

Hi, my name is Kevin Johnson. I wanted to be a Marine Biologist when I was a child. I became interested in marine animals when I was eight. My parents and grandparents encouraged it they would get me books on marine animals and the ocean. When I hit my teenage years, other family told me there was really no money in it and since I didn't really have a direction I kind of wandered away from it as I grew up.

In my late 30s I found the saltwater aquarium hobby. I loved it since it gave me a way to enjoy marine animals and the ocean at home. It gave me a way to watch marine animals grow and thrive. I went to conventions and met more and more people in Marine Biology and other facets of conservation of our oceans. People like Jean-Michel Cousteau spoke at the conventions and the things they had seen and spoke about fascinated me and in some cases made me think. I met people that loved marine animals and the ocean as much as I did. In 2017 I finally found a direction for my dream I had spoken with people at MACNA (Marine Aquarium Conference of North America) for years that were doing Conservation and Restoration of coral reefs. I loved what they were doing and realized something. I had been kind of paralleling my childhood dream in a way without even realizing it. I got into the hobby and loved it I would get frags of coral from other hobbyist growing it out in their aquariums and grow it out in mine then if or when I cut the colony to control growth, I would give it to another hobbyist. In a way it is a way to conserve while in the hobby because the more we grow out and trade from our aquariums the less that is taken from coral reefs that might be suffering from other impacts as well.

I was so upset at some of the things I was seeing and hearing about. The carelessness or complete lack of understanding by people in positions of authority. I was also seeing things in the hobby I didn't agree with. I decided it was time for me to shut up if I was not willing to step up and do my part. I had been reading and speaking with people interested in and working in conservation and restoration of coral reefs. I decided that it wasn't too late even if I was in my 40s at that point to follow a childhood dream. I have not decided if I will pursue higher education beyond my bachelor's degree yet or where I will go with it. I know that my goal is to do something with conservation and restoration. Whether that is just on the side of my career or as my career I am still young, so I have time to decide which path when I reach that branch. For me the most important thing was starting on that path.

We see manmade disasters all the time that impact our planet and oceans. We see extreme weather and natural disasters. We see global warming and climate change, and, in some cases, we are only now accepting they are issues. For me looking at these things and knowing they are real I just want to do what I can even if it isn't enough to stop it alone. Each of us can do our part to start turning the ship and working to at least buffer or decrease the impact. We cannot and will not be able to reverse it probably in our lifetime just maybe if we all do our part the next generation or the generation after can.

My goal is by the end of my lifetime to be able to look back and not say I saved the world but maybe I did my part and am comfortable with what I did accomplish. My bucket list is simple and all of it has to do with the ocean and conservation. Well except skydiving I just want to wait until I am in my 90s and hopefully weigh little enough that if my chute fails and I land on someone it won't hurt them as bad. That and by then I can look back and be proud of the things I did accomplish. I just want to close this with thank you for taking the time to read it. It sincerely means a lot to me to be able to share this with you. It is rare that we get to follow dreams from that far in our past. I know since my other dream was to be a superhero!