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## Researcher comes in from cold for Niles North date

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It's hard not to pay attention to a woman who balances a balloon globe in her hands while standing next to a life-size, chest-high Emperor Penguin statue, and talks about fluctuations in Earth's eroding ozone layer.

And your attention sharpens when you know she's been to the bottom of the real globe, seen real penguins in their natural habitat, and contributed research to our knowledge of the ozone hole.

It's no surprise, then, that students in Niles North High School teacher Hillary Tulley's science classes paid attention when Elke Bergholz spoke to them Monday.

She detailed daily life in Antarctica, complete with snapshots, and protective gear which she let some kids model. She told them how she measured the earth's protective ozone layer, using a deflated weather balloon to emphasize her points. She told students when the layer is thinnest over the pole (September) and what it means for people living closest to the hole (even minutes outside lead to sunburn in Australia -- just a hint of the physical and ecological damage that can obtain from unshielded solar rays.) Bergholz also reminded them how much remains to be done to protect the ozone layer, scientifically and politically, through agreements like the Kyoto Protocols.

Hers is the kind of personal connection science educators dream of forging between students and the subjects they teach. It's also the kind of bridge envisaged by the creator of programs that first sent Bergholz to Antarctica, and are sending her there again.

Bergholz teaches biology at New York's United Nations International School. She met Tulley back in 1998, when both traveled to the South Pole as part of the Teachers Experiencing Antarctica and the Arctic program. During that trip they did ozone research with members of the Boulder, Colorado-based climate monitoring and diagnostic laboratory.

In December Bergholz returns to Antarctica, thanks to the PolarTREC program, as one of 15 teachers collaborating with polar researchers. She will once more join the Boulder laboratory team (now part of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.)

But before heading south, she accepted Tulley's invitation to talk to Niles North students. And that's a task that fits in with the goals of the programs which allowed her to make both trips. She will be sharing her adventure with students of all ages, via personal school visits, podcasts, Internet chats and online journals and presentations.

"The human aspect is very, very important," she said Monday. "Once you have this personal experience that you can share with people, you can really become an advocate for science, for all of your life."

"This year, I had a chance to go back on the 10th anniversary of my first trip, during International Polar Year (which runs between 2007 and 2009), and 50 years exactly after the first International Geophysical Year. I'm so pleased this is going to happen," she said.

Tulley doesn't plan an Antarctic revisit, but said what she learned there has helped her enrich her message to students. Echoing Bergholz, she said, "this sort of first hand experience is what helps make science real to students."



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