2020-2021
Annual Report
International Ocean Film Festival
Letter from the Executive Director

In March 2020, merely one week prior to Opening Night of the 17th Annual International Ocean Film Festival the global pandemic forced the cancellation of the film festival. The IOFF team quickly adapted and began offering free, ocean inspired films on our website accessible 24/7 to audiences around the world. With something for anyone, our global audience participation grew by more than 40%.

As the entire world slowly came to terms with a universal new normal, it became increasingly clear that audiences were seeking easy access to interesting, online entertainment. As teachers across the U.S. were forced to trade in their standard classroom teaching procedures to new socially distanced online platforms, the IOFF was uniquely positioned to offer a wide variety of ocean inspired films from around the world.

Fast forward to sixteen months later, and having survived the pandemic year with the unwavering support of sponsors and donors, the IOFF has evolved into the largest ocean film festival in the world. We continue to be committed to our mission and to serve as a platform for discussions around how to protect our oceans.

As we begin celebrating the 19th Annual IOFF our goal is to continue building our audiences by offering a hybrid presentation – both in person at our flagship venue, Cowell Theater in San Francisco as well as virtually online. We hope you will join us and help us plan for the next decade of ocean inspiring films.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers behind the scenes whose dedication and commitment have helped the IOFF maintain a presence during these challenging times. We look forward celebrating them in person at the 19th Annual IOFF on April 7–10, 2022.

For our oceans,

Ana Blanco
Executive Director
Film Festival

It became increasingly clear that the 18th Annual IOFF was going to be presented virtually giving rise to the theme of offering 18 days of film to celebrate 18 years of films. Without the capacity limitations and costs inherently associated with presenting the festival in a traditional brick and mortar theater venue, we were able to offer more than 90 online films versus the typical average of 55 films.

For our post-screening question and answer sessions with filmmakers we were able to offer 10 live streamed Q&As engaging global audiences in live discussions on key issues such as ocean acidification, restoring mangroves, shark conservation, coastal cultures and more. Not only were audiences engaged in the films, they became a part of the discussion and thus part of the possible solutions. All of the film director Q&As were recorded and hosted on the festival website for further viewing. Our records indicate that 40% of the viewers participated in live discussion with a larger percentage viewing them at a later date.

Traveling Program

The IOFF Traveling Program has made a select group of its official selections available to a larger audience across the US and around the world. By partnering with ocean conservation organizations and established film festivals, the IOFF works with film directors to extend the reach and message of their films. During this fiscal year, our partners offered their screenings directly through our online platform.

Now in its fourth year of partnering with the IOFF, organizers of CINEMARE International Ocean Film Festival in Kiel offered ten full length documentaries from Europe of all ocean subject matter.

Alpena Michigan, located in the northern part of the state along Lake Huron just offshore of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, one of sixteen marine protected areas of the U.S. With their inaugural film festival dating back to 2012, the film festival in Alpena has become an annual winter tradition for ocean lovers across the state of Michigan.
The annual IOFF Fall Benefit has always been an important component of our fundraising efforts and an opportunity to honor an Ocean Hero, inspiring individuals who are global leaders in ocean conservation. Prior Ocean Hero honorees have included Dr. Sylvia Earle (Mission Blue), Director Louis Psihoyos (The Cove) and Dr. Wallace J. Nichols (The Blue Mind) to name a few. In keeping with this tradition, we chose to host a virtual fundraising in December 2020 to honor award-winning photographer and wildlife conservationists Cristina Mittermeier (SeaLegacy, OnlyOne). Delivering her keynote speech virtually from her home in Vancouver, Ms. Mittermeier gave a passionate and inspiring message to our online audience about the urgency and the importance of protecting our oceans, and the power of film to educate and empower people to take action. By the end of the evening, we not only shared highlights of upcoming films, we also attracted a new global audience and surpassed our fundraising goals.

Online Ocean Education Program

Started out with a focus on California teachers in Fall 2020, the free online education program increased dramatically based on the demand by both teachers and principals alike. Over 20,000 middle school and high school science teachers throughout the states of California, Florida, South Carolina and Kansas were offered the online programs. The first three states were selected based on their Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) curriculum requirements, and their proximity to an AZA accredited aquarium or zoo association accredited aquarium, with Kansas being selected as a non-coastal state. For three weeks, teachers and students had access to more than 13 films and four post screening Q&A sessions.

Student Film Competition

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Student Film Competition (SFC) presented a new opportunity for at-home students to tap into their creative worlds and create their own film. Instead of actually going to a beach to make their films, many students used free online resources for their films. While the number of submissions may have been less than normal, the subject matters were just as interesting and important. With increased social media promotion and advertising films were submitted from four new countries: Mexico, Cyprus, Pakistan and Brazil.

Virtual Ocean Hero Fall Benefit

The annual IOFF Fall Benefit has always been an important component of our fundraising efforts and an opportunity to honor an Ocean Hero, inspiring individuals who are global leaders in ocean conservation. Prior Ocean Hero honorees have included Dr. Sylvia Earle (Mission Blue), Director Louis Psihoyos (The Cove) and Dr. Wallace J. Nichols (The Blue Mind) to name a few. In keeping with this tradition, we chose to host a virtual fundraising in December 2020 to honor award-winning photographer and wildlife conservationists Cristina Mittermeier (SeaLegacy, OnlyOne). Delivering her keynote speech virtually from her home in Vancouver, Ms. Mittermeier gave a passionate and inspiring message to our online audience about the urgency and the importance of protecting our oceans, and the power of film to educate and empower people to take action. By the end of the evening, we not only shared highlights of upcoming films, we also attracted a new global audience and surpassed our fundraising goals.
2020-2021 Financials, Donors & Sponsors

Our in-kind donations totaled $51,387.

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**Producer**
The Joseph R. Parker Foundation

**Director**
Orange County Community Foundation

**Leading Role**
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National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
PG&E
RBC Wealth Management

**Supporting Role**
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**Official Restaurant Sponsors**
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**Donors**

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Silicon Valley Community Foundation
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Paul Eveloff
Sebastian Nicholls
Laura Wais

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Lynn Berger
Ana Blanco
Jaclyn & Lauren B. Carey
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Dustin Brown
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Ocean Champion: Sylvia Earle
2019 Off the Reef Fall Benefit

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Christine Helling
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David Magnusson
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Malte Stryj
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