



# US BUSINESS NEWS

## Global Blue Economy Leaders: Preparing the Next Generation for the Future

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By *Matt Emma*

The phrase “future jobs” is used frequently in business and policy discussions, yet uncertainty often persists when hiring, training, and long-term planning decisions become concrete. The Blue Economy puts ocean-related work into focus, from ocean exploration and regenerative aquaculture to underwater robotics. The Stone Soup Leadership Institute designs educational tools and workforce initiatives that give businesses a practical way to shape future talent, align skills with real industry needs, and protect long-term growth in the Blue Economy. Its signature event, [Global Blue Job Shadow Day™](#), helps students connect curiosity to careers.

Marianne Larned, author and founding director of the [Stone Soup Leadership Institute](#), leads that work. For three decades, she has used the Stone Soup model to bring together youth with business, academic, and government leaders. Under her tutelage, they have developed an online platform for pathways to economic opportunity in sustainability and the Blue Economy.

### Where the Blue Economy Becomes Local

The challenge is not only limited awareness of the rapidly expanding range of Blue Economy careers, but also the lack of sustained connection between classrooms and real operational environments where practical skills, certifications, and industry readiness are developed. Traditional lessons rarely reflect the realities of labs, marine operations teams, or renewable energy sites that depend on technicians, planners, and skilled workers. The Institute frames this disconnect as an economic issue, building learning experiences with the involvement of business and education leaders who recognize that early workforce investment is essential to long-term industry viability.

The Blue Economy is projected to reach \$3 trillion globally by 2030 (OECD), and workforce development has to keep pace. Larned's motivation came from working with major corporations and seeing talented young people and underserved communities left out of emerging economic sectors. She argues that workforce development must start early, be community-driven, and connect education, industry, and policy in ways that lead to real jobs.

### **A Day That Makes Work Visible**

The 2026 Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ takes place on February 2, 2026, in locations across the U.S. and Portugal. Students spend time with professionals, see what a role looks like up close, and learn what training and experience tend to matter. The institute describes Job Shadow Day as a strategic way for business and education leaders to collaborate and develop Blue Economy workforce pipelines.

The 2026 event also features an exchange between Blue Economy leaders from the U.S. and Portugal, meant to showcase best practices in workforce development and spark new partnerships.

### **One Story That Explains the Aim**

The Institute collects stories because they show what a program can change. One example centers on Kassandra Castillo, born on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. She had few opportunities and little hope for her future. At 14, she joined the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative, the Institute's four-year bilingual demonstration project to empower young people to become leaders of their island's future. For Job Shadow Day, Castillo aspired to become a top model in Puerto Rico and used her star power to help other young girls envision their own dreams for their island community.

She was matched with the Vice President of L'Oreal Puerto Rico. Castillo said, "I got to spend a whole day with this person who does exactly what I wanted to do, and I get to see what I need to do to make that happen." That value is the clarity that comes from proximity.

### **What Happens After the Event?**

Global Blue Job Shadow Day™ also gathers community-driven data to shape economic development and future jobs. The Institute routes that input through surveys, including [youth](#), [education](#), and [business surveys](#). That way, leaders can document needs, barriers, and opportunities.

"At a time when international collaboration matters more than ever, the Institute's Global Blue Job Shadow Day demonstrates how Portugal and the United States can work together to empower young people to help build a more sustainable world," says Larned.

As discussions conclude, a practical challenge remains for business and industry: identifying the skills young people must develop today to meet the future workforce demands of the Blue Economy.