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Big Things Can Come in Small Packages

How one small boy can make a big difference.

All photos were generously supplied by Keefer's family,
with the exception of the photo of Keefer and Senator Begich at the end of the article which was provided by Glenn Aronwits - GA Digital Photos.

There are a few things in life that grab the hearts of men/women: children and animals are among the top! Here is one story that involves both, and will inspire you to do better, go bigger and to stretch beyond your own comfort zone for the benefit of others. Let me tell you about one small boy who made a big difference!

This begins with a summer of fun in Seldovia for a young 12 year old boy named Keefer. Coming from Wasilla, Keefer has been coming down to Seldovia every summer to stay with his grandparents and enjoy the fresh salty air, beach time and tranquility that comes with living across the bay from



Seldovia in Hoen's Lagoon. Keefer's grandparents, Doug and Jeanette Garrison have been spending their summers in their cabin on Hoen's Lagoon for the past 4 years, but have been enjoying summers here for the last 10 years.

In the Spring of 2010 Keefer went with his class to the [SeaLife Center](#) in Seward where he discovered a love for harbor seals and developed a passion to support rescue and rehabilitation efforts for the many creatures of the sea! He also discovered that he could raise funds to adopt a harbor seal for \$50.00. This was the beginning of his desire to find a way to raise money to help with the efforts of the SeaLife Center!

Keefer's cousin sold earrings in Seldovia and he decided he wanted to sell something too, and came up with the idea for beach candles. His plan was that he would look for shells and beach glass and create beautiful candles to sell alongside his cousin.

At first he put his candles at the Herring Bay Mercantile, and Monty Hingley was very helpful and willing to work with him. That lasted a little while, but Keefer felt that he would have more success if he were out at the harbor, where folks are coming and going, and he would be able to talk with people and promote the product. So, he went to the City of Seldovia and obtained a permit, and set up at the harbor ramp. Keefer would come across the bay with his candles a few days a week, and found the personal touch was working, he would sometimes come home with more than \$50.00 a day! Sometimes folks would just donate money to his cause and not even purchase a candle! There were many locals who bought more than one candle and would continue to donate as they believed in Keefer's cause and wanted to support his great effort.



One day, in speaking with our city manager, Tim Dillon, Keefer explained what he was up to, and that he was raising money for the SeaLife Center, and Mr. Dillon offered to connect him with the folks at the SeaLife Center, and perhaps get him a behind the scenes tour of the facility when he went to present the funds. This sounded great to Keefer and when the summer was over, and the funds were counted, Keefer had earned over \$1,300 for the SeaLife Center!



When Keefer went to Seward to present the money, (all \$10 bills) he was accompanied by his family, and they were all completely surprised by such a very warm greeting. When they arrived, the President Ian Dutton was there to receive the funds, along with the Seward City Manager Dr. Phillip Oates and Seward Mayor, Willard Dunham!

Mr. Dutton personally gave Keefer and his family a tour of facility, and allowed him special access to the harbor seals and close up encounter with Woody the massive Sea Lion. He was also given a Seal Crew sweatshirt and the entire family was treated to lunch! It was an amazing day, and one that Keefer would never forget - he felt so honored to be a part of something so important.

Keefer truly believes in the important work they are doing at the SeaLife Center to keep the marine ecosystem healthy. The Rescue and Rehabilitation Department is especially dear to his

heart and he is so glad they are there to help the injured and sick marine animals throughout the state.

Kefer was also invited to be a special guest at the Fundraising Gala in Anchorage for the SeaLife Center in February. At the Gala, Kefer was seated at the front table with Senator Mark Begich and Fran Ulmer, and was completely humbled by the attention he was given, and amazed by the affect of his small efforts, which started off by wanting to raise only \$50 to adopt a harbor seal!



Kefer has been back to the Center since that time, and was able to visit with the harbor seals (which are his favorite) and was informed that he has been invited back to the SeaLife Center to help name the pup of Atty - the harbor seal who is pregnant and due sometime this



summer.

He has been thinking about names, and has both a boy and girl name picked out already, and though he wouldn't tell me - he did give me a clue that the names he has come up with are Celtic, like he and his brother Keegan. We will have to get back with him about that after the pup is born!

When speaking with Keefer he really wanted to express how thankful he was to the community of Seldovia. So many people were so kind, they saw him every day at the harbor as they came and went from their boats, and many folks bought more than one candle or bought numerous candles for friends, and some even just gave Keefer a donation to help with the cause. He really appreciated both Monty Hingley and John Fenske who were encouraging and helpful. He was also thankful for Mary at the Sea Parrot Inn who would come over with a big cup of ice water during a hot day, knowing that Keefer doesn't drink soda. Everyone was just so thoughtful and generous.

When talking with Keefer's grandmother, she expressed how great of an experience this was for Keefer. "He really got a big dose of working with the public, stepping out of his comfort zone and talking with folks and he learned to not be afraid of a 'no'." She mentioned that she felt he really perfected his "gift of gab" and had a real boost of



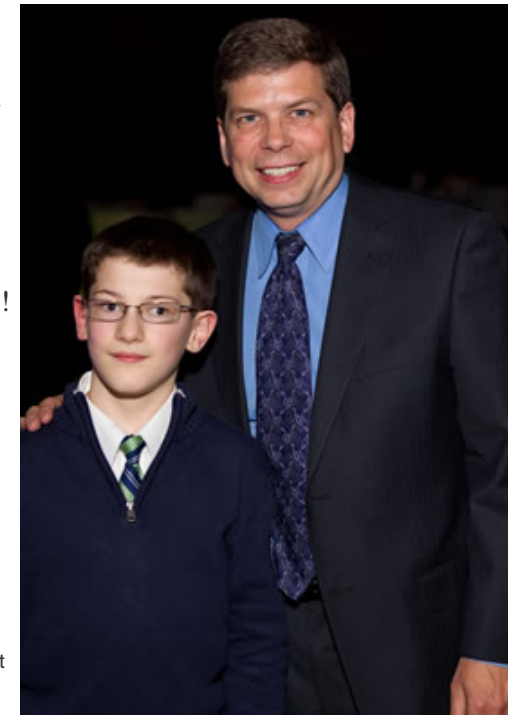
confidence by having such a successful summer.

It was an amazing experience for him to donate those funds to a cause that he truly believes in. He was overwhelmed by the reception he received from the SeaLife Center - he had no idea that a candle stand in Seldovia would lead to being a guest of honor at a huge Gala and being acknowledged by a Senator of Alaska. Keefer also won the [Spirit of Youth award](#) - in the Science and Environment category!

Keefer loves his summers in Seldovia, and if he had it his way, his family would live in Seldovia year round! He expressed how much he loves our town, and enjoys how nice all the people are. When I spoke with Keefer, he said that he can't wait to come back to Seldovia, and that he will be out here at our harbor again this summer! He wouldn't tell me what he plans to sell this year, maybe more candles, but maybe something completely new! So, if you see Keefer at the head of the ramp this summer, stop by and congratulate him on his accomplishments! He has selflessly worked hard for something he is passionate about, and we should all remember that when you love something and work hard for it, that there are rewards far beyond what you can ever imagine!

Great job Keefer - Seldovia is proud of you and all that you've done, and we look forward to seeing what you will accomplish in the future - big things sure can come in small packages!

Congratulations on taking action and making a big difference!



All photos were generously supplied by Keefer's family, with the exception of the photo of Keefer and Senator Begich to the right which was provided by Glenn Aronwits - GA Digital Photos.

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