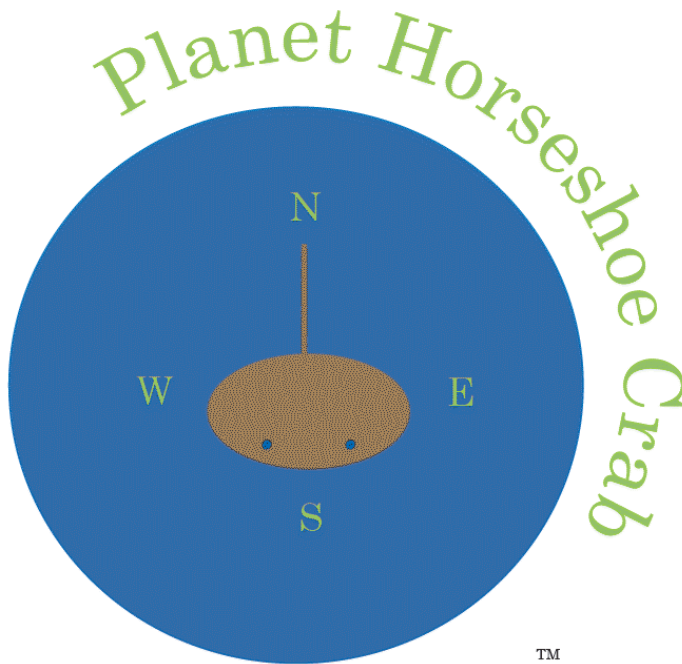


Youth Horseshoe Crab Advocate Places in top 5 of National Contest



Alex Zerphy, age 11, recognized a need for a horseshoe crab awareness campaign regarding the global impact of this creature. He created *Planet Horseshoe Crab* after his discovery of horseshoe crab eggs at his community's beach in May of 2007. He was digging in the sand at Hillsmere Shores in Annapolis, Maryland. Alex noticed very tiny orbs in the sand. Upon closer inspection, he could see movement in these translucent bluish-green spheres. His subsequent research identified these spheres as the about-to-hatch eggs of *Limulus polyphemus*, the horseshoe crab species indigenous to the east coast of the United States.

Alex entered his idea in a national contest, the Akita to Zebra Challenge at By Kids For Kids, sponsored by The Weather Channel. The contest was designed to encourage youth to create ideas to *help improve the life of an animal*. Alex's entry was selected as one of the top 5 entries in January of 2009. Here's what Alex had to say about his campaign:

"My idea is an awareness campaign on horseshoe crabs and their contribution to our well-being. Not many people are familiar with horseshoe crabs and those who are probably do not think about horseshoe crabs as heroes. Every prescription drug and

vaccine is tested for bacteria by using horseshoe crab blood. The crabs are bled and released; only to be caught and used as bait by conch fishermen. We need people to get involved in horseshoe crab surveys to better understand these animals. My campaign will inspire people to come up with alternate testing for prescription drugs and put harsher restrictions on fishing for them to be used as bait. The campaign will also motivate people to flip stranded horseshoe crabs over to keep their book gills moist which keeps them alive.”

In order to spread the word about these amazing creatures, Alex created *Planet Horseshoe Crab* flyers. He spends hours handing them out to the public and speaking about the global contributions of the horseshoe crab. Most people are unaware of how this creature affects their daily lives.

The horseshoe crab has inhabited Earth for over 445 million years. Humans have used these creatures for many of their amazing properties. Much of what we know regarding modern ophthalmology we owe to studying the horseshoe crab. Today horseshoe crabs are harvested and bled for Limulus amebocyte lysate, or LAL, which is used to test all intravenous drugs, vaccines, and medical devices to ensure they are free of bacterial contamination. The chitin from their shells is used to manufacture dissolvable sutures, contact lenses, surgical sponges, artificial blood vessels, and more. Horseshoe crabs save human lives every day; Alex’s project is dedicated to returning the favor.

Alex’s enthusiasm is nothing short of contagious. In 2008 Alex and his parents, Jeni and Matt, conducted rudimentary surveys of spawning horseshoe crab populations at the Hillsmere beach, participated in Delaware Bay surveys, and began raising Chesapeake Bay horseshoe crabs through the Maryland DNR’s Horseshoe Crabs in the Classroom program. Alex’s passion for the amazing role of the horseshoe crab in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and in all of our daily lives led to the establishment of The Chesapeake Conservation Center, inc. in September of 2008.

The Chesapeake Conservation Center, inc. is a not-for-profit corporation working towards 501(c) (3) non-profit status over the next year. More information about how you can join the public support of this campaign can be found at www.cc-center.org or you can contact Alex by email at alex@cc-center.org.

Look for more from *Planet Horseshoe Crab* in the near future!