For Immediate Release

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Our nation is currently facing many challenges and our collective dialogue to discussing these issues is, at times, divisive. But, as a culture the statistics illuminate that we share a strong core value of charitable giving. As a nation, we privately donate twice as much to non-profit organizations compared to any other developed nation totaling 2% of our gross national product. Even more significant is the time and service that people contribute, with a quarter of the adult U.S. population volunteering annually.¹ Last year, almost three-quarter of charitable gifts stemmed from individuals rather than foundations, corporations, or government.¹ Most cultures have a tradition of giving, but where did the framework for philanthropy come from in the United States?

Modern philanthropy concepts in the United States can be traced to the societal changes in Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance. A new ideal of private responsibility with public oversight began to emerge, which laid the foundation for the charitable giving structure we have in the United States today. The word philanthropy entered the English language during the same timeframe and stems from the Greek word philanthropia, which literally translates to a “love of mankind”.² Giving is fundamental to our establishment as a nation, with the earliest European settlements in North America receiving aid from the Native Americans, who also value the traditions of giving and reciprocity. In the early 1700’s, Massachusetts minister, Cotton Mather, published an essay encouraging people to do good. He is now recognized as the father of the individualistic, voluntary tradition of American giving. A few years later, Benjamin Franklin founded the Junto Club in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Junto Club was a “Mutual Benefit Society” with the goal of sponsoring civic improvements to prevent, rather than combat, poverty. Franklin is credited as starting a secular model of giving in the United States. From these foundations, charitable giving grew to what we now see today.

Even though it is called “giving” this money is not a give-away. The non-profit beneficiaries of your gift form a broad-ranging social network of churches, schools, research and development, educational opportunities, and environmental sustainability initiatives. For-profit businesses and government form the backbone of the United States’ market economy, with the non-profit sector filling the gaps like the discs in your spine. You, as the donor, can vote with your dollars and support the non-profits with missions which align with your values. By
supporting community-based ideals like education, health and human services, and community benefit programs, your charitable gift fuels innovation and business growth.

Harbor WildWatch is a Gig Harbor based non-profit which strives to inspire stewardship of the Puget Sound through fun, interactive programs that encourage curiosity and questions. At Harbor WildWatch, over half of our revenue stems from individual donors who value science education and stewardship of our local environment. In partnership with our grant funding, we offer some wonderful programs to connect school children and the community to the beauty of the Puget Sound.

- Annually, we deliver over 500 classroom and field-based science programs to nearly 10,000 students. We offer programs to all students of all ages - from preschool children to college interns.
- In the community, we offer approximately 200 interactive programs ranging from speakers about issues relating to the science and health of the Puget Sound to touch tanks where you can touch a sea star or sea cucumber to guided beach and wetland walks.
- We are grateful to over 60 volunteers who also lend their time and expertise to make Harbor WildWatch a success!

This year, please consider donating to the non-profit organization of your choice. At Harbor WildWatch, we are thankful to everyone who donates to support our mission to inspire stewardship of the Puget Sound through fun learning activities. Donations to our Annual Appeal campaign can be made at our website, Harborwildwatch.org.

*Harbor WildWatch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental education organization based in Gig Harbor, WA. Founded in 2004, their mission is to inspire stewardship for Puget Sound by providing learning opportunities about the environment to the people in the local community. Through more than 500 fun and interactive programs each year, Harbor WildWatch hopes to inform residents and visitors about local marine life and elicit their involvement in preserving our natural resources. To make a donation or learn more about Harbor WildWatch, visit www.harborwildwatch.org or follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter).*

References:
1 National Philanthropic Trust (nptrust.org), accessed on 9 November 2017
2 Historyofgiving.org, accessed on 9 November 2017