

NEWS RELEASE

717 General Booth Blvd. Virginia Beach, VA 23451



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Mackenzie Di Nardo | Virginia Aquarium | MDiNardo@VirginiaAquarium.com
Alex Dye | Cultural Affairs Department | CDye@VBGov.com

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Mural Painting to Transform the Virginia Aquarium's Façade

(Virginia Beach, VA) – A marine-inspired mural will soon adorn the façade of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center. Artist Sarah Gallahan, a Virginia native, was commissioned for this mural project and will begin work on the 2,508-square-foot canvas, approximately 66 feet wide by 38 feet high, at the Virginia Aquarium on Monday, September 12, 2022.

The City of Virginia Beach's Cultural Affairs Department launched the mural project in collaboration with the Virginia Aquarium and sought an artist to design and paint a large mural to transform the Aquarium's building and entrance into an inspiring and welcoming moment for visitors and passersby. Earlier this year, Cultural Affairs assembled a public art committee to review the 20 applications received from artists based locally, regionally, and nationally. The committee was comprised of citizen representatives, public art committee members, Cultural Affairs staff, and Virginia Aquarium staff.

During the review process, the public art committee was looking for artwork that celebrates the natural world and our local eco- and aquatic history and that reflects the Virginia Aquarium's mission and art. Gallahan's submission illustrated three sea turtles swimming under water, artistically representing the guest experience at the Aquarium, the work of the Stranding Response Program, and the Aquarium's mission to protect endangered species and the marine environment. The artwork will be revealed at the completion of the project; however, sneak peeks of the artwork will publish on the Aquarium's social channels throughout the duration of the project.

From the northern Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Sarah Gallahan is a multi-talented creator who gives life to her clients' imaginations through her mural artwork. Gallahan says, "The Virginia Aquarium is a beautifully immersive place for people of all ages, and I am thrilled for the opportunity to create a new experience that inspires guests to continue loving and caring for the marine environment." When describing her art and design style she says, "I strive for realism with my own artistic touch of bold colors and clean lines to guide the viewer through the scene." Sarah's portfolio can be found on her Instagram, [@sarahgallahanart](https://www.instagram.com/sarahgallahanart).

The project is estimated to take two weeks with a projected completion date of September 23, weather permitting. **Media is invited to attend a scheduled meet-up to conduct interviews with the artist on Friday, September 16 from 7-8:30 a.m. at the Virginia Aquarium. Please reach out to Mackenzie Di Nardo directly for additional details.**

This project is a collaboration between the City of Virginia Beach's departments of Cultural Affairs and the Virginia Aquarium and is funded by the Aquarium. To learn more about the City of Virginia Beach Public Art program, visit VBPublicArt.org.

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. The Aquarium is also a member of World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The Virginia Aquarium's mission is to inspire conservation of the marine environment through education, research, and sustainable practices. It is located at 717 General Booth Boulevard, just south of Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach. Visit www.VirginiaAquarium.com for more information.

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The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, supports the work of the Virginia Aquarium. The Foundation procures and maintains the Aquarium's exhibits, including the animals and habitats. It is also responsible for annual and capital fundraising, administration and funding for the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program, conservation and scientific research efforts, and the Aquarium's mission-related education programs. You can be a part of our mission by making a [tax-deductible donation](#) to support our programming.

City of Virginia Beach Cultural Affairs Department

The Cultural Affairs Department engages residents and visitors through meaningful arts, heritage, and cultural experiences to connect and strengthen communities. The Department assists and directs the Virginia Beach Arts & Humanities Commission, coordinates the City's Public Art Program, oversees Virginia Beach History Museums, provides contract management for the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts, serves as the liaison with Virginia MOCA and the ViBe Creative District, and serves as a resource to local arts and humanities organizations.