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Teacher goes to ends of the Earth to study

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This summer, Elizabeth Eubanks will spend a month immersed in sunshine.

The intrepid St. Mark Catholic School teacher heads for Barrow, Alaska, June 10 as part of a research team investigating the role of carbon in Arctic tundra ecosystems.



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adventure. Last summer, she spent two weeks in the Pacific Ocean collecting data on sharks through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Teacher at Sea program.

The Dwyer award-winning teacher is part of the National Science Foundation's PolarTREC (Teachers and Researchers Exploring and Collaborating) expedition where teachers conduct scientific research in some of the most remote locations on Earth.

Eubanks will be on a team investigating how changes in a warming arctic environment may affect the balance and stability of the arctic soil. They will measure soil moisture, permafrost depth, carbon dioxide and methane gas in the soil and atmosphere and survey plant composition and function.

Eubanks, a Lake Worth resident and science teacher at the Boynton Beach school, is no stranger to

While there, she wrote blogs for her students and answered their questions via e-mail. When she returned, she created lesson plans based on her experience.

Her venture will be shared via her journal and photos on www.polartrec.com and Webinars, one of which is planned for June 18 at the Boynton Beach City Library. Call the library at (561) 742-6390 to confirm the time. At St. Mark, students will spend a year learning about the North and South poles.

Eubanks shares thoughts about her trip:

What do you hope to accomplish?

"I am trying to build awareness and share my experience with the public. I want people to read my journals, ask the team questions and participate in webinars. I am thrilled to be part of such cutting edge science. Global warming is a huge issue and to study these gases will be an amazing opportunity. Also, I will be on permafrost (permanently frozen ground). The permafrost is melting so this could mean that part of the world that I stand and work on may perhaps not be there one day."

What will be your biggest challenge?

"The time change and 24-7 sunlight."


What will your daily agenda involve?

"We will be in the field daily collecting samples of carbon and methane. They have lots of fancy equipment that I will have to learn about. I am a birder so I am interested in migratory birds in the Arctic. They will be breeding when I get there and some of them will even return to our beaches by fall! I am also looking forward to meeting and understanding the culture of the Inuits. Also, I think it will be exciting to celebrate Fourth of July in the Arctic Circle. Can you imagine if they have fireworks with 24-7 sunlight?"

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