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COUSTEAU DISCUSSES HOW ALL LIFE IS CONNECTED TO THE OCEANS

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Oct. 2, 2014) — On Wednesday evening, East Carolina University and a crowd of nearly 1,500 audience members welcomed Jean-Michel Cousteau to Greenville. Cousteau, renowned underwater explorer, environmentalist, educator and film producer delivered the Premier Lecture in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series. Chancellor Steve Ballard and Dean of Harriot College William Downs welcomed Cousteau.

During the public lecture, “The Great Ocean Adventure,” Cousteau, son of Jacques Cousteau, began with a brief history of his father’s inventions, including scuba gear, which has allowed us to delve farther into the Oceans for exploration and discovery. Jean-Michel has continued his father’s mission of preserving the Oceans and the life in them.

Cousteau’s key points, presented both through his discussion and snippets of his video productions, included that we are all connected to the Oceans, our one water source, without water there is no life, and our decisions do have an impact. The chemicals in the products produced by industry, our discarded trash, all make it into the water systems that ultimately flow into the Oceans affecting the marine life.

“We were shocked to see what was out there in the middle of the Ocean,” said Cousteau, when introducing one video clip containing images of thousands of bits of plastic, bottles, bags and trash that littered the water and land of Necker Island, which is approximately 430 miles northwest of Honolulu, Hawaii. “What people think,” said Cousteau, “is out of sight, is out of mind.”

But Cousteau’s message throughout the night was also one of change and impact.

“Marine debris is a global problem with a global solution,” said Cousteau. “Everyone of us can change this problem.”

He went on to say that we are all connected to the Ocean, which makes up 75 percent of the planet, and we need to keep this in mind if we want our species to continue. Cousteau believes we can be better managers of our resources.

In his conclusion, Cousteau asked the audience to watch a 3-minute video he titled, “Orca Ballet,” and think about what we can do for our environment, what we can contribute, and what we need to do that we haven’t done yet to make a difference in the future.
“I know we will make a difference,” said Cousteau, “but we have a lot to do.”

Cosponsors of Cousteu’s lecture included ECU’s Chancellor’s Office, Office of the Provost, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, Division of Student Affairs and Division of Health Sciences.

The Voyages of Discovery Lecture Series is made possible through contributions from Harriot College’s Dean’s Advancement Council, various university organizations, and many friends and supporters. To make a contribution to the series, contact Major Gifts Officer Jennifer Tripp at 252-737-4201, or via email at trippj@ecu.edu. For additional information about the Voyages series and upcoming speakers, visit www.ecu.edu/voyages.

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