John C. Racanelli Named CEO of the National Aquarium Institute

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Baltimore, MD (PRWEB) June 20, 2011 -- John C. Racanelli was named today Chief Executive Office (CEO) of the National Aquarium Institute (NAI) by unanimous approval of the Board of Directors.

The aquarium industry veteran, who assumes responsibilities July 18, will oversee the NAI’s aquariums in Baltimore and Washington DC, as well as the National Aquarium Conservation Center (NACC), the Center for Aquatic Life and Conservation (CALC), and the National Aquarium Foundation.

A passionate advocate for ocean conservation, Mr. Racanelli was formerly president of Racanelli Partners, Inc., a San Francisco based consulting firm that serves the needs of non-profit leaders nationally and globally, focusing on cultural and conservation organizations.

“With the confirmation of John Racanelli as the National Aquarium’s next CEO, the Board of Directors has clearly set an agenda for the future,” said Board Chair Jennifer Reynolds. “John’s wealth of experience in strategy development, change management, and fundraising provides the essential foundation needed to ensure the Aquarium’s national reputation and expand its conservation mission. His record of environmental accomplishments speaks directly to the organization’s goal of serving as a global voice for conservation.”

Racanelli has spent nearly 20 years in leadership positions at US aquariums. He was the first CEO of the Florida Aquarium in Tampa, where he built the facility, team and vision for Tampa Bay’s leading cultural attraction. Prior to that, he served for nine years on the leadership team of the Monterey Bay Aquarium as its VP of Marketing and Development, joining the aquarium a year before its opening.

“I believe the modern movement towards inspiring care for our blue planet can trace much of its origin to the National Aquarium, which set a new standard for appreciating the aquatic world 30 years ago,” said Racanelli. “I am deeply honored to be a part of carrying this mission forward.”

“This opportunity to lead and support NAI is the culmination of my own life’s work, and I will bear that responsibility with great dedication and humility. I can’t tell you how excited I am to lead and support the team that will propel this organization to its rightful place as a global voice for ocean and aquatic conservation.”

Racanelli recently completed a three-year assignment as Executive Advisor to renowned oceanographer Sylvia Earle, with whom he co-founded the Sylvia Earle Foundation. In addition to helping Dr. Earle build the board, mission and vision for her new foundation, John assisted her in the 2009 development and launch of Google Ocean, and in the creation of Mission Blue, a long term partnership with the National Geographic Society.

Other recent clients have included the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, for whom he led development of a five-year Global Plan of Action; the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS); the Surfrider Foundation; Google Inc.; and numerous other businesses and organizations nationwide.

“By recommending John Racanelli, the Aquarium’s search committee selected an individual whose breadth of
experience and environmental stewardship will ably address the multiple facets of the National Aquarium Institute,” noted Don Pettit, board member and search committee chair.

“In its 30th year, the Aquarium is no longer a single entity attraction. Today, it comprises aquariums in two cities, nationally recognized conservation education programs, major community, government, and corporate partnerships, a beautifully restored brown field park on the Patapsco’s Middle River, and a newly established Conservation Center. Behind the glass and beyond the glass, the National Aquarium is positioned for new achievements and success-- we look to John Racanelli to lead the way.”

Racanelli holds a degree in Strategic Management from Dominican University of California. He is a SCUBA diver, open water swimmer, sailor and surfer. Fluent in Spanish, he is a published author and commentator on NPR. The new CEO and his spouse, Susan, will relocate to Maryland from San Rafael, CA.

Racanelli succeeds David M. Pittenger who concludes 30 years of service to the National Aquarium, 15 of them as CEO. He arrives as the organization celebrates its 30th year on Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, and launches its future with a commitment to providing transforming experiences that inspire people to enjoy, respect, and protect the aquatic world.

About the National Aquarium

The National Aquarium is a non-profit, nationally recognized aquatic display, education and conservation organization with locations in Baltimore, MD, and Washington, DC. Through transforming experiences, the National Aquarium inspires people to enjoy, respect, and protect the aquatic world. The National Aquarium is globally engaged in aquatic conservation from Chesapeake Bay to Costa Rica; a world-class entertainment attraction with engaging exhibits; committed to education with programs that connect children with the aquatic environment; a sought-after partner with alliances around the world; and the #1 tourist attraction in Maryland and unique in Washington, DC, with more than 16,000 animals in its living collections.

For more information about the National Aquarium venues, programs and impact, visit www.aqua.org.

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