

Hello Students and Parents,

I'm writing you today with the sad news that AIO will not be running programs in the summer of 2020. Since the beginning of this crisis, we've been communicating with medical professionals and other camp directors in Maine as well as carefully listening to the CDC and state of Maine to determine the best way to proceed with our program. The safety of the students and staff is our first priority, and, to that end, we had developed protocols that I felt confident would allow us to offer the best of our program while maintaining safety. Unfortunately, it's impossible to plan for every possible scenario, and the Maine governor's guidelines, requiring a 14-day quarantine for everyone from outside the state, cemented our decision to close.

For 46 years, AIO has welcomed students to our Maine site to explore marine science but also to meet other like-minded people. Many of our students have moved on to careers in science while maintaining life-long friendships with others they've met in the program. I will miss the excitement of collecting animals at the shore, exploring tidal pools, our many boat trips, beach lessons, saltmarsh visits and amazing hikes around Acadia and Mt. Desert Island.

I know that our decision is disappointing for many of you and we can fully understand your sadness, anger and sense of loss. We all feel that way as well. It's hard to take away something that kids have all wanted and needed, especially with a loss of school, friends and, perhaps, dealing with someone in your family who has had the virus. You should voice your frustration, in a safe way, over all of these things that are beyond our control. Then, I hope you'll be able to move forward and look for the positive. A time will come when we will all be together again. This, too, shall pass.

I hope that you'll share this [video message](#) with your child about the choice we've made and our plans for moving forward.

We will continue to stay in touch with new AIO Virtual Lectures, live Zoom sessions and some virtual field lessons and I hope your child will participate. We will continue to monitor the situation and I'll be back in touch if alternative programming options are available for the 2020 summer. The staff will miss seeing the kids in person but are looking forward to connecting with them in this new way. Having worked in the program for the past 37 summers, I can attest to the kindness, resilience and fortitude of our students and I have no doubt they will come out of this stronger and ready to take on the next challenge. You have raised these amazing people! Congratulations and thank you for allowing us the opportunity to work with them now and in the years to come.

As promised, all money paid can be refunded. I'll be in touch with you early next week with information about the refund process and how you can hold a spot for the summer of 2021. We are also still moving forward with our Florida Exploration program in late November and will be taking registrations for the Tropical Belize Program in November 2021. As always, I'm available for any questions via email or phone. We're here for you and your kids.

Take care,
Sherry