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BANK OF AMERICA CHICAGO MARATHON AND SHEDD AQUARIUM TEAM UP TO MAKE STRIDES IN REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

The Partnership is the Latest for the Chicago Marathon, Already a Leader in Sustainable Racing Events

CHICAGO – The [Bank of America Chicago Marathon](#) is partnering with Chicago's [Shedd Aquarium](#) to take on the issue of reducing single-use plastic pollution by joining the aquarium's Shedd the Straw initiative for the 2018 Chicago Marathon on October 7. The partnership aims to reduce plastic use and encourage more sustainable alternatives for marathon participants, vendors and hotel and restaurant partners.

This sustainability initiative is designed to help protect water systems and the animals that live in them by highlighting the dangers single-use plastic straws pose to aquatic life and will provide an educational awareness to the many runners and partners that support the race.

One way the organizations hope to make an impact is by asking all Chicago Marathon hotel partners, restaurants and vendors to join the aquarium's Shedd the Straw initiative for race weekend and hopefully, permanently. Participation involves serving straws only upon request and switching to compostable options such as paper straws. The aquarium asks that participating businesses retain some plastic straws on site for anyone who might still require one.

The cause encourages people who don't require a plastic straw to consider using a more environmentally friendly alternative or ditching the straw entirely. Information will be available race weekend at the Abbott Health & Fitness Expo, encouraging race participants, spectators and fans of the sport to learn more about Shedd the Straw.

"Our partnership with Shedd Aquarium is an exciting next step in the growth of our sustainability program," said Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. "It's rewarding to see the enthusiasm our runners, volunteers and event partners have to make the marathon and their own communities as sustainable as possible. We hope everyone will join us race weekend as we Shedd the Straw."

Straws are one of the top 10 most common items found in beach clean-ups across the Great Lakes, and are part of the 11 million pounds of plastic waste that enter Lake Michigan each year—the equivalent of 100 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Because plastics cannot biodegrade, they simply break down into smaller pieces over time and endanger wildlife that might accidentally ingest the plastic or become entangled in it. Plastic bags and bottles are additional offenders, which can easily be replaced with more sustainable, reusable alternatives.

"Small changes like 'Shedding the Straw' or finding alternatives to common single-use plastics can turn into big solutions for the health of our lakes, rivers and oceans," said Cheryl Mell, Senior Vice President, Conservation Partnerships and Programs. "We are proud to be a resource for the Chicago Marathon and to inspire racers and spectators alike to reduce our collective plastic footprint."

The aquarium's Shedd the Straw initiative began last year on Earth Day, when Shedd Aquarium launched its campaign encouraging people to switch from single-use plastic straws to reusable or biodegradable alternatives. Since then, more than 160 local restaurants have signed onto the cause, as well as larger organizations like the Chicago White Sox and Loews Chicago Hotels.

Hi-res Shedd the Straw photos and videos are available for download:

<https://personal.filesanywhere.com/fs/v.aspx?v=8d716b8c61636eb9a867>

Photo credit: © Shedd Aquarium

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ABOUT BANK OF AMERICA CHICAGO MARATHON

In its 41st year on Sunday, October 7, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon welcomes thousands of runners from more than 100 countries and all 50 states, including a world-class elite field, top regional and Masters runners, race veterans, debut marathoners and charity runners. The race's iconic course takes runners through 29 vibrant neighborhoods on an architectural and cultural tour of Chicago. Annually, an estimated 1.7 million spectators line the streets cheering on more than 40,000 runners from the start line to the final stretch down Columbus Drive. As a result of the race's national and international draw, the Chicago Marathon assists in raising millions of dollars for a variety of charitable causes while generating \$282 million in annual economic impact to its host city. The 2018 Bank of America Chicago Marathon, a member of the Abbott World Marathon Majors, will start and finish in Grant Park beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 7. In advance of the race, a two-day Abbott Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 5, and Saturday, October 6. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

ABOUT SHEDD AQUARIUM

The John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago sparks compassion, curiosity and conservation for the aquatic animal world. Home to 32,000 aquatic animals representing 1,500 species of fishes, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, birds and mammals from waters around the globe, Shedd is a recognized leader in animal care, conservation education and research. An accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the first U.S. aquarium to be awarded the Humane Conservation™ certification mark for the care and welfare of its animals by American Humane. The organization is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute, and is supported by the people of Chicago, the State of Illinois and the Chicago Park District. More information is available at www.sheddaquarium.org.

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