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## **STATE PARKS VIRTUAL CLASSROOM PROGRAM HONORED WITH EXCELLENCE IN MUSEUM EDUCATION AWARD**

FRIENDS OF SANTA CRUZ STATE PARKS FUNDS THE PARKS ONLINE RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS PROGRAM AT SEACLIFF STATE BEACH

**MARCH 13, 2014—SANTA CRUZ, CA**—Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks today announced the Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) program housed at Seacliff State Beach has been honored with the Superintendent's Award for Excellence in Museum Education, a competition sponsored by the California Association of Museums (CAM) and the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks funds the PORTS program at Seacliff State Beach, which last year served 8,334 students across California.

"We're so proud to fund this program," said Bonny Hawley, executive director of Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks. "PORTS uses virtual classroom technology to bring our unique coastal environment to K-12 students across the state and beyond, including kids who have never been to our coast. PORTS Interpreter Vonnie Lempke does amazing things in real-time to bring to life butterflies and mammals, with a special emphasis on elephant seals."

PORTS programs are based at several State Parks and Beaches throughout California, including Anza Borrego, Crystal Cove, California State Capitol, Columbia, Hearst Castle and North Coast Redwoods. Each program features live, interactive videoconference presentations on science, history, language arts and other academic topics. The programs also include units of study to prepare and assess learning, and the service is free for schools to use.

PORTS is one of six programs selected to receive the Excellence in Museum Education award. The honor recognizes outstanding achievements in museum programs that serve K-12 students and/or educators. Other 2014 winners include the Center for Childhood Creativity at the Bay Area Discovery Museum, the Leonis Adobe California Ranch Life exhibit at the Leonis Adobe Museum, the Hands! On Elementary School Science program at the Palo Alto Junior Museum & Zoo, the Air Force One Discovery Center at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library, and Build a Better World: A Museum/School/Community Partnership at the Skirball Cultural Center.

The awards were presented at the 2014 CAM annual luncheon on March 6, 2014. For more information about the winning programs or the Superintendent's Award program, see [www.calmuseums.org/superintendentsawards](http://www.calmuseums.org/superintendentsawards).

**About PORTS**

Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students (PORTS) is a free distance learning program that uses the power of interactive videoconferencing to help K-12 schools teach common core state standards in the context of California State Parks. PORTS is located at Seacliff State Beach. For more information, visit <http://www.thatsmypark.org/cp-parks-beaches/seacliff-state-state-beach-3/>.

**About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks**

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is an entrepreneurial nonprofit sustaining the legacy of our state parks and beaches. Through an innovative partnership with California State Parks, and by leveraging local community support, Friends has provided millions of dollars of funding for educational programs, visitor services and capital projects. Founded in 1976, Friends is passionately dedicated to the preservation of our spectacular natural environment and rich cultural history. Friends also operates six ParkStores, offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. ParkStore locations include Natural Bridges, New Brighton (closed until spring 2014), Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch and Online. Learn more at [ThatsMyPark.org](http://ThatsMyPark.org) or via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.

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