org](http://www.urbansciencelive.org)

## The Future

USI Inc., is committed to producing high quality science focused events in the Rio Grande Valley. We have already booked a date for Oceanarium 2009 at the Gladys Porter Zoo. We will be back next year on Saturday, September 12, 2009!

Additionally, we are working with the Brownsville Children Museum to bring WeatherQuest, our weather science event to the Valley in March of 2010.

We learn many things with each event that we produce as each location and event is absolutely unique in its nature. We will take our new found knowledge about this event and apply it to future events we bring to Brownsville. Thank You to our exhibitors and supporters for helping us bring science to life for so many children and adults.



## OCEANARIUM 2008

GLADYS PORTER ZOO

BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS