

**BIG  
BLUE  
& YOU**

**2023  
Annual  
Report**

BIG BLUE & YOU  
20200 WEST DIXIE HIGHWAY  
SUITE 902  
MIAMI, FL 33180

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# THANK YOU

## TO OUR MAJOR DONORS AND CORPORATE PARTNERS FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2023!

Mara & Arthur Benjamin  
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Cinda Scott

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Foundation

Mightycause Foundation

Neal Beightol

Ocean Conservancy



## GRATITUDE FOR OUR AMAZING BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Danni Washington**

Co-Founder and Board Chair



**Brittney Starks**

Board Secretary



**Ellen Woods**

Board Member



**Michael Cain**

Board Member



**Cinda Scott**

Board Member

# THANK YOU

## FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Blue Scholars

Break Free From Plastic

Debris Free Oceans

Earth Echo

Ocean Conservancy

The Ocean Project

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## PROGRAMS

# BIG BLUE CREW

From scuba divers to students, authors to activists, the Big Blue Crew is a community of advocates who are passionate about inspiring others to protect the sea. Many of our Miami members are engaged in our **Plastic Free Cities** program and in 2021, Mayor Dan Gelber declared September 30th will forever be celebrated as Big Blue Crew Day in Miami!

But you don't have to be in our city (or even the United States) to join the movement. We

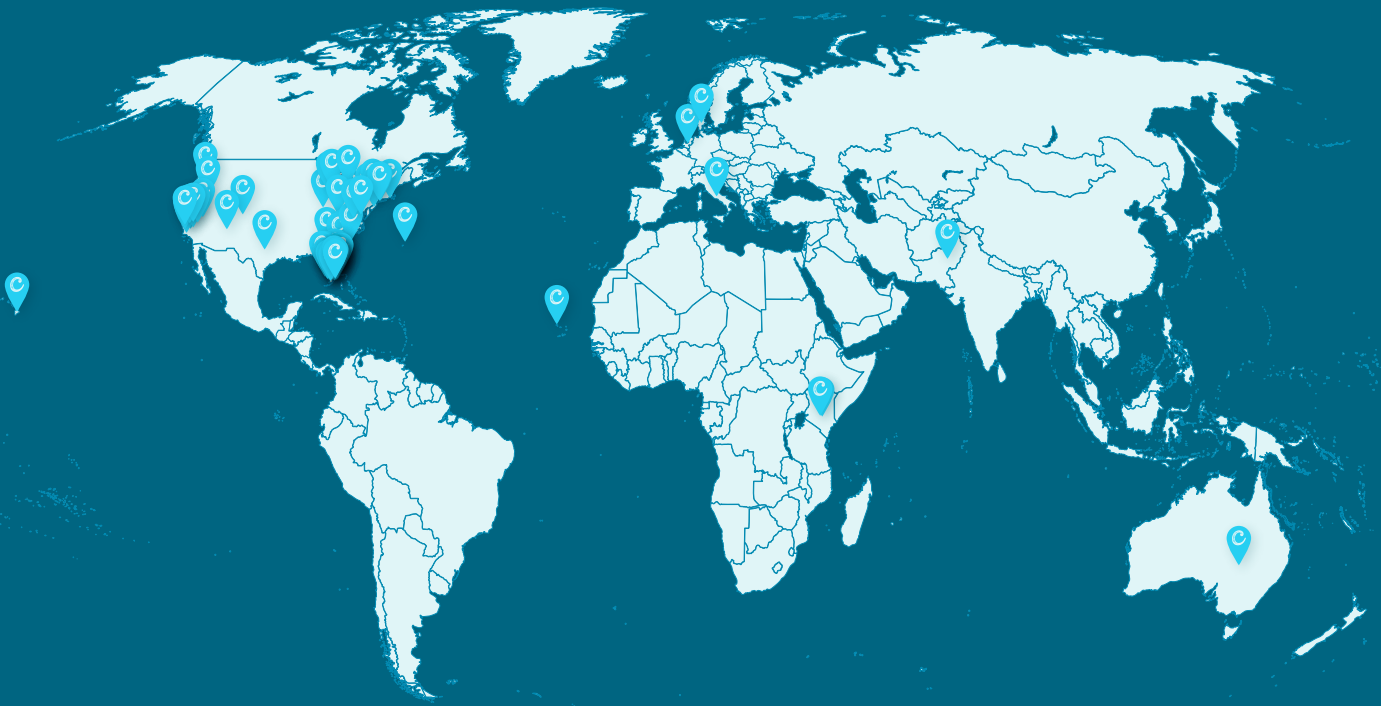
have crew members all over the globe – even one as young as six! Want to join the party? We don't ask for any big commitment from you to become a member; we simply want to recognize your campaigns and achievements through our network.



**Danni Washington**

Co-Founder and Board Chair

## BIG BLUE CREW MEMBERS ALL AROUND THE WORLD\*



\*As of January 2024

Vectors by Vecteezy

## PROGRAMS

# BRAND AUDIT + COASTAL CLEANUP

Big Blue & You annually participates in the **Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup** — which has coordinated community beach cleanups for 35 years and inspires millions of volunteers worldwide. Our team brings valuable data analysis at **Blue Scholars Initiative** beach clean ups in Miami, which is included in the **Break Free From Plastic** global report.

In 2022, analysis showed that the Coca-Cola Company had produced the most plastic litter of any other company around the world — for the fourth year in a row. Why is this information important? It clearly shows that the companies responsible for pollution need to clean it up and that we can do our part by choosing **reusables**.



### Michelle Swaby-Smith

Co-Founder and Executive Director

Below: Big Blue Crew earning their volunteer hours with Plastic Free Cities



## PROGRAMS

# PLASTIC FREE CITIES

Plastic Free Cities empowers youth activists at South Florida schools to protect the ocean by working with local businesses to encourage the transition away from single-use plastic. Through advocacy training, outreach to businesses, and community clean-ups, Plastic Free Cities aims to engage upstream and prevent waste from flowing into our precious ocean.

In 2023, 57 students at four high schools earned 370 volunteer hours and increased their knowledge of plastic pollution by 40% and their understanding of sustainable business by 49% as well as increased their comfort with public speaking by 37%. As a result of this activism, Senator Rene Garcia announced a proclamation that recognized Plastic Free Cities for its contribution to making the community of Hialeah a safer and cleaner place to live, and Councilperson Bryan Calvo presented each of our graduates with a certificate of appreciation. Amazing!

We're so grateful to our partners **Ocean Conservancy** and **Debris Free Oceans**, in partnership with **Miami-Dade County's Plastic Free 305**, for working with us to bring this program to life, to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (**NOAA**) for funding it, and to the incredible students who dedicate their time and effort to this important mission.



### Milly Milton

Programs Consultant

## PROGRAMS

# SEA YOUTH RISE UP

Addressing the climate crisis and protecting ocean health are inextricably connected. Key to tackling both of these challenges is a recognition of the importance of collaboration and the critical role youth leadership plays in advancing policies to protect our ocean planet.

In partnership with the **Youth Ocean Conservation Summit** and **The Ocean Project**, Big Blue & You co-founded Sea Youth Rise Up in 2016. The program trains youth leaders in ocean advocacy and hosts their participation at the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's annual Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW).

In 2023, we sent two youth leaders who had participated in our **Plastic Free Cities** program to Sea Youth Rise Up (affectionately known as "SYRUP") where they shared our work with state and federal legislators including representatives from the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the U.S. Department of State, and the offices of key Florida legislators Senator Marco

Rubio and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart. Our delegates spoke in two Capitol Hill Ocean Week sessions and met with numerous governmental and nongovernmental leaders for ocean and climate conservation. They participated in the first-ever White House Ocean Justice Roundtable with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chair Brenda Mallory and other leaders from the Administration, met with the ocean policy lead and other representatives at the White House CEQ, and had a special side meeting at CHOW with US State Department Acting Assistant Secretary JR Littlejohn. The group spent an entire day on the Hill, meeting with representatives and senators. They also co-hosted the Social for the Sea, an intergenerational networking event with approximately 50 youth, leaders from conservation organizations, representatives from NOAA, indigenous leaders, and others from youth-focused organizations.



**Rachel Lincoln Sarnoff**  
Strategic Advisor





# WEAR THE LOVE!

Visit our Ocean Lovers Shopping Guide and check out the sustainable products from our partner, as well as Big Blue & You's phone cases, water bottles, and tote bags. Show the love!

[Shop Now >](#)



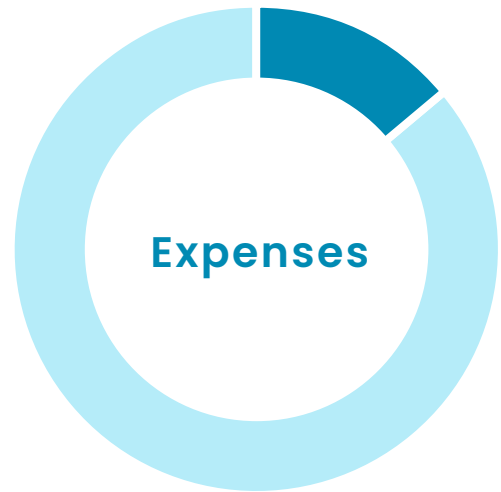
# OUR NUMBERS

Please email [hello@bigblueandyou.org](mailto:hello@bigblueandyou.org) to request a copy of our 990s, or visit our Charity Navigator page. Thanks!



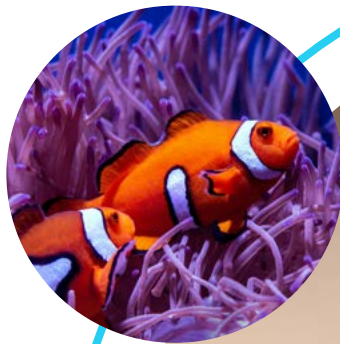
Income

- Corporate Contribution
- Foundation/Nonprofit Contribution
- Individual Contribution



Expenses

- Fundraising
- Management & General
- Program Services







**BIG  
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**Big Blue & You** is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring and empowering youth about ocean conservation through ARTS, SCIENCE and MEDIA.

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