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PRIDE OF AMERICA HOSTS TURTLE RELEASE, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR ISLAND KEIKI

HONOLULU – October 20, 2008 -- NCL America has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS), Sea Life Park, Hawai'i Preparatory Academy, and Maui Ocean Center to sponsor the **Science Day at Sea** program on board Pride of America. The week-long program will take place at each port of call (Kahului, Hilo, Kailua-Kona, Nawiliwili) during Pride of America's seven-day cruise that departs Honolulu on October 18, 2008.

At each port, approximately 75 students will board Pride of America to participate in *Science Day at Sea*. This program will provide students the opportunity to tour the cruise ship to see how a "city at sea" operates; learn about green sea turtles and research conducted in Hawai'i; discover more about plankton and water quality with samples taken dockside on each island; and understand more about humpback whales and research and rescue programs being implemented in Hawai'i.

"We are pleased to launch the *Science Day at Sea* program that provides island keiki with a unique learning experience aboard Pride of America," said Alan Yamamoto, NCL America's vice president of Hawai'i operations. "It is important to raise awareness among our keiki about the need to protect and preserve our natural resources for generations to come."

In addition to the *Science Day at Sea* program, six Hawaiian green sea turtles captive bred from Sea Life Park will be released off the coast of Kaua'i on October 24. The release is part of a NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center research project to learn more about the life and travel patterns of young turtles in the open ocean. Three turtles will be outfitted with satellite transmitters which will allow researchers to receive information about their movements and behavioral patterns in their oceanic habitat.

Including this current turtle release, NCL America, NOAA and Sea Life Park have teamed up to release more than 61 green sea turtles from NCL America vessels since 2006.

George Balazs, Leader of the Marine Turtle Research Program, is conducting the study that is using captive-bred turtles from Sea Life Park. "The unique and generous partnership of this project with NCLA on behalf of sea turtle conservation has been one of the most rewarding activities of my 36-year career to restore a species once on the brink of extinction in the Hawaiian Islands. I look forward to meeting the school children at each port-of-call to share our excitement and science knowledge with them."

"In addition to providing an educational experience for island keiki, the turtle release program provides an outstanding opportunity for guests aboard Pride of America to learn more about Hawai'i's environment and the importance of protecting of our natural resources," said Yamamoto.

Stephanie Flood, Education Manager, Sea Life Park, said, "Our sea turtle breeding program continues to be a resounding success as a result of events such as this. Not only are we releasing these turtles into the wild and educating our keiki, but this provides a means to educate travelers from all over the world who are here to experience Hawai'i."

Naomi McIntosh, Sanctuary Superintendent, NOAA HIHWNMS added, "Hawai'i's marine environment is the perfect natural laboratory to inspire and encourage our students to take an interest in protecting our ocean resources. This partnership provides an opportunity for students to see, touch and learn about Hawai'i oceans and its importance to us."

Schools and organization participating in the *Science Day at Sea* Program include:

Kahului, Maui:

- Kalama Intermediate School
- Kīhei Charter School
- Kamahameha School – Maui Campus
- Boy Scouts
- STEM Academy Kīhei Charter

Hilo, Hawai'i Island:

- Connections Charter School
- Ka 'Umeke Kaeo Charter School

Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i Island:

- Kealakehe Middle School
- Hawai'i Preparatory Academy
- West Hawai'i Explorations Academy

Nawiliwili, Kaua'i:

- Kaua'i High School
- Chiefess Kamakahelei Middle School
- King Kaumuali'i Elementary School

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