Geography is all about what makes a space a place. Geographers explore the world, gather data and use spatial thinking to make decisions. Geography can be global, national or regional but most often we do geography where we live, work and play.

This year the theme of Geography Awareness Week (November 13-19) will be Geography: the Adventure in Your Community. The local focus of this theme will tie in nicely with popular DRC units at the elementary, middle school and high school levels. But this year GAW takes the adventure of geography beyond the classroom. Informal educators- scout leaders, 4-H clubs and other groups are encouraged to join in the fun of doing geography!

The Challenge:
Individuals or teams of students, families, or friends can explore their own communities through a series of “missions” found on a special student website: www.missionexplore.net. The website allows students to earn points and monitor their own progress. By completing a varied series of missions, individuals or teams can earn “badges” in the four sub-theme categories: photography, storytelling, mapping, and taking action. If they complete every badge, they demonstrate that they are able to see their community and the rest of the world with deeper understanding.

Geography Awareness Week 2011 is sponsored by the Geo-literacy Coalition Founding Council.

Find out more about GAW:

We’re on Facebook!
GAW Coordinator Wendy Harrington is excited to share resources, ideas, and materials with Alliance members and others. She is collaborating with the Colorado Coordinator to build a Facebook exchange where teachers in both states can post and find information about what they are doing. Search for Geography Awareness Week 2011-2012- and “like” it! Wendy also has a supply of special GAW posters. Wendy teaches 3rd grade at Milton Elementary School in the Cape Henlopen School District.
Third-grade teachers **Kristen Becker and Kim Snyder** from North Star Elementary School in Hockessin were among the DGA members who attended the annual conference of the National Council for Geographic Education in Portland Oregon August 3-6. As teaching partners, they presented Kristen’s DRC unit “Using Maps and Globes”. The pair was encouraged by the enthusiastic responses from the many classroom teachers who attended the session. Kristen Becker was named 2011 Geography Teacher of the Year at a special reception in May.

Also attending the conference was **Wendy Harrington**, Milton Elementary School in the Cape Henlopen District. Wendy attended many interesting sessions including a special training session for Geography Awareness Week Coordinators.

**Peter Rees** receives national award

Dr. Peter W. Rees was recently awarded the Higher Education Distinguished Teaching Award from The National Council for Geography Education. This award recognizes Dr. Rees for his outstanding contributions to undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Delaware. Dr. Rees has consistently demonstrated excellence in the classroom by developing and delivering challenging classes, and in the field through his participation in the UD study abroad program. Last year Rees was honored by the University of Delaware as a Distinguished Mentor, recognizing his personal connection and service to his students. The award also recognizes his extensive contributions to K-12 geography education in Delaware. Dr. Rees is the founder of the Delaware Geographic Alliance; for the past 25 years he has contributed to professional development, and to curriculum and assessment reform in the Delaware public schools. Most recently he authored a set of instructional units for high school entitled *The Delaware Geography Health Initiative*. The units have been approved as part of the DRC.

**Portland, Oregon**

Green in more ways than one, Portland is a lively city with a progressive and environmentally friendly attitude. The Columbia River provides a focal point for tourism, festivals and recreation. Interesting shops and restaurants draw pedestrians to leafy streets.

Conference attendees enjoyed excursions to the rocky coast, to near-by Mt. St Helens and Mt. Hood and the Columbia River Gorge. Clear summer skies, cool temperatures and varied landscapes made Portland an ideal destination for geographic educators.
Regional Geography, a semester course for 9th grade students, is the newest geography addition to the Delaware Recommended Curriculum. The course is comprised of four DRC units.

Teachers at a special two-day training session held July 12 and 13 got a quick overview of the course and sampled the varied instructional materials and strategies. Each teacher received a “kit” of basic print materials, a classroom set of computer disks, and access to a special website designed to support the class.

Additional training sessions for this course are planned for the near future. Trainings are sponsored by the DGA, the Social Studies Coalition of Delaware, and the Delaware Dept. of Education. (Check www.ngsednet.org/dga for dates and times.)

Coming soon to the DDOE website is DRC model unit Green Cities. This unit looks at American cities from colonial times until the present, and the ideas Americans have had about open space in cities. Students work with historic city plans, read the opinions of urban planners, and study how “green ideas” and American cities have changed over time. They read predictions about urban spaces of the future and are challenged to plan a city based on what they have learned.

DGA members Maureen Greenley and Barbara Prillaman developed this unit with an eye to making quality materials and activities accessible to all students. Lessons feature readings and activities adapted for the needs of students of varied ability levels. The unit includes research support for the reading and assessment strategies employed.

Students apply the ideas of the past, the principles of geography, and their own creativity to design an ideal city in a transfer task that doubles as a unit culminator. http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/staff/cl/content_areas/social_studies/standards/pilot_6-8.shtml

Green Cities- 7th graders learn about urban places

DRC Unit Training Opportunities 2011-2012

October 17- Thinking About Maps and Globes- Kindergarten and/or Grade 1
October 25- Using Geography to Solve Health Problems- Grade 9
October 27- Using Maps and Globes- Grade 3
February 7- Green Cities- Grade 7
February 13- Humans Interact with the Environment- Grade 6
February 17- Community Profiles- Grade 4

Register for DRC unit training through your school or school district. Contact person is Preston Shockley at pshockley@doe.k12.de.us. All training sessions are held at the Collette Training Center west of Dover. All sessions are scheduled from 8:30am to 3:30pm. Geography unit training is sponsored by the Social Studies Coalition of Delaware, Delaware Dept. of Education, and the Delaware Geographic Alliance.
The 4th annual GIS Day fieldtrip will take place on November 16, 2011 at the Air Mobility Command Museum in Dover, Delaware. GIS Day is an international event held on Wednesday of National Geography Awareness Week. Delaware GIS Day is sponsored by the GeoEducation Committee.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is the set of tools used to relate information to geography and is an integral part of the technology platform used today. GIS allows you to apply a geographical perspective to life situations. Decision making for business, government, education and the culture at large is enhanced by using GIS relationships between people, places and environments. This field trip is intended for 5th grade classes and is designed to create awareness and enhance the students’ GIS knowledge of how GIS affects everyday life.

For more information on past years’ GIS Day success and what’s in store for this year, please visit www.mygeoworld.org

The GIS Day Committee will accept registrations for this event beginning September 19, 2011.

If you have additional questions please feel free to email Megan Nehrbas at the following: mnehrbas@sussexcountyde.gov
Teachers, scout leaders, 4-H project leaders and parents:

Geography Awareness Week 2011 – November 13 – 19, 2011 will be the kick-off for geography fun and learning for kids of all ages. The activities are designed to be self-directed. A variety of “missions” will appeal to students of all ages and interests. They will be challenged to earn points—working toward badges. Students can login and keep track of their points at [www.missionexplore.net](http://www.missionexplore.net).

Support and sharing: Search “Geography Awareness Week 2011-2012” on Facebook “Like” and our Facebook page to share ideas and projects.

Here is a sampling of the missions and badges. Visit the public website [www.geographyawarenessweek.org](http://www.geographyawarenessweek.org) to download a full set of badges and missions.

1. Photograph Badge – Must earn 1000 points

To earn the Photography Badge, explorers are challenged to see their community in whole new ways: as if they’d just moved in, or from a bug’s-eye or bird’s-eye point of view. By looking at their neighborhoods through a new lens, explorers learn about scale, invasive species, and community cohesiveness.

1.2 Snap your community’s image – 1000 points

Photograph the things that you think hold your community together and create its identity. These could be things like community centers, roads, schools, parks, or neighborhoods. Produce a photo collage to represent the best things about the place where you live. Persuade your local or school newspaper to include the photos in one of their next editions.

1.5 Alien invasion – 444 points

Photograph evidence of where a non-native plant or animal has invaded a local ecosystem. Produce a ‘spotter’s guide’ to these invasive species. Do some research to learn about how these species got into your community, how they are affecting your community’s ecosystem, and if anything is being done to try to remove them. Include all of this information in your guide.

2. Mapping Badge – Must earn 1000 points

To earn the Mapping Badge, explorers must investigate their communities by creating a variety of different maps – invisible mazes, maps based on smells, and others! These missions show explorers the many different ways maps are useful geographic tools used to capture all kinds of data.

2.4 Walk your footprint – 1000 points

Estimate the size of your ecological footprint. How long does it take you to walk from its center to its edge? What is the total ecological footprint of your household? School? Community? Create a piece of art to demonstrate what you discover by doing this mission.
2.5 Welcome Map – 704 points
Make a map that can be given to kids who are new to your area. Work in a team to think about what things new people would need to know about your local area and then start mapping them out on paper. Try to include some local secrets, interesting stories, and great places to discover. Once complete, find clever ways to distribute the map to newcomers.

3. Story-telling Badge – Must earn 1000 points
To earn the Story-Telling Badge, explorers must create their own stories about their communities. They can create a museum showcasing something that comes from somewhere else, or write and perform a play about a place. They are even challenged to write a story using only billboards and signs they find in their neighborhood! These stories help explorers learn about the culture in their very own backyards.

3.1 Tell an object’s story – 351 points
‘Interview’ something that you’ve bought that was made in or comes from another country. What story does it tell you? How is the place it came from different than the place it traveled to? Share the story in an interesting way by setting up your own museum. Be sure to include a map that traces the item’s travels.

3.5 Sign Story – 250 points
Using only words you can find on signs in your community, tell a story about it. Include yourself in the story.

4. Take action! Badge – Must earn 1000 points
From volunteering in their communities, to starting a garden, to creating trash art, explorers have lots of ways of earning the Take Action! Badge. The badge inspires explorers to identify issues in their community and then come up with strategies to work towards a solution that is better for all involved.

4.4 Award sustainable businesses – 675 points
Explore your local stores and coffee shops. Which ones have the most sustainable products? Reward those that are good with a certificate and ask your local paper to list them.

4.5 ID a problem – 1000 points
Identify a problem that faces young people in your area: homelessness, kids without school supplies, or a lack of playgrounds perhaps. Research the problem you are interested in and write up and submit a plan for how you would go about fixing the problem. See if there is a related organization you can volunteer with. If not, organize a campaign to try to change things and raise awareness of the problem.
Geographer’s Corner

A Week to Remember
By Dr. Peter B. Mires, Contributing Editor
pmires@udel.edu

We sometimes forget that geography is a dual discipline—human and physical—with the former receiving most of the attention. Ask anyone about geography as a subject and you’re likely to get a response that includes countries and capitals. You’re less likely to hear about components of our physical world: the lithosphere, biosphere, and atmosphere.

This week in Delaware, however, we got two reminders that the physical world is very much a part of our experience. On Tuesday, August 23, most of us felt the magnitude 5.8 earthquake centered in south-central Virginia, and on Saturday, August 28, Hurricane Irene paid us a visit (and even spawned a tornado in Lewes). Although neither did any appreciable damage to Delmarva, we couldn’t help but notice that we inhabit an awesome planet.

Delawareans are accustomed to moderation when it comes to physical geography. We’re blessed with a mid-latitude coastal environment unaccustomed to extremes. We never experience the hot and cold of places like Death Valley or International Falls. Devastating cyclonic storms—hurricanes and tornados—will never hit here like they did in New Orleans, Tuscaloosa, or Joplin. And we will never know the tectonic effects of a Mount St. Helens or a Loma Prieta.

Nevertheless, it’s worth remembering that natural hazard information abounds. I was in a meeting when the earthquake hit and immediately recognized the sensation (having lived in Nevada where I experienced half a dozen temblors in the 4-6 magnitude range). I turned to the instructor sitting next to me who was already on the Internet and suggested that she go to the U.S. Geological Survey’s website. Within minutes we knew the epicenter and intensity.

Information on Hurricane Irene accumulated over the course of many days allowing for orderly and deliberate preparations, including the evacuation of coastal and low-lying areas. With all the media outlets covering Irene, I chose to spend much of Saturday listening to my NOAA weather radio.

The lesson for Delaware teachers is that these are local examples of physical phenomena that usually occur in other, often quite distant, places. With the theme of this year’s GAW—local communities—some of you will want to focus attention on the half of our dual discipline that is sometimes taken for granted: physical geography.
The Delaware Geographic Alliance is an active organization of teachers, college geographers, administrators, and others interested in strengthening geography learning in Delaware's classrooms. The Alliance seeks to promote geographic education in our state's schools and college curriculum and is a member of the National Geographic Society's Education Alliance Network. Founded in 1989, DGA has consistently advanced geographic literacy in Delaware. The Alliance receives support from the National Geographic Society and the State of Delaware and has received support for its projects from many agencies.

Contact Us
Our office is located in the Department of Geography in Pearson Hall at the University of Delaware. Questions should be directed to the DGA office:

Margaret (Maggie) Legates or David R. Legates (Not Related -- Seriously!)
Project Coordinators
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Academy Street
Newark, DE 19716-2541

Register now for National Geographic Bee

Schools enrolling students grades 4-8 should register now for the National Geographic Bee. Deadline for school regular registration is October 15 ($90). Extended deadline registration until Dec. 9 is $110.

To check to see if your school is already registered, or to get details about how to register, go to the special National Geographic Bee website at:

http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee/how-schools-register/