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## **Maritime Aquarium Offers a 'Sensory-Friendly' Night April 8 for Those Who Need It**

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The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk is planning a special evening on Thursday, April 8 to give guests with sensory-processing differences a fun, comfortable and accepting environment.

— *an announcement from The [Maritime Aquarium](#)*

During this "Sensory-Friendly Evening," from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., lights in the Aquarium will be lower, and music and other sounds will be turned down or off.

Plus, admission will be discounted, and the aquarium will show movies in the new 4D Theater without special effects.

Tom Naiman, the aquarium's director of education, said the Aquarium created "Sensory-Friendly" events in 2016 to be supportive of children and adults with special needs who may find a visit to the aquarium too stressful.

"We have been offering occasional 'Sensory-Friendly' events in recognition that some elements of our

exhibits can present a challenge because the spaces may be seen as too bright or loud or crowded for some people,” Naiman said.

“We paused them in 2020 because of COVID-19, but are excited to again make the Maritime Aquarium accessible and enjoyable to this important part of our community.”

Naiman said the advantages in offering this event after the Aquarium’s normal opening hours are two-fold: Aquarium staff can focus on the guests with special needs, and guests averse to crowds won’t encounter them. All Aquarium galleries and exhibits will be open.

Capacity is limited to allow for social distancing. Other COVID protocols in place throughout the Aquarium include: mask requirements for all guests 2 and older except for those with a medical note from their doctor; one-way flow encouraged in galleries; and enhanced cleanings of common areas.

In the new 4D theater, guests can enjoy the films wearing 3D glasses but with sounds lower and theater lights brighter, and without any of the sensory effects. (Guests aren’t required to wear the 3D glasses but, without them, images onscreen will appear blurry.) Pick from BBC Earth’s “Shark: A 4D Experience” (12 minutes long) at 6:15 p.m., or “Ice Age: No Time for Nuts 4D” (10 minutes) at 5:45 and 6:45 p.m.

The Aquarium’s SoundBites coffee shop will be open, offering sweets from a local bakery (including gluten-free options) and the full line of Starbucks’ hot and cold drinks.

Discounted admission for the April 8 “Sensory-Friendly Evening” is \$17 for adults, \$15 for seniors (65+), and \$12 for children (3-12). Tickets for a 4D movie, which are optional, are \$7.

Because capacity is limited, guests are strongly encouraged to reserve their tickets in advance online for timed-ticket entry. Go to [www.maritimeaquarium.org](http://www.maritimeaquarium.org) and click on “Visit,” and then “Aquarium Happenings.”