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# Englewood resident on science adventure

Teacher taking part in Antarctic research project



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Englewood resident Maggie Kane smiles after she and 45 scientists and crew member completed a 12-hour flights over Antarctica measuring changes in the ice. Courtesy photo



Posted Monday, October 31, 2016 6:10 pm

**Tom Munds** (mailto:tmunds@coloradocommunitymedia.com)

Oct. 24 was a very different day for Englewood resident Maggie Kane because, instead of being in a classroom preparing to teach science to students, she was almost 9,000 miles away boarding a DC-8 as a member of a team of 45 scientists and crew members flying scientific missions over Antarctica in the PolarTREC program.

The teacher spent about 25 hours making the trip from Denver to Punta Arenas, Chile. In her daily journal, she said she spent the first day at the base camp in briefings and then, on Oct. 24, joined the crew for the flight over the Antarctic ice.

“I have a degree in geology and I like to do the things that challenge me the most so I applied to be part of this research team,” she said during an interview before she left. “We are based in Punta Arenas, Chile, at the tip of South America and will make aerial trips over Antarctica to evaluate changes in the ice.”

Her Oct. 24 journal talked about her arrival at the base camp and her first flight. The next day’s entry contained many details about the plane, equipment and mission.

“I got to fly over the South Pole today and that was such an experience,” Kane wrote as part of the Oct. 26 journal. “We also spend time during the commute to the testing area by talking with teachers and classrooms through XCHAT.”

In that journal, she wrote about the specialized equipment required to run the tests they are doing.

“The instruments measure four layers,” she wrote. “The equipment records the surface of the ice, the bottom of the ice, the surface of the water and the surface of bedrock. All these measurements are essential elements of the scientific data used in the mission to maintain records of changes in the polar land and the sea ice.”

Her daily journal entries detail many of her experiences. The journal can be accessed on the web by going to [polartrec.com](http://polartrec.com) and clicking on “Follow here” under the “Teachers in Antarctica” section.

Kane is a science teacher at Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning in Denver. She is one of 12 teachers selected from about 200 who applied in the nationwide search for educators to participate in PolarTREC. On its website, PolarTREC is described as an educational research experience in which K-12 teachers participate in polar research, working closely with scientists as a pathway to improve science education.

For about the next month, weather permitting, Kane and the team will work with a sophisticated array of scientific instruments on the plane as they fly 12-hour missions over the Getz Ice Shelf in Antarctica studying the ice thickness and extent. The passes over the ice are made at about 1,200 feet.

Kane is part of Operation IceBridge. According to the press release, Operation IceBridge's continuing mission is to collect data on changing polar land and sea ice and maintain continuity of measurements between ICESat missions, similar ice-study missions conducted by satellites. The original ICESat mission ended in 2009, and its successor, ICESat-2, is scheduled for launch in 2018.

The planned overlap with ICESat-2 will help scientists validate the satellite's measurements.

Kane grew up in New York state, earned a degree in geology from Hampshire College in Massachusetts and earned her master's degree from Montana State.

“I have always loved the outdoors,” she said. “I came to Colorado in the 1980s and loved it. I helped build trails and worked on a variety of other projects; I applied and was accepted as a teacher to take part in a number of scientific ice-study projects.”

She spent part of 1985 in Alaska and part of 1986 in the Canadian Arctic with ice study projects.

“Ice study is important,” she said. “Polar ice tells a story of the past in thickness and changes in the ice over hundreds of years.”

Kane said in an October interview that she will be sharing her experience with her students in Denver through the internet. She also is scheduled to talk about her experiences to students at the University of Magellan in Chile while she is in that country. She also said she will be doing presentations at her school when she returns to Colorado. Kane said when she returns to Colorado in late November, she will consider requests to do her presentation from schools and organizations.

Those interested in her presentation can email the request to Kane at [maggiekaneo@gmail.com](mailto:maggiekaneo@gmail.com) even while she is part of the mission in South America.

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