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Graham science teacher will study sea life in arctic

Chantelle Rose will spend six weeks in Bering, Chukchi seas.

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BILL LACKEY

Chantelle Rose, a Graham High School science teacher, describes the route she will be taking during the polar expedition she will be taking part in later this year. Staff photo by Bill Lackey

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By Matt Sanctis, Staff Writer

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ST. PARIS — Chantelle Rose has already trained for space travel and flown with the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, so it probably didn't surprise her colleagues when she decided to spend much of this winter studying sea life in the arctic.

Rose, a science instructor at Graham High School, will spend roughly six weeks aboard a ship traveling the Bering and Chukchi Seas near the Alaskan Coast.

The trip, funded through the National Science Foundation, will begin in November and last more than 40 days. Rose will take part in the expedition through the PolarTREC program, which pairs teachers and scientists for two to six weeks to conduct hands-on research.

Although she has participated in other adventurous programs, Rose said she initially wasn't sure she was prepared for a six-week trip to the arctic. She had applied for the program for several years, but only for two weeks at a time and never at this time of year. This is the first time she was selected.

As her departure date approaches, Rose said she is becoming more excited.

"All summer long, it's like, this is going to happen," Rose said.

Throughout the journey, Rose will be paired with Carin Ashjian, a senior scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts.

They will be studying the copepod, a tiny aquatic crustacean that serves as a vital link in the food chain.

Ashjian said during the harsh winters in the arctic, the creatures sink deep into the ocean and go into a state similar to hibernation. But no one has yet studied what happens to the copepod in much shallower seas. The research will assist computer modeling to help predict the future impact of climate change on the oceans, among other goals.

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“It makes it very difficult because we don’t know what these animals do in the winter time,” Ashjian said.

While she assists with the study, Rose will take photos, post a blog and keep a journal to track the research. She also plans to speak to students at Graham and Urbana University about her experiences.

“It’s bringing the experience back for the kids to see this is what real science is,” Rose said.

Rose said she’s always had a sense of adventure, which she attributes to growing up in a rural area and being outdoors for much of her life. Her next adventure, she said, might be running in a marathon.

“People who have adventuresome spirits have them their whole lives,” Rose said.

Contact this reporter at (937) 328-0355.

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