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Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative

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WHALEMOBILE BEACHES IN DARTMOUTH

Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) Programs Step Inside a Life-Sized Inflatable Humpback Whale



From inside Nile, the whale, students and adults served by SMEC shared an unforgettable learning experience. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)

DARTMOUTH — Nile, the whale, is a real humpback whale swimming around the ocean, often sighted off the coast of Massachusetts. She gets her name from a marking on her tail shaped like the world's longest river.

Students and adults served by the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) recently had the opportunity to climb inside Nile — not the real-life humpback but a giant, life-sized inflatable doppelganger — during a visit from The Whalemobile.

"I'm so glad The Whalemobile stopped by for a visit," said Sharon Donovan, SMEC Adult Day Health (ADH) Program Director. "It's not every day you get the opportunity to climb inside a whale for a meaningful educational experience. We hope that all the students and adults served by the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative enjoyed the experience and learned a little bit more about our environment, the oceans and the amazing creatures that can be found just off our coastline."

The Whalemobile was created by whale naturalist Cynde McInnis, who has spent more than 30 years helping people discover whales and the ocean and helping to catalog and recognize individual humpback whales by their distinct markings, while sharing their stories with passengers along the New England coast.

That interest led McInnis from whale watching into education. With a background in psychology and a master's degree in education, McInnis found ways to bring the experience of whale watching to students who might never have the chance to see a whale in the wild.

In 2012, The Whalemobile set sail, visiting schools and libraries and inviting students to step inside a whale while learning about anatomy, adaptations, ecosystems, and the challenges whales face in the ocean.

Before each visit, The Whalemobile staff works with educators on a multi-step lesson. They prepare in the classroom prior to Nile's arrival.

Once Nile arrives, she is unfurled in a large room, end to end, and inflated like a bounce house. Classes take turns moving through a large entrance slit on the

whale's flank, and settle in to witness a whale anatomy lesson from inside Nile. That lesson is followed up with a hands-on lesson in the classroom, with real samples of whale bone and baleen.

"That was awesome," declared one ADH participant as she emerged from Nile.

And then, back in class after exploring Nile from the inside, participants spent more time discussing whales and the ocean and working on whale-focused art projects.

"Our visit from The Whalemobile was an amazing experience for all of the students and adults who had a chance to meet Nile close up," said SMEC Executive Director Kim Wilmot. "At the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative, we do our best to bring learning to life in the classroom and beyond. I think everyone will long remember the day they stepped inside Nile and learned so much about an amazing lifeform and the world around us. The Whalemobile visit was such a fun way to learn about science and the environment."

Click here for more information about the Whalemobile.

About SMEC

The Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative is a public education collaborative established in 1975. SMEC is an extension of 10 public school systems, which make up its membership. The present membership includes the Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Fall River, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, Rochester and Old Rochester Regional public school districts. SMEC accepts students for enrollment in its programs from school systems throughout Southeastern Massachusetts. The Collaborative's programs and services are locally based and locally directed and are designed to supplement the special education resources of its member districts. SMEC offers a variety of services for students with special needs aged 3-21 as well as adults with developmental disabilities. To learn more about the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative, visit smecollaborative.org.

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Bailey Ulrich, educator with The Whalemobile, delivered a quick lesson on whales at the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) Adult Day Health program on Russells Mills Road in Dartmouth. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Each program took turns entering the life-sized inflatable whale. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Several students posed for a photo outside Nile, the whale, during a recent visit by The Whalemobile. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Bailey Ulrich, educator with The Whalemobile, delivered a quick lesson on whales before each SMEC program took a turn entering Nile, an inflatable whale. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Students and adults served by SMEC lined up outside Nile the whale before they went inside for a whale anatomy lesson. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern

Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Nile, the inflatable humpback whale, filled an entire room in SMEC's Adult Day Health (ADH) program at 27 Russells Mills Road in Dartmouth. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)

A message from Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative

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