

MEDIA ALERT

Child with Prosthetic Device Meets her Hero Winter the Dolphin

Seven-Year-Old Dolphin Tale Fan to Meets her Inspiration at Clearwater Marine Aquarium

Clearwater, FL (Oct. 20, 2017) – Seven-year-old Layla Welch’s dream came true this Friday when she met her inspirations Winter and Hope the dolphins at Clearwater Marine Aquarium. Layla is inspired to wear her prosthetic ankle-foot orthosis (AFO), by Winter the dolphin, who wears a prosthetic tail.

Layla, who has a unique form of dwarfism, wears an AFO to support and strengthen her foot. Since seeing the movie four years ago, Layla has been enamored with and inspired by Winter’s story. Layla’s mother Katie Welch told Layla they were going to get her prosthetic adjusted, but surprised her by taking her to the airport. That’s when David Yates, CEO of Clearwater Marine Aquarium, called Layla on video chat to tell her where she was going. The mother-daughter duo flew from their home in Minnesota for Layla’s special encounter with Winter and Hope.

“She wants to tell Winter how much she loves her,” says Katie Welch, Layla’s mother. “Winter has made her feel okay to wear her brace. To say she is a fan is an understatement.”

Like Winter, Layla continues to need new prosthetics as she grows. Winter’s willingness to work hard and adapt inspires Layla to do the same.

“Connecting incredible children like Layla to their inspiration is an essential component of our mission at CMA,” says Yates, CEO. “As Winter inspires Layla, Layla inspires us to face life challenges with courage and a positive attitude.”

Layla met Winter and Hope the dolphins during a special encounter at Clearwater Marine Aquarium on Friday, October 20, at 1:30 p.m.

- [Click here](#) to download video from the encounter.
- [Click here](#) to view the Facebook live video from the encounter.

For further information, contact Julia Anderson at janderson@cm-aquarium.org or 727.686.3499.

About Clearwater Marine Aquarium:

Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working marine rescue center dedicated to inspiring the human spirit through leadership in education, research, rescue, rehabilitation and release. CMA is home to rescued dolphins, sea turtles, river otters, stingrays, nurse sharks and more. Winter the dolphin’s story of survival, after an injury that caused her to lose her tail, has impacted millions of people around the world. A major motion picture, *Dolphin Tale*, highlighted her life story in 2011. The sequel, *Dolphin Tale 2*, was released in September 2014 and features the incredible story of Hope, a young resident dolphin of CMA. The mission and potential to change people’s lives differentiates Clearwater Marine Aquarium from any other aquarium in the world.

WE BELIEVE in preserving our environment while inspiring the human spirit through leadership in the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of marine life, environmental education, research and conservation.

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