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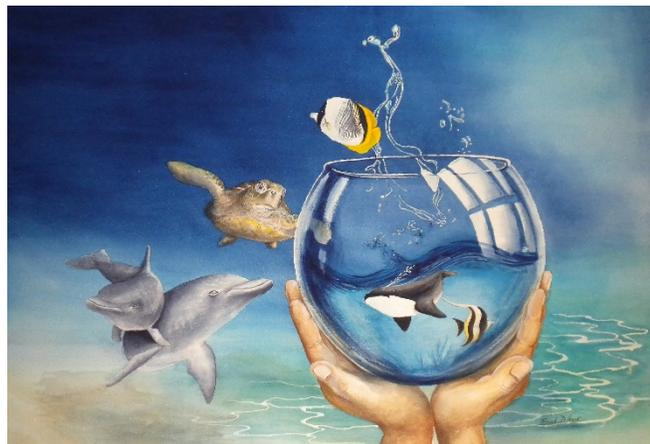
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Gray's Reef Film Festival Poster Competition Winner

Savannah, GA.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) and Arts Resource Collective (ARC) of Savannah are delighted to announce the winner of the 2017 Gray's Reef Film Festival Poster Competition.

The winning artist is 'In Our Hands' by Brad Hook. The judges feel that the stunning watercolor captures the essence of the sanctuary and the theme of this year's festival, "Our community, our ocean." (See image to the right.)



The winning art and the two runners-up will be displayed at the [Gray's Reef Film Festival](#) venues. Founder's Party at 24e on Feb 2. The film festival, now in its 14th year, celebrates ocean conservation and the wonders of the ocean. Since [Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary](#) is a protected area 16 miles off the coast of Georgia, NOAA brings the sanctuary to the community through events such as the Gray's Reef Film Festival in Savannah. Attracting more than 1,500 ocean enthusiasts each year, the film festival features over 30 entertaining and educational films, a children's program and an emerging filmmakers' competition for students.

[ARC Savannah](#) organized the competition and serves as a unified group of Savannah artists and art advocates who are committed to expanding, sustaining and supporting the financial and creative viability of arts in Savannah through advocacy, vision and action.

About Brad Hook, "Strokes" by Hook, Watercolor Artist

Brad is a self-taught watercolor artist who has been painting and drawing for over 35 years. He has dabbled in many different mediums including charcoal, pastels, oils, clay, acrylics, etc. When he tried watercolors, he did not like the unforgiving nature of this difficult medium, until he

picked up the watercolor set again about 10 years ago. He then tried a different approach and mindset. Brad's unique and detailed techniques make his style of watercolors a breath of fresh air.

Brad spent most of his life in the Midwest, mostly growing up in Michigan with his family. Hook grew up in Holly, Michigan, where he achieved numerous awards for his early works.

Later, he moved to Arizona with his parents and it was there that he began to use oils as his medium of choice. In 2010, Brad moved to Tybee Island, where he had vacationed for many years before. This is where his art career has blossomed into a thriving business known as, "Strokes" by Hook.



Tybee Island is where he calls home now. Although he runs a very successful local company in Savannah, he always makes time every day to pick up a paint brush and apply his creativity to paper. "There is nothing more rewarding than creating a piece of work that brings a smile and some joy to others lives."

About Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary:

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) protects a vibrant hard-bottom area off the Georgia coast. The reef's scattered rocky outcroppings and ledges provide homes for an abundance of marine life. Crabs, lobsters, soft corals, sponges, sea stars and other organisms form a dense carpet of living creatures, covering the nooks and crannies of Gray's Reef and giving it the name "live bottom." The reef attracts more than 200 species of fish, including black sea bass, snappers, groupers and mackerels.



Loggerhead sea turtles, a threatened species, forage and rest year-round at Gray's Reef, and the reef is within the only known winter calving ground and critical habitat of the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale. The 22-square-mile sanctuary is the only protected natural reef and one of a few natural marine protected areas in the Atlantic Ocean between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and Cape Canaveral, Florida. Learn more about Gray's Reef NMS at www.graysreef.noaa.gov.