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## **Maine EPSCoR Partners with Maine Discovery Museum for New STEM Outreach**

Orono, ME – Maine EPSCoR at the University of Maine is pleased to announce a new collaboration with the Maine Discovery Museum in Bangor. As part of its new Sustainable Ecological Aquaculture Network (SEANET) project, a saltwater touch tank was installed at the museum to promote learning in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. This partnership benefits the community at large and offers visitors the opportunity to get up close and personal with a variety of sea creatures, encouraging interactive learning.

“The Maine Discovery Museum is extremely excited to be working with the University of Maine and the EPSCoR program,” says Niles Parker, executive director of the Maine Discovery Museum. “The saltwater touch tank, which was recently installed, is already a huge hit. It captures the attention of our young visitors the minute they walk in the door.”

“The hands-on programming being done that is related to Maine's coastal ecosystem is very popular and is clearly connecting with our visitors. We know that it is important to reach children at an early age when it comes to communicating scientific information and cultivating a love of learning. We feel that this partnership between the Maine Discovery Museum and Maine EPSCoR will succeed in this regard,” Parker explains.

Molly Joyce is a student outreach assistant with Maine EPSCoR. She facilitates the touch tank Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday. “It’s great to see how quickly visitors are connecting with the touch tank. A lot of the visitors, both children and parents, have never heard of or seen some of the animals we have in the tank, let alone have the opportunity to touch them. Being able to have the animal in-hand while explaining what makes it special and how it connects to aquaculture really helps to make the information tangible,” describes Joyce.

EPSCoR stands for the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. It is a federal program directed at states that have historically received smaller portions of federal research and development funding. EPSCoR develops partnerships between their higher education institutions, industry, government, and others to effect lasting improvements in research capacity, innovation, and economic development. For more information see [www.umaine.edu/epscor/](http://www.umaine.edu/epscor/)

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The mission of the Maine Discovery Museum (MDM) is to educate children and families, encourage creativity, nurture a sense of wonder, and to challenge all to learn in new and innovative ways. Exhibits and programs will be fun, interactive and thought provoking, and encourage participation by children and families of all abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds. As a unique community resource, the museum will provide opportunities for exploration and discovery that incorporate aspects of Maine into a greater understanding of the world in which we live. For more information visit:  
<https://www.mainediscoverymuseum.org/>

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