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## **COLUMBIA GAS OF MARYLAND AWARDS GRANT TO THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE**

### *Washington County Elementary and Middle Schools to Benefit from Free Science Programs*

*Baltimore, Md., (April 1, 2003)*--Columbia Gas of Maryland awarded the National Aquarium in Baltimore a \$10,000 grant to support the Aquarium's educational outreach efforts in the Washington County School District – a territory that Columbia Gas of Maryland services.

The grant will provide free Aquarium outreach programs to 10 Washington County elementary and middle schools in the 2003-2004 school year. Students will benefit from many hands-on activities the Aquarium offers including dissecting squid, building a crab pot like a Chesapeake waterman, or touching live animals. In addition, students will learn about the fragility of the Earth and its inhabitants, and the need to preserve and protect natural resources.

“By supporting our outreach program, Columbia Gas of Maryland is investing in our children and Maryland's environmental future,” says Joe Harber, manager of formal education. “These programs broaden students' horizons, introduce them to new experiences, and change their attitudes toward the environment and science.”

The Aquarium's outreach program consists of three staff members who visit schools in parts of Maryland, Northern Virginia and South Central Pennsylvania to inspire interest in, knowledge about and stewardship of aquatic environments. Last year, the program visited more than 175 sites to reach 25,437 students.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization and world-class aquatic institute, is Maryland's leading attraction, hosting more than 1.5 million visitors per year. Dedicated to education and conservation, it serves the environment, students, teachers, visitors and communities through a wide variety of programs. Its Web address is [www.aqua.org](http://www.aqua.org).

Columbia Gas of Maryland serves more than 31,000 customers in three counties. It is one of the 10 energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE:NI) NiSource distribution companies serve 3.7 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in nine states. More information about Columbia Gas of Maryland is available at [www.columbiagas.com](http://www.columbiagas.com).

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