Harbor WildWatch is thrilled to re-open the Skansie Visitor Interpretative Center on March 2, 2017, in partnership with the City of Gig Harbor and a corps of dedicated visitor center volunteers. Residents and visitors will be surprised at the new educational displays now found in the historic Skansie House. Harbor WildWatch received a $25,000 grant from the Ben B. Cheney Foundation in 2016 to fund exhibit improvements. The Cheney Foundation focuses their giving in communities where the Cheney Lumber Company was historically active. The new exhibits are the result of a year-long planning process to bring visitors and residents down to Skansie Brothers Park to experience Gig Harbor’s natural and cultural history firsthand.

Harbor WildWatch’s earliest educational outreach programs started in 2004 and featured their popular touch tanks. Thus, the cornerstone of the new exhibit is a beautiful touch tank. “The new touch tank in the Skansie House is a larger, more permanent version of what we offer during the Summer Sounds concerts and the Waterfront Farmer’s Market”, says Lindsey Stover, Executive Director of Harbor WildWatch. Now, visitors can enjoy the touch tanks year round. Adults and children love to dip a finger in to feel the sturdy exterior of a sea star or the squishy spikes of a sea cucumber or experience the quick reflexes of a feather duster tube worm.

Another highlight of the new exhibit is a sandbox. But, this is not your kid’s backyard sandbox. State of the art computer graphics and 3-D projection technology make this the sandbox of your wildest childhood imagination. “The augmented reality sandbox allows visitors a hands-on opportunity to explore a watershed of their own creation. This sophisticated technology projects changes in the topography of the sand in real time,” says Rachel Easton, Education Director at Harbor WildWatch. You (and the kids, if you share!) can dig rivers, bays and lakes, or pile sand into hills and mountains. Then let the virtual rain water fall and collect on the landscape! Watersheds are important because it is the core concept that connects a healthy landscape to a healthy Puget Sound. The sandbox is a great tool to learn about watersheds and it fits Harbor WildWatch’s motto: Learn. Have Fun.

Other exhibit features include a live underwater video feed giving you a fish-eye view of what is swimming and crawling around Gig Harbor Bay. Microscopes with rotating educational projects and an impressive collection of skulls, including a newly donated juvenile gray whale skull from NOAA, will be on display.

Harbor WildWatch is excited to offer this reimagined space as a downtown destination for the Gig Harbor community. “The exhibit will allow us to connect with our community on a more consistent basis, and will also be the foundation for more in-house classes and programs”, says Stover. During the summer, there will be free, drop-in science programs led by a Harbor WildWatch naturalist. And next fall, we will offer an additional Storybook Science program for the preschool set which will support early literacy, science and fun, hands-on interactive play with the sandbox and touch tanks.
Drop in and explore the Skansie Visitor Interpretative Center.

**Winter hours** (October -March)
Thursday-Saturday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

**Summer hours** (April-September)
Wednesday-Sunday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

*Harbor WildWatch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental education organization based in Gig Harbor, WA. 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 600 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](http://www.harborwildwatch.org).*