The Steinmetz Foundation has brought Ocean Institute something to be thankful for during this month of gratitude. Throughout the pandemic OI has continually introduced new programs to fit within parameters and restrictions. From online curriculum to “All Out(doors)” programming for families, to summer camps that offered big experiences on a small scale, pandemic constraints inspired innovative new offerings.

The recent launch of Virtual Field Trips during which classes participate in unique activities live from Ocean Institute, presented a new challenge. “Demand exceeded our ability to supply.” according to Dr. Wendy Marshall, President and CEO. “Within days of introducing our Virtual Field Trips, our schedule through the end of the year was full. Schools are simply starving for motivating real-world content that engages and inspires students.” With donors removing financial barriers to the program for schools in need, Ocean Institute was flooded with interest that exceeded its ability to deliver. Unlike a pre-recorded video or large-scale webinar, Ocean Institute’s Virtual Field Trips were designed to be highly interactive, with only one class participating at a time. Fifth grade teacher Lindsay Riscalla from Courreges Elementary in Fountain Valley underscored the benefits of this approach, “My students loved that they could use the chat box or talk directly to the instructor.” But this small-scale approach limited the number of virtual field trips that could be offered each day.

“We quickly realized that our only obstacle to fulfilling all requests was equipment. We were just a few cameras and computers away from tripling the number of students we could reach each day,” said Marshall.

Committed to supporting student learning and enrichment needs, the Steinmetz Foundation came to the rescue and has challenged the community
to do the same. Between now and the end of December, the Steinmetz Foundation will match every dollar donated, up to the first $200,000. This funding will support the Virtual Field Trip programs as well as other pandemic-proof programming. To encourage participation, Ocean Institute will showcase voices from a variety of stakeholders on its website (https://oceaninstitute.org/give/match-a-thon) and social media every day between November 28th and December 31st. “Ocean Institute is a community icon and we are thrilled to share the stories of our impact as told by the diverse beneficiaries and supporters.” said Marshall, “We have no doubt the community will rise to the challenge and help us exceed our match goal.”

About Ocean Institute
Ocean Institute is a highly respected ocean science, maritime history and experiential education nonprofit located in Dana Point Harbor, California. Its modern campus is adjacent to the Dana Point State Marine Conservation Area, and encompasses 33,000 square feet of hands-on exhibits, science labs and an aquarium collection of 1,100 live specimens of local marine life. Central to its unique identity throughout California, Ocean Institute operates two impressive tall ship, Spirit of Dana Point. Ocean Institute also operates the 70-foot research vessel Sea Explorer. Over a span of forty years Ocean Institute has enriched the lives of two million California students with a mission of “using the ocean as our classroom, we inspire children to learn.” Ocean Institute serves over 100,000 students, teachers and families each year with a hands-on approach to ocean-related science, research and conservation. Ocean Institute’s diverse elementary, middle and high school program inventory is STEM-focused and aligned with California Common Core Standards. www.oceaninstitute.org.

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