

# ODYSSEY

*Fall 2023*





## Letter from our Executive Director

*Our natural world is in a state of chaos. Santa Cruz County has had a front row seat to wildfires ravaging our mountains, extreme winter storms, and unprecedented flooding devastating homes and businesses. The most vulnerable in our community feel the greatest impact and the weight of climate change. At the O'Neill Sea Odyssey, we have witnessed a growing wave of anxiety and fear regarding the state of our natural world. Providing students an opportunity to experience and observe the power, beauty, and importance of the ocean helps them develop a deeper connection to the natural world. Spending time in nature reduces "crisis fatigue" and helps students leave the program motivated to be part of the solution.*

Environmental education is at the heart of the O'Neill Sea Odyssey (OSO). The OSO experience brings to life lessons from the classroom or online learning module. OSO provides real-time opportunities for students to apply the lessons they have learned in the field, in their own homes and communities. Through their student action projects, they realize their potential as agents of change. A Sea Odyssey experience is part of the journey towards environmental literacy. It is an investment in our future - a future where there is ecological

sustainability and economic prosperity for ourselves and everyone in our community.

This newsletter shares about the incredible work that has happened in the past year here at the O'Neill Sea Odyssey. The past year has been one of growth, progress, and great impact. Thank you for being part of this one of a kind experience. Your support makes a difference in the lives of our youth and the health of our planet.

Yours in community - Tracey

# Impact Report

2022-2023



# 3242

STUDENTS SERVED IN  
2022-23



# 70%

SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY  
DISADVANTAGED

# 92

TRANSPORTATION  
SCHOLARSHIPS



# 42%

MULTI-LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS



# 65

STUDENT ACTION  
PROJECTS



# 53%

FIRST TIME  
ON A BOAT  
ON THE  
OCEAN

## TRIP OUTCOMES

- Improved environmentally responsible behaviors.
- Increased of student's awareness related to watershed and ocean health.

## TRIPS BY COUNTY

- Santa Cruz 39%
- Monterey 27%
- Santa Clara 28%
- San Benito 3%
- Stanislaus 3%





# Odyssey Program Updates

## STUDENT ACTION

Climate activist, Greta Thunberg, tells us, “...*you are never too small to make a difference.*” This past year, we strengthened the student action component of the OSO experience. As a result, students report having an increased sense of connection and responsibility to our ocean and watersheds. They used their voices to organize beach and campus cleanups, develop PSA messages, perform food waste audits, and write letters to local representatives.

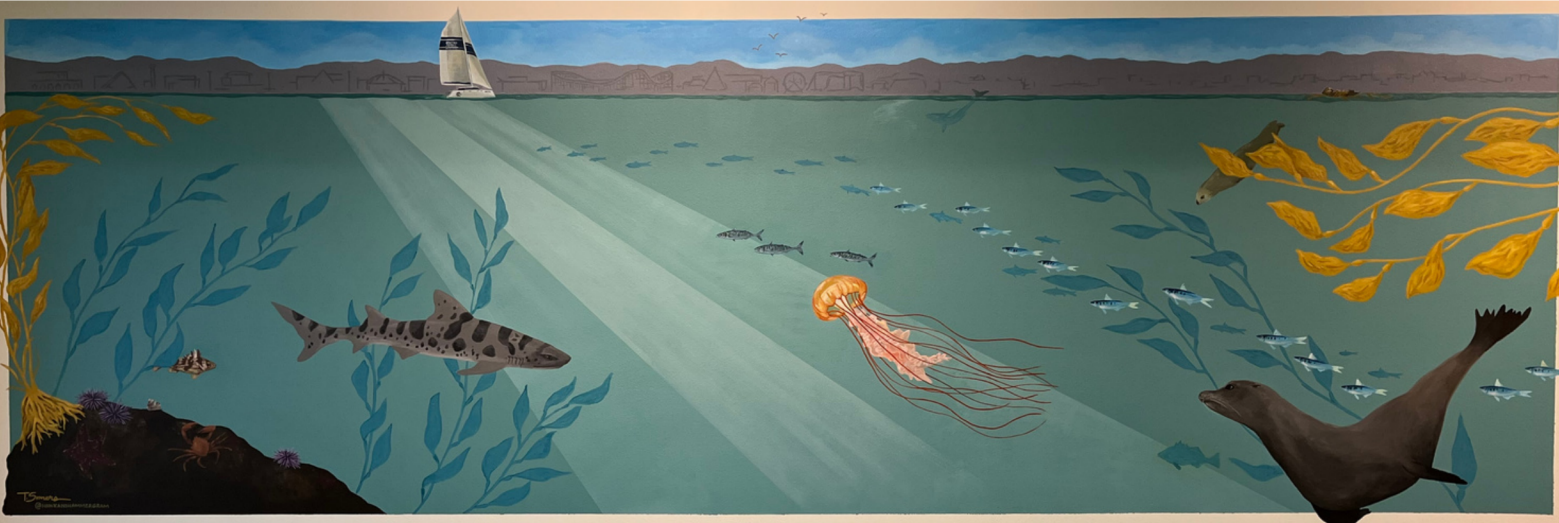
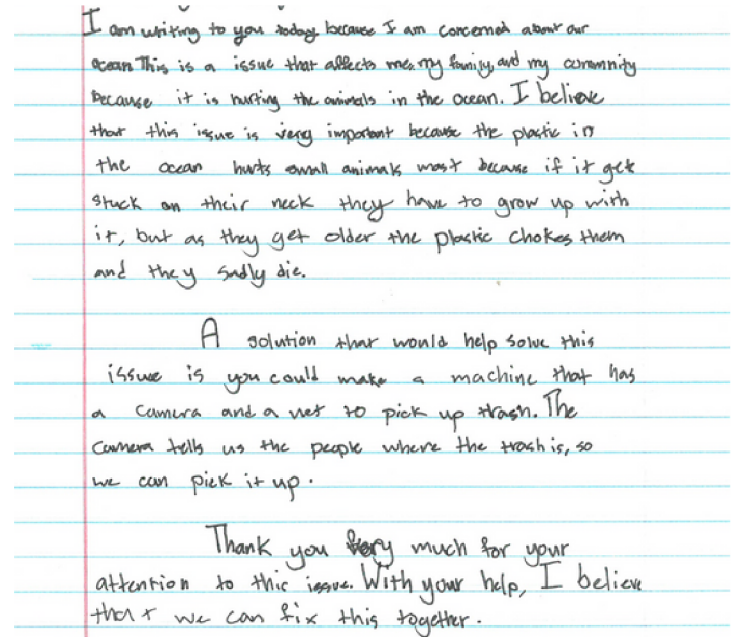
Two 5th-grade students from La Joya Elementary were surprised when they received personal notes from Congressman Panetta after they wrote a letter to his office advocating for the elimination of single-use plastics!

## PROGRAM RECOGNITION

During 2022-23, OSO was honored with the Sea Star Award for Education and Outreach from the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. This award acknowledges OSO’s exceptional contributions to raising awareness and knowledge about the Monterey Bay Sanctuary over the past 25 years.

## CLASSROOM MODERNIZATION MURAL

A vibrant and captivating new mural has transformed our Shoreside Education Center. Stretching across our entrance hall and the wall of our ecology classroom, the mural serves as a window into the marine ecosystem beneath the ocean’s surface. Created by a local artist, Tina Somers from Hawk and Hammer Creative Studios, it has become a focal point for our students and visitors. Thank you to the Santa Cruz Rotary Club, Santa Cruz Sunrise Rotary Club, Captain Mike Egan, and Santa Cruz County Bank for the generous funding that made this project possible.





# Thank You 2022-23 Contributors!

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“Best field trip ever!”  
~ Creekside Elementary

“This is such an important experience for students. We can learn a lot in the classroom, but being out on the Sea Odyssey sail boat and experiencing the fragile ecosystem helps them truly build empathy for our oceans. Now that they care more, we can go farther back in the classroom. THANK YOU!”

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