

Inspiring the next generation of ocean explorers

By **Angela Nicoletti**

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Angela Rosenberg earned her ‘sea legs’ long before she took her first steps. In some of her earliest memories, she’s sitting at the helm of her family’s sailboat on the Chesapeake Bay. Boating brought her family closer together. Every hour on the water also brought her closer to her future career as a marine scientist.



FIU and ANGARI will host 12 trips over the year — during the fall and spring semesters. Applications are open for formal and informal educators interested in participating in the program.

Now, Rosenberg is helping a new generation of children find a passion for marine and environmental science by getting them out on the water.

As part of a partnership between FIU and the [ANGARI Foundation](#) — a nonprofit created by Angela and her sister, Kari, who is the director of development at Marvel — local middle and high school students will accompany FIU marine scientists on weekend expeditions at sea. The foundation’s boat *R/V ANGARI* will become a classroom where learning and field work come to life. On the schedule: Everything from shark tagging to examining plankton under a microscope.

“FIU is a perfect partner, because they share our goal of bringing science to the public,” Rosenberg said. “Everyone knows that research doesn’t just happen with one person. It takes a team. Together, we’re going to give students a chance to go behind the scenes — to talk to scientists, see what research is about and what a career in marine science actually looks like up-close and in-person.”

The Rosenbergs established the ANGARI Foundation in 2016 to bridge the gap between science, research, education and the public. To do this, they needed the perfect boat that could serve as a platform for research and also host groups of scientists, teachers, students and filmmakers.

After months of searching, they finally found it: A 65-foot privately owned and well-maintained yacht named *Cassandra Jade*. Then the renovations began. The living room became a lab. Indoor and outdoor workspaces were added. The newest technology and equipment were installed. The final touch was giving the vessel a new name — *ANGARI*, a combination of Angela and Kari.



Mike Heithaus tagging a shark aboard ANGARI during the pilot phase of the program. (Credit: The ANGARI Foundation)

During the past several months, FIU and the ANGARI team have been piloting the new program, which will begin in the fall semester. During this phase, FIU researchers, including [Mike Heithaus](#), who also serves as dean of the College of Arts, Sciences & Education, have led a few expeditions.

“This partnership is about connecting children to our oceans in a really personal and lasting way. What better way to do this than to let them be with our researchers, helping them tag sharks and appreciate why these predators are so important to our marine ecosystems,” he said. “At the same time, our scientists are expanding their research beyond what is possible otherwise.”

Those scientists are also showing the students what is possible. Rosenberg knows this type of interaction with a marine scientist would’ve changed everything for her.

Growing up, she didn’t know it was possible to have a career studying the ocean. “I wanted to go into science and thought of becoming a doctor. I didn’t realize a career in this field was possible. I was like, ‘*You can go to college for marine biology?*’” she recalls.

That revelation changed everything. In college, Rosenberg switched directions, earning a bachelor’s degree in marine science and biology and a master’s in marine geology and geophysics. She went on to conduct research on deep sea coral, marine fossils, ocean acidification and more. Rosenberg hopes that the students on these expeditions will not only get excited about science, but also see a path for the future.

“There’s no doubt that I am where I am today, because of all the time I spent on the water,” Rosenberg said. “I hope this experience is just as life-changing for the students who come aboard *ANGARI*.”