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**CIAO, HON! NATIONAL AQUARIUM IN BALTIMORE
ANNOUNCES LAST CHANCE TO SEE SEAHORSES
Exhibit Moves to Italy in January 2004**

Baltimore, Md. (Oct. 15, 2003) – The National Aquarium in Baltimore’s blockbuster exhibit *Seahorses: Beyond Imagination* will say “Ciao, Baltimore!” in just three months when they move to Italy. Visitors can view the exhibit in Baltimore through January 4, 2004.

Designed by Aquarium staff as a temporary exhibit that opened in March 2001, *Seahorses: Beyond Imagination* is the all-time top-rated exhibit for the Aquarium. More than three million people have marveled at the 20 species of seahorses, sea dragons and pipefish that hail from global coastal regions in Australia to the Chesapeake Bay.

Independent surveys by John Morey and Associates show that *Seahorses: Beyond Imagination* garnered more “excellent” ratings than any zoo or aquarium exhibit it surveys nationwide each year. More than 90 percent of all visitors rated it as “excellent.”

“The public’s response to these animals and the habitats we created for them far exceeded our expectations,” said David Pittenger, executive director of the National Aquarium in Baltimore. “As threatened coastal species, seahorses serve as global ambassadors for marine conservation. We hope they will continue to captivate and educate the public in Europe as they have here in the U.S.”

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From the dwarf seahorses that reach just one inch to the exotic leafy sea dragons that appear more like floating plants than live animals, the animals are the stars of this exhibit. Supporting cast includes nine dramatic, handcrafted exhibits; originally composed music; and high-quality video that includes fascinating scenes of male seahorses giving birth.

Aquarium staff began shipping behind-the-scenes components to Italy in September, allowing time for the water quality to reach perfect conditions before the animals arrive in January.

Best times to visit the Aquarium are daily before 11:00 a.m. and after 3:00 p.m. As a special lunchtime offer through November 21, 2003, adults may visit the Aquarium for just \$10 between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with the coupon available at: <http://www.aqua.org/lunch>. The Aquarium also offers Fridays after Five, where tickets are just five dollars per person after 5:00 p.m., September through March.

Seahorse information and tickets are available online at <http://www.aqua.org>.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, a non-profit organization, is Baltimore's leading attraction, hosting more than 1.6 million visitors per year. The Aquarium's mission is to connect people with aquatic life in order to create a better world for both. Its impact extends well beyond the walls through more than a dozen programs that serve the environment and the community.