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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Feb. 17, 2009

### **NOAA Recognizes Hawaii Student for Raising Ocean Awareness**

The NOAA Marine Debris Program today recognized 13-year-old Gina McGuire for her efforts to raise awareness of the harmful effects of marine debris on Hawaii's marine environment during a special ceremony at NOAA's Mokuapāpapa Discovery Center in Hilo, Hawai'i.

"The NOAA Marine Debris Program is proud to honor Gina's efforts in raising awareness to help protect Hawaii's marine environment, especially from the harmful effects of marine debris," said Holly Bamford, director of the NOAA Marine Debris Program. "She shows us that anyone, anywhere, no matter what their age, can make a difference. She is an inspiration to us all."

In 2008, Gina, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i Middle School, participated in "It's a Honu World," an art exhibit benefiting the Big Island community. For the exhibit, she decorated a ceramic sea turtle with painted scenes of Hawaii's marine life, including the endangered Hawaiian monk seal and humpback whale. Her hand-painted sea turtle was auctioned off for \$400.

A total of \$875 was raised from the auction of Gina's sea turtle combined with funds she raised through her "Gina McGuire Hero Fund," a special fund set up for her by the Honu World project. The entire sum was donated to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's Marine Debris Campaign.

"I wanted to capture the beauty of Hawaii's environment through my art and share it with others," said McGuire. "I have seen marine debris on our beaches here as well as photos of trash in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, and I want to do what I can to help and give back to my community."

She continues to demonstrate her passion for Hawaii's environment through her art, in school and in her community.

"Gina is a terrific role model for all young people interested in protecting America's underwater treasures," said Lori Arguelles, president and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. "The funds she raised will be used to make people more aware of the marine debris problem and how to prevent it."

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the non-profit partner to the federal National Marine Sanctuary System, managed within NOAA's National Ocean Service. The foundation supports sanctuary education and research programs and seeks to educate the public about how they can help protect and preserve them for future generations.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web:

NOAA Marine Debris Program: <http://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov> NOAA's Mokuapāpapa Discover Center: <http://hawaiiireef.noaa.gov/education/center.html>

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation: <http://www.nmsfocean.org>