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Name Announced for Future Aquarium in Port Canaveral

MELBOURNE, Fla., Dec. 2, 2024 — East Coast Zoological Foundation (ECZF) is proud to share the name for its future aquarium set to be built along the shores of Port Canaveral. The future Bowen Aquarium will be ECZF's second campus, and the sister campus to Brevard Zoo.

The name honors two generous philanthropists whose gift launched the \$100 million Our Legacy Campaign to raise money for the Aquarium and Zoo: John and Pat Bowen. John and Pat Bowen are long-time members of Brevard Zoo, and upon their first visit, fell in love with ECZF's mission, felt a connection with the Zoo's animal residents and were impressed by our conservation efforts.

For more than 30 years, ECZF has been answering the call for wildlife, first with Brevard Zoo. The nonprofit soon expanded beyond its first campus to focus on Brevard County's backyard and becoming involved with helping save the Indian River Lagoon. Building an Aquarium and Conservation Center was the next step for ECZF to effect change beyond the Indian River Lagoon. However, after \$1 million in state funding was cut, this dream was delayed – until the Bowens stepped up.

After their initial gift, the Bowen's contributions have grown exponentially with millions of additional dollars given to ECZF to build the Aquarium and Conservation Center.

"They are the founding donors who put this project into motion, a regional project that's going to make a difference for all of central Florida," said Keith Winsten, CEO of ECZF. "By naming the aquarium after them, we are able to truly celebrate their generosity, their legacy and who they are, which we feel represents the best of mankind."

They offered the very first check toward ECZF's Our Legacy Campaign, the historic \$100 million effort toward building the Aquarium and supporting its sister campus, Brevard Zoo. Through this campaign, East Coast Zoological Foundation will be able to expand on our mission work in animal wellbeing, conservation and education. So far, this five-year campaign has raised more than 86% of this goal in its first three years.

"We are so thankful for the generosity and support of our community to make such a progression toward our goal," Keith said. "We look forward to the continued support, and we'll be excited to celebrate once we meet our goal."

As dedicated members of the Brevard community for decades, the Bowens saw the benefits of having our Aquarium's important conservation work making tangible impacts every day.

They see their gift as a "thank you" to Brevard County and the community, both of which they love very deeply.

"In honor of their incredible support, we are so proud to return the "thank you" by honoring their legacy by naming this transformational campus the Bowen Aquarium," Keith said.

Groundbreaking for the future Bowen Aquarium and Conservation Center is expected in 2025, with an anticipated opening after 2-3 years of construction.

Bowen Aquarium will offer a unique experience to guests with its focus on native Florida wildlife while also serving as a regional conservation hub with an emphasis on restoring the Indian River Lagoon and surrounding ecosystems. The Aquarium will also be home to two cutting-edge critical care facilities for sick or injured sea turtles and manatees.

Hands-on learning opportunities, interactive spaces and stunning habitats will inspire conservation action among guests and foster a deeper connection between people, the environment and wildlife.

This transformative project will engage over 525,000 visitors annually, promising to become a cornerstone of the region's cultural and economic vitality. The project is expected to create more than 1,200 jobs.

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About East Coast Zoological Foundation

Driven by a mission to answer the call, East Coast Zoological Foundation (ECZF) is focused on educating, engaging and empowering the community to take action for conservation. The 501c(3) nonprofit located in Melbourne, Fla., includes Brevard Zoo and Bowen Aquarium campuses that will work collaboratively to ensure the best results for wildlife. ECZF works directly with Florida species and the community to develop programs and workshops to make a difference locally and around the world. From sea turtle rehabilitations and releases, building living shorelines along the Indian River Lagoon, providing scholarships and grants to the community and more, the Foundation creates opportunities for guests to connect with nature and make an impact in conservation and education. Founded in 1986, ECZF is governed by a volunteer board of directors and receives no recurring operating funds from any city, county or state government, relying on donations from people and companies to continue answering the call for wildlife and the environment along Florida's Space Coast and beyond. To learn more, visit ourlegacycampaign.org.