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Aquarium of Niagara names Chad Fifer as president and CEO

BUFFALO, NY – May 1, 2024 – The Niagara Aquarium Foundation Board of Trustees today announced the appointment of Chad Fifer as president and CEO of the Aquarium of Niagara. His official start date is June 17.

"When we began our national search, we were looking for a candidate with the right mix of leadership, fundraising, and animal care experience," said Christine Lorenz, chair, Niagara Aquarium Foundation Board of Trustees. "Chad checked all the boxes, bringing an exciting energy and strategically focused approach to leadership and collaboration, coupled with being an effective fundraiser and visionary innovator. As a board, we are confident that Chad is the right leader to build on the Aquarium's current momentum, while positioning the organization for continued growth into the future."

With nearly 25 years of zoological, education and development experience, Fifer joins the Aquarium of Niagara from Dayton Society of Natural History in Dayton, Ohio, where he served as chief operating officer for the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery and SunWatch Native American Village. Prior to that, he served as director of education at the Nashville Zoo and held positions with Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Zoo Knoxville, Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies, and Brevard Zoo. Fifer currently serves as vice chair of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Conservation Education Committee, and on the advisory board for the Modeling Zoos and Aquariums as Inclusive Communities of Science Project. He will be relocating to Western New York with his young family in the coming months.

"This is an amazing opportunity to lead a strong team responsible for such a vibrant and growing cultural institution like the Aquarium of Niagara," said Fifer. "It's an exciting time with the opening of Great Lakes 360, the Aquarium's largest expansion project in its history, only months away, and I look forward to collaborating with the team, the board of trustees, stakeholders, and the community as we enhance the Aquarium experience and its offerings for both residents and visitors alike."

Tracie Schafer, the Aquarium's vice president of finance and administration, has been serving as interim president and CEO since Feb. 1, 2024.

"Thank you to Tracie and the entire leadership team for their outstanding commitment during this transition. They never skipped a beat from day-to-day operations to special events and preparing to open Great Lakes 360 this summer," added Lorenz.

About the Aquarium of Niagara

The Aquarium of Niagara is a 501(C)3 non-profit organization. With our community and our partners, we celebrate our natural wonders and inspire people to make a difference for aquatic life. We are home to more than 120 different species, including eight rescued and non-releasable marine mammals. The Aquarium is open daily at 9:00am year-round, except for Christmas and Thanksgiving. For more information, visit aquariumofniagara.org.

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