



## *DGA Summer Institute Courses – Teachers Gain a New Perspective*

Two one-week summer geography courses for Delaware classroom teachers will be offered during the month of July. Teachers who are looking for a quality professional development experience will benefit from taking one or both of these offerings, with content and methods that will prove useful to teachers at all grade levels. Teachers of social studies, science, foreign language, language arts, and mathematics will find content applications that will be useful to them.

- GEOG 642 focuses on Place/Culture and Region. This course will be held on the Newark campus of the University of Delaware **July 6-10**.
- GEOG 641 (Mapping and Environmental Interaction) will be held at the Carter Center of DelTech in Georgetown, DE **July 20-24th**.

Each course carries three UD graduate credits. Registration for both classes is through the University of Delaware Continuing Education. To learn more, visit the Delaware Geographic Alliance website at [www.ngsednet.org](http://www.ngsednet.org) or [www.degeog.org](http://www.degeog.org).

### DGA Events

- July 6-10 Geography Summer Institute  
GEOG642- UD Campus,  
Newark, DE
- July 20-24 Geography Summer Institute  
GEOG 641- Carter Center,  
Georgetown, DE
- September 23-26 National Council for  
Geographic Education Conf.  
San Juan, Puerto Rico
- October 4 Coast Day, Lewes, DE
- November 15-21 Geography Awareness  
Week- Theme: Europe
- November 18 Delaware GIS Day  
Air Command Museum, Dover

## *Volunteers and Supporters Make State Geographic Bee a Big Success*

Sixty-six students competed on April 3 in the Delaware Geographic Bee, held at Clayton Hall on the University of Delaware campus. Varun Wadhwa, Grade 6, The Independence School, Newark, DE 19711 was the winner. Second Place: Kyle Plusch, Grade 7, Alfred Waters Middle School, Middletown, DE 19709. Third Place: Alexander Suarez-Beard, Grade 7, Springer Middle School, Wilmington, DE 19802.



Credit: Jennifer Corbett: The News Journal

Thanks to all the volunteers, teachers, and parents who supported this event with their time and talent. This event could not be held without their help and generosity. Judges for the event were Dr. Peter Mires, Dr. Yda Schreuder, Mr. Kevin Brinson, and Dr. David Legates. Moderators were Tom Neubauer, Steve and Mary Pollitt, Anne Deinert, and Becky Reed. Jacqui Wilson, Vicki Seifred, Kim Mires and Vicki Goettel were scorekeepers and timekeepers. DGA grad assistant Melanie Schimek spent many hours on correspondence, preparing certificates and materials.

The National Geographic Bee program is sponsored nationally by Plum Creek Lumber Co, Google, Inc. and the National Geographic Society. Locally, the Delaware Geographic Alliance and its members provide the personnel and financial support. The Kalmar Nyckel Society provided each of the top ten semi-finalists with a free sail pass.

## *Kudos to Award Winning DGA Members*



At the DGA Annual Awards Dinner Third-grade teacher **Wendy Harrington** from Milton Elementary School was named Delaware Geography Teacher of the Year. Harrington received a trophy plaque and an inscribed crystal globe. She will also receive a \$500 grant to use on classroom materials. In September, Wendy will represent Delaware at the annual conference of the National Council for Geographic Education in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



Winner of the DGA Distinguished Teaching Award for 2009 was **Joseph Ambrosino**, Downes Elementary School, Newark, DE. A dynamic and innovative music teacher, Ambrosino infuses geographic knowledge and learning into his expressive arts program.

**Dom Zaffora**, special educator from Phillis Wheatley Middle School, Woodbridge, was honored with the DGA Distinguished Service award for his dedication to Alliance activities and projects.



**Tom Baker**, Middletown High School, wins third prize in national contest-lesson plans on transportation. Tom attended the DGA Summer Institute in 2006 and 2007. The lesson he submitted to the Grosvenor Geography Education Institute was a version of a project he created as a course assignment. The lesson, Panama Canal, is found on the DGA websites.

DGA member **Laura Patterson** was recently named Red Clay Social Studies Teacher of the Year and was recognized for her classroom excellence at the Delaware Council for the Social Studies banquet in April.



DGA member **Dr. April Veness** and DGA founder **Dr. Peter Rees** were recognized with the Distinguished Advising Award from UD.

# Delaware?

By: Dr. Peter Mires, Contributing Editor  
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To date, most of my columns have dealt with historic Delaware place-names. However, as a geographer I recognize that places continue to evolve and new settlement patterns develop. It seems that names on a map sometimes don't keep pace with the dispersal of people on the landscape.

I've been fascinated by the creation of new communities since first reading Joel Garreau's influential book *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* some twenty years ago. A reporter for the *Washington Post*, Garreau became intrigued with what urban geographers call the multiple nuclei model, or how satellite communities just spring up out of nowhere (or, more correctly, on the periphery of urban areas).

For me, this was perhaps best illustrated by the northern Virginia crossroads of Tysons Corner; the front and back endpapers of the book compare the place in 1988 and circa World War II, respectively. The contrast from a rural crossroads occupied by a mom & pop grocery and a gas station to a mass of high rises illustrates Garreau's central thesis. It also underscores the importance of geography's agenda: understanding the why of where.

In recent years, heretofore rural and unincorporated areas the First State have experienced dramatic growth and development, especially the interstices of urban New Castle County such as the area around Churchman's Marsh. All Delawareans are familiar with the phenomenal growth of Sussex County beach communities from Lewes south, but have you been to Long Neck lately? In Kent County, recent development of farmland north and west of Magnolia makes its "center of the universe" moniker somehow a little less ridiculous.

The whole idea of an edge city is that it's more than simply a commuter suburb; the concomitant availability of goods and services creates a self-sufficient community. I have a friend who lives in one such edge city outside Houston (Texas, not Delaware). He says that he and his family are able to satisfy most of their needs locally: school, church, shopping, dentist and doctor appointments, car repair, and so forth. Why go to the big city? Although Delaware is comparatively small, geographers recognize that we too are experiencing the edge city phenomenon.

*National Geographic Xpeditions* features a lesson for grades 9-12 on this very American phenomenon. Find *Life on the Edge* at

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/12/g912/fringe.html>

Some Related Links:

[About.com: Edge Cities](#)

[GeoHive: Country Data Index](#)

[National Geographic: Virtual WorldThe New Suburb?](#)

[Wired.com: Edgier Cities](#)

## A New Look for DGA's website

We've had a makeover! Our original Alliance website, [www.degeog.org](http://www.degeog.org) has been reorganized for greater convenience for the busy teacher. Our web designer was DGA member Kristen Taggart whose daytime job is teacher/ department chair and webmaster for the social studies department at William Penn High School. For several years the Delaware Geographic Alliance has maintained two websites. The [degeog.org](http://degeog.org) site was our original web presence. It functions as a source for shared resources, member-developed lessons and activities, news about upcoming events, and so on. Kristen spent many hours reorganizing our files, cross-indexing resources, and trying to anticipate future needs. Ideas for further improvements are welcome. If you have a suggestion or would like to share a lesson or good idea you have developed, contact the DGA office at 302-831-6783 or [maggielg@udel.edu](mailto:maggielg@udel.edu).

A second website, [www.ngsednet.org/dga](http://www.ngsednet.org/dga) is part of the National Geographic Education network. This website has experienced some technical problems in the past few months, but hopefully problems have now been corrected. This site is a useful tool for Alliance committees and groups, and allows us to stay connected to the national network.

### New on our websites:

A special webpage that brings together many resources on modern exploration has been developed by grad assistant Melanie Schimek under funding from Space Grant. This page is designed to be used for student research. Four areas of exploration are featured: Space (Lunar and Mars), Undersea, Polar, and Archaeological.

## DGA Graduate Assistant Melanie Schimek shares Arctic experiences

University of Delaware graduate student Melanie Schimek has worked in the Delaware Geographic Alliance office during the 2008-2009 school year. Funding from Space Grant supported Melanie's work developing lessons and instructional resources for the use of Delaware teachers. All of the materials will be freely available to Delaware teachers for download from the DGA website. During Melanie's time as a graduate student she has been fortunate to work with geographer Fritz Nelson in the Arctic region helping with research on permafrost and related physical changes happening in the far north.



What follows is an excerpt from an article Melanie has prepared for students in which she shares her impressions and personal photos of the North Slope region of Alaska.

### Explorations on the North Slope of Alaska

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to travel thousands of miles north and experience the wilderness of the Arctic first hand? I have spent time in Alaska over the course of 5 separate summers and the following account contains my personal reflections of the North Slope as a field scientist.

#### Why research in northern Alaska?

Being a curious person, as most scientists are, when an opportunity presented itself to travel as a field assistant to Alaska, "when do we leave?" was the first question that came to mind. It just so happens, being an adventurous geographer as well, that traveling is one of my favorite things to do. I have found that traveling is the best way to

learn about a place and to come away with a real "sense of place" in your mind.



#### Misconceptions:

Unlike what some people think, northern Alaska is not simply a snow covered barren wasteland all year round. At the end of May, the winter snow melts completely and the land rapidly comes to life. At 70°N latitude the sun stays above the horizon continuously from May 26 to July 17. Although the growing season is only 3 months long, the continuous daylight and warmer temperatures trigger vigorous plant growth. The lush growth feeds many animals and birds that live or migrate to the area. Bears, fox, caribou, moose, ground squirrels, owls, and swans are a just a few of the animals that live on the North Slope for at least part of the year. The area is teeming with wildlife around every bend.



To access the complete article, visit [www.degeog.org](http://www.degeog.org) or [www.ngsednet.org/dga](http://www.ngsednet.org/dga) and click on Learn About modern Exploration.

## DelCastle teacher Allen Sylvester looks forward to adventure

National Geographic and Lindblad Expeditions are developing a new program that will expand the Grosvenor Teacher Fellowship into an opportunity for up to 50 teachers per year to accompany a Lindblad expedition and bring that experience to their classrooms. An extension of an earlier program in which only two teachers were selected annually from a group of fifty candidates, the new program promises even greater benefits. A two day preparation workshop will be followed by a summer expedition on Lindblad's new ship, the National Geographic Explorer. It is through this workshop that teachers will be given the tools needed to create a new kind of classroom activity for their students which will utilize GPS, photography and video to bring the sights, sounds and educational elements of an ocean adventure within reach for their classrooms. National Geographic and Lindblad Expeditions are hoping that this program will continue for future years, allowing a large number of dedicated teachers to receive the reward of a workshop and voyage that will truly change their lives and bring a new level of geographic and conservation aspirations to their students.

Allen Sylvester, high school social studies teacher in the NCCVT district, has been nominated for the new program. Allen has already contributed to geography education in Delaware through his geography reader for high school students entitled "Standard Geography" (available for download on DGA websites). He has traveled to China and to Europe and enjoyed incorporating travel experiences into his classroom activities.



The National Geographic Explorer will sail in 2010. We hope that Allen will be selected to represent DGA on that voyage.

## Looking Ahead to Fall 2009:

**Geography Awareness Week** will be November 15-21. This year's regional theme is "Europe". DGA workshops and materials will include mapping activities and other features tied to that theme.

*Our thanks to DGA member Nicole Minni who contributed this information.*

### **GIS Day- Wednesday, November 18**

This year the Delaware GIS Day Event Committee will offer another field trip for students to the Dover Air Command Mobility Museum. The event is designed to support Delaware curriculum requirements for students learning about geography, cartography and the world around us. The evening will be opened to the general public for free.

Teachers interested in bringing students to this event should look for information on the GeoEducation site at [www.mygeoworld.org](http://www.mygeoworld.org). GIS Day started in 1987, as part of the National Geographic's Geography Awareness Week, as a way to expose society to the tools and opportunities of GIS. The Delaware Geographic Data Committee is a cooperative effort among all levels of government, the academic sector, and the private sector, to build a Delaware GIS Community and improve the coordination of the use of GIS tools and spatial data in Delaware, so for several years the State of Delaware has participated in celebrating GIS Day.

### **K-12 Student Contest**

The Delaware GeoEducation Committee's K-12 Student Contest will be held at the Delaware GIS Conference on February 9-10, 2010. Our contest theme this year will be *Maps Tell the Story: Planning for the Future*. Some ideas for our contest theme are; land use, wind, population shifts, vacations, watersheds, epidemiology, and where to build. The contest will be opened up the multi-media, such as podcasts, web pages, power point, GIS maps or overlays, and posters.

Look for more information regarding the Student Contest and the GIS Day event on the Delaware GeoEducation web site at [www.mygeoworld.org](http://www.mygeoworld.org).

# Little geographers- big gains in learning!

Professor Carol Gersmehl from Hunter College in New York City spoke at the DGA Spring Awards Dinner, sharing her experiences with geography education in early childhood and high school classrooms in the inner city. Carol's practical approach to instruction allows the successful integration of the latest brain research in spatial reasoning and cognition with the realities of classroom life. Photos of classroom projects and neighborhood field walks, examples of maps and models generated by the students, and glimpses of a developing curriculum designed especially for young learners made the talk especially interesting.



Examples of activities used in a charter school in Harlem were writing sentences using positional words, mapping the school and making a map key, and taking a neighborhood field walk. All of these activities are commonly used in elementary schools, but careful focus on geographic skills and linkages to literacy skills paid big dividends in student learning. In the field walk activity, a simple GIS map was constructed for the neighborhood around the school. The children viewed the map and then took a walk through the area on the map. Pictures were added to the map after the walk to represent landmarks the children remembered. The path they had taken was marked with tiny footprints. After the trip, a language arts writing activity extended the lesson and reinforced lesson vocabulary.

The proof of the value of any program is in the results- and we all are looking for ways to improve student achievement, especially for students who are disadvantaged. The introduction of weekly geography lessons for kindergarten and first grade students seem to have contributed to significant gains for the children in related subjects. Test scores in language arts and mathematics showed significant gains. While Carol carefully avoids taking all the credit for the increase in academic achievement, she points out that the considerable time devoted to instruction in geography surely did not hurt!



To view the slides from Carol Gersmehl's talk, visit [www.ngsednet.org/dga](http://www.ngsednet.org/dga) and go to resources- PowerPoint presentations.





Image Credit: UNEP

Climate Change may have an effect on the lives of those who live and work within the Arctic Circle. To learn more about exploration of this region today, visit [www.degeog.org](http://www.degeog.org) and click on “Learn About Modern Exploration”.

- Which countries control territory in the northern polar region?
- How might they benefit from a warming trend in the far north?
- Is the polar view of this map helpful or misleading? How might it be used by scientists and policymakers?

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