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Video and Photo: Available upon request

## **Tampa Bay area students recognized at Capitol Hill Ocean Week**

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation invited students from SCUBAnauts International (SNI) to their 7<sup>th</sup> annual leadership awards dinner held Tuesday in Washington D.C. The SCUBAnauts organization received recognition for their volunteer marine conservation and outreach efforts.

While in Washington, students discussed their work with Congressman Gene Taylor of Mississippi. They also spoke with Dr. Robert Ballard, the scientist who discovered the Titanic, as well as other marine conservation and science experts. Students learned about current marine research and ocean conservation issues at Capitol Hill Ocean Week scientific seminars.

Coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Capitol Hill Ocean Week 2009 highlighted the inextricable link between the ocean and the economy, and suggested tangible ways sound ocean policies impact improvements in our economy.

SNI teaches students ages 12 – 18 about the marine world through applied science. Formed in 2001 in Tampa Bay, SNI has grown to include chapters in Tarpon Springs and Key West. Students that participate in the SCUBAnaut program complete rigorous SCUBA training in order to take part in diving activities. SNI has performed scientific dives in Tampa Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, Florida Keys, the Bahamas and other locations.

For more information on SNI, visit [www.scubanautsintl.org](http://www.scubanautsintl.org).