

Fishy, Fishy In the Sea

Clarence T.C. Ching was a kind and generous man that did many things to help Hawaii and its residents. Clarence T.C. Ching followed and lived his own motto: "Ask not what your community can do for you. Ask what you can do for your community."

Something that needs to be done in my community is to increase the interest in marine studies. The decrease in marine life studies can lead to neglect of Hawaii's marine life, which can lead to careless pollution. Pollution can build up for many years and will take several more years to find ways to reduce the pollution. This is shown in the case of Salt Lake. Salt Lake used to be a place in which people could not swim or fish in because it was so heavily polluted with both human and environmental waste. If we are not careful, our waterways and beaches could also end up like this. Clarence T.C. Ching filled in polluted Salt Lake and helped to develop the once polluted wasteland into a beautiful community that people could enjoy. To prevent this type of pollution from happening, educating the community about marine life is essential.

Solving this problem all starts with increasing the number of visitors to the Waikiki Aquarium, the designated Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center for the Pacific. The aquarium receives about 330,000 visitors annually, of which 8% are made up of school children. The number of visitors is quite small compared to the 1,500,000 visitors a large museum like Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies attract. Also, the nearby Honolulu Zoo attracts about 400,000 more visitors than the Aquarium. This shows that people are less interested in marine life.

Without people taking an interest in marine life, community awareness of our islands' ecosystems will decrease. This can be dangerous because people may unknowingly pollute our waters and destroy reefs, thereby, endangering native marine species.

Dr. Andrew Rossiter, the Aquarium's director since 2004, says that his long-term goal for the Aquarium is to "increase public awareness of the ecology and conservation of marine life and reef habitats," (Waikiki Aquarium, ©2005). To help him accomplish this, I think that marine science should be included in regular science and biology classes, not just in high school, but in all school levels. These classes could spark the interest of students in this field of science. Class projects could be developed in collaboration with businesses to promote community awareness on how to protect our marine life. These classes could help fuel students' goals to pursue a college degree in this field.

If we are not careful, disregard of our marine life can increase water pollution, cause extinction of native species, and deplete one of our food sources. Today, less than 1% of our near-shore waters and coral reefs are adequately protected. Hawaii's coral reefs and near-shore waters are home to more than 7,000 marine life forms; 25% of which are found nowhere else on Earth. Hawaii and its ecosystem change every day. The longer we wait, the more the problem increases.

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