

Published: Friday, July 27, 2012

Parks teacher to embark on an Arctic journey for the 2nd time

Deanna Wheeler, a science teacher at J.C. Parks Elementary School, is about to return to the Arctic for a second educational experience of a lifetime.

As part of the PolarTREC program, Wheeler will travel aboard an icebreaker for 21 days in the Chukchi Sea, between Alaska and Siberia north of the Bering Strait, with scientists to participate in polar research. She was initially selected for the program in 2009, when she traveled to the Bering Sea.

The PolarTREC program, which stands for Teachers and Researchers Exploring and Collaborating in the Arctic, is funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation and managed by the Arctic Research Consortium of the United States.

During her expedition, Wheeler will participate in research such as examining the food chain of walrus and eider ducks, testing the water and examining the sediment at the bottom of the sea for living organisms.

The expedition also will monitor areas where exploratory offshore oil and gas drilling has been conducted.

Wheeler is excited about being selected to participate in the program for the second time, and is looking forward to learning as much as possible.

"To have the opportunity to share real-life research from an icebreaker in the Chukchi Sea will be an awesome experience," she said, according to a news release from Charles County Public Schools.

Wheeler will be able to share her experiences on board the USCGC Healy with other educators, scientists and students through Internet tools including online teacher and research journals, message boards and podcasts.

Wheeler said she will be able to share data and her experiences with all Charles County Public Schools students through the online tools available.

"If students at another school are working on a specific project in which I have data for, they can view daily reports that we will upload to the Internet. I look forward to helping connect two vastly different worlds and will communicate with the use of technology back to our students and the community," Wheeler said.

The program accepts about 15 teachers per year.

She departs for her experience in Dutch Harbor, Alaska, on Aug. 5 and returns to Barrow, Alaska, on Aug. 25.

To follow Wheeler's daily logs, go to www.polartrec.com.

© 2012 Post-Newsweek Media, Inc./SoMdNews.com