2015 DGA Awards

**DGA Pathfinder Award** - Presented annually to a Delawarean who has found a way to direct resources to support geographic education.

**Nicole Minni** is a GIS / Graphics Specialist for the School of Public Policy & Administration, Institute for Public Administration, Water Resources Agency in all aspects of its geospatial research, graphic and web development needs.

**Miriam Pomilio** is currently a Principal Planner with the Office of State Planning Coordination, and Chair of the Geographic Data Committee for our state.

Nicole and Miriam are a formidable team; they are mothers with a mission! Together and separately, they have worked tirelessly for years to share the power of GIS with teachers and students, as a tool for analysis and problem solving. They know that GIS skills and perspectives will be essential skills for students in future education and work settings, and they know that teachers often hesitate to get into an area they do not know well. They have developed and presented teacher workshops, visited classrooms around the state to demonstrate the use of GIS in age-appropriate lessons, shared resources, and advocated for GIS with education policymakers. Perhaps their most visible contribution has been the Annual GIS Day event. Through sponsorships and participation of many companies and agencies, this event builds awareness of the need for GIS in K-12 education while at the same time offering an opportunity for students to learn and explore.

**MaryAnna Taylor Service Award**

**MaryAnna** is presented at the discretion of the Steering Committee to a DGA member who has made extraordinary efforts to advance geography education by supporting the DGA and its activities.

**Cathy Cooper** has been a member of the Delaware Geographic Alliance for about 10 years. She resides in Easton, MD and became connected with the activities of the DGA while she was an intern at National Geographic Headquarters in Washington, DC. Cathy has a background in the world of corporate banking, but she has built a second career in geography education and has never hesitated to contribute her time and talent to DGA projects. Whether the task at hand is evaluation of educational programs, taking 5th graders on a fieldwalk at Trap Pond to observe trees and spot human impact, or teaching teachers to use GIS confidently, Cathy is there to help.
The Distinguished Teaching Award is offered annually to recognize demonstrated excellence in the craft of geography teaching among our membership. Applicants complete an application providing evidence of effective geography teaching in the areas of curriculum and assessment, professional preparation for teaching geography, classroom environment, and collaboration with peers within the school community. The Distinguished Teaching Award is presented to those applicants who meet the criteria established by the Alliance as judged by the DGA Professional Development Committee.

**Katy Brown** teaches 7th grade Social Studies at Gunning Bedford Middle School near New Castle, DE. Because she values the needs of her students and wants them to see relevance and excitement in their school experience, she has worked with other Colonial teachers to develop a standards-based curriculum that meets their needs. Katy understands the interplay of the physical geography of a place with the activities of humans, and brings that geographic perspective to lessons on the Panama Canal, or the ancient civilizations of the Middle East. As department chair she serves her peers in the school, maintaining the department website and coordinating the school-level Geo-Bee. Katy has also participated in a DGA focus group to improve communications with our members.

**Amy Carlson** teaches grade 4 at William Keene Elementary School near Newark, DE. Amy has broadened the traditional “Delaware History” focus of grade 4 to include engaging learning activities that help supplement the limited background of some of her students. In her application, Amy mentioned a lesson based on the Tall Tale of Paul Bunyon’s Blue Ox Babe. The students didn’t “get” the jokes in the story because they did not have the needed background on the physical features of the US, so Amy took a little detour and filled them in on the Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon, the Mississippi River. As content chair, Amy supports other teachers in her school in their geography education efforts through Geography Awareness Week events and the Geography Bee. Representing Keene Elementary on the Christina District Social Studies Council, she shares successes and brings back resources for her colleagues.

**Carolyn Fafara** teaches grade 7 at McCollough Middle School in New Castle, where she also serves as an LFS coach and department chair and represents her school on the Colonial School District Social Studies Leadership Council. As a well-traveled individual herself, Carolyn is determined to open up the world to her students, and have them explore and engage in real problems. In her Conflict and Cooperation unit, she has students research diverse conflicts (Darfur, religious conflict in the Middle East) reading articles she has collected at varying reading levels. Carolyn is a resourceful and imaginative teacher of geography.
**Sonia Saunders** teaches grade 5 at Brandywine Springs School, Red Clay Consolidated SD in Wilmington, DE. She draws on her broad background of professional development and experience in environmental education, hydrology (streams and water), STEM integration, and mathematics to develop a geographic perspective in her district’s history-based curriculum for grade 5. An example she provided was a unit on the power of water and how harnessing streams for mills sparked the industrial development of the Brandywine Valley and the US. Sonia has served on her school leadership team, and is constantly involved in professional development aimed at improving her skills as a teacher.

**Delaware Geography Teacher of the Year** is awarded annually to the Distinguished Teacher who best exemplifies the values and standards of the Delaware Geographic Alliance as judged by the professional development Committee. The Geography Teacher of the Year will be invited to represent the Alliance at the annual conference of the NCGE next summer in Washington, DC.