

JENKS NEWS

Jenks Teacher Brings Arctic Experiences to Students

Over the summer, Alicia Gillean, media specialist at Jenks West Intermediate, spent one month in the Arctic as a part of PolarTREC (Teachers and Researchers Exploring and Collaborating). PolarTREC takes K-12 teachers to polar regions for up to six weeks to engage in hands-on field research with the goal of invigorating polar science education and understanding.

Gillean recently returned home with many new experiences and stories to tell.

She shared a few with Greater Tulsa Reporter:

Jenks District Gazette (JDG): How did your involvement with PolarTREC come about?

Alicia Gillean: In the summer of 2012, I was honored to participate in the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Teacher at Sea

program. I spent 11 days living and working aboard the ship R/V Hugh R Sharp as part of a science team conducting a survey of Atlantic sea scallops. The experience provided me with tremendous examples of real-world science to share with my students. A few months after returning from my adventure at sea, that Teacher at Sea program posted a link to the PolarTREC application.

Both programs focus on teachers participating as members of the science team and sharing their experiences with students through blogging, classroom lessons, videos, etc. My positive Teacher at Sea experience, my drive to constantly learn and challenge myself, and my lack of knowledge about polar regions led me to apply to the PolarTREC program.

JGD: What did you learn?

AG: Overall, I was struck by how wrong my concept of the Arctic and the tundra was. I envisioned the Arctic as a barren, desolate wasteland that was covered in snow all the time and harbored little life. In reality, nothing could be farther from the truth! It was amazing to see the tundra transform before my eyes in just a matter of days from the brown tundra that had been covered in snow to a lush, green, flower-carpeted paradise, teeming with birds, insects, and animals uniquely adapted to the environment. The growing season is short in the Arctic, but it is spectacular.

Additionally, it was exciting for me to see that the scientific process that we teach our students is how it actually works in field science. I especially enjoyed hearing the scientists talk to each other at meals and in passing. They constantly ask questions and get excited about future research possibilities. They are examples of the types of



SQUIRRELY DEALINGS: Alicia Gillean, left, and fellow researcher Kate Wilsterman carry squirrel traps to their research site at Toolik Field Station.

life long learners we want our students to become.

Thirdly, before I became involved with PolarTREC, I had never heard of Arctic ground squirrels, let alone pondered their circadian rhythms. It had never occurred to me to wonder how the 24 hours of daylight during the Arctic summer impact the

plants and animals in the Arctic.

JDG: How do you plan to pass on what you learned to your students?

AG: First and foremost, I want to inspire my students to develop as lifelong learners who are curious about the world. I want to use my experiences to educate and motivate them to become active conservationists and to instill an appreciation of our natural resources. I also look forward to helping students understand the interconnection of academic subjects and their applications in the real world, which I hope will motivate them as learners and raise awareness of potential careers in science.

I was able to video tape four polar scientists as they offered insight into their daily work, why they chose science as a career, what they most enjoy about their work, and advice for students who are interested in pursuing careers in science.

More importantly, my experiences enable me to be a role model of life long learning and risk-taking for my students.



SUMMER WORKOUT: The Hot Body Bootcamp Challenge has begun at Jenks Nutrition, 124 N. 3rd St. The free bootcamp is a four-week challenge to see how much participants can improve in their fitness level. Classes take place Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6:30 p.m. Call 918-518-5725 to sign up.

New Building Opens

Jenks Public Schools' new Education Service Center, 211 East A Street, opened July 15. Construction began one year ago on the new facility.

For the previous three years, administration offices have been housed at 951 W. Main. This came about when construction began on the Math and Science Center, which took the place of the old education service center on campus.

School administrators chose to locate the new Math and Science Center in that location because "we wanted to centrally locate that building for students," says

Executive Administrator Ben Ferem. "We have 3,000 9-12 grade students who use that building. Classrooms take preference over offices. We wanted it to be accessible for them."

The new building holds the offices for curriculum, finance, student programs, human resources, communications, administration, the Jenks Foundation and others. The building is modeled after the original Jenks school building on Main Street with its bell tower and arches over the doors, says Ferem. "We think it is important to incorporate the past of the school in the new."

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