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Something Romantic For Valentine's Day: Feed the Creatures at the Maritime Aquarium

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Categories : [Animals](#), [Holidays](#), [Maritime Aquarium](#)

Tagged as : [Valentine's Day 2019](#)

Date : February 2, 2019

On the Saturday before Valentine's Day, give your sweetie what he or she really wants: the chance to hand-feed a cow-nose ray. And a horseshoe crab. And a diamondback terrapin.

— *an announcement from the Maritime Aquarium*

The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk is making the magic possible by putting a special twist on its popular behind-the-scenes "Feeding Time" program.

On Sat., Feb. 9, the Aquarium is opening the program exclusively to couples age 18 and older, who will make the morning feeding rounds with staff prior to the Aquarium's opening.

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“Nothing says ‘I love you’ like giving your significant other the chance to have a ray slurp a piece of fish out of his or her hand,” said Aquarium spokesman Dave Sigworth (who, surprisingly, is married).

Ceding to tradition, all couples also will go home afterward with a box of specialty chocolates. After they wash their hands.

“Valentine’s Feeding Time for Couples” starts at 8:30 a.m. Participants will feel the vacuuming slurp of rays at the “Shark & Ray Touch Pool,” and go behind the scenes to hand-feed horseshoe crabs and diamondback terrapins.

They’ll attend a private seal feeding by staff, and also visit the Aquarium’s “fish kitchen” where food is closely inspected and prepared.

Highlight of the program is going above the Aquarium’s 110,000-gallon “Ocean Beyond the Sound” exhibit for a thrilling view while staff feeds the 7-and 8-foot sharks prowling and snapping just below the railing. Participants can toss in some bonus food for the sharks, large rays and other fish.

“The backstage access of ‘Feeding Time’ is a special treat for anyone who is passionate about the Aquarium and wants to deepen their understanding of the creatures we display and the quality care we provide,” Sigworth said. “So it truly is a unique Valentine’s gift. Plus, you get a delicious box of chocolates.”

Cost of the “Valentine’s Feeding Time” is \$100 per couple (\$90 for Aquarium members). Optional Aquarium admission at 10 a.m. is discounted.

The program is limited to 10 couples. Advance registration is required. Call (203) 852-0700, ext. 2206, or register online at www.maritimeaquarium.org/events.