

The Lariat

By the Students, For the Students

March 2009

A Trip of a Lifetime

Almost every student at Wilson has probably heard of Mrs. Wilkening, a seventh grade teacher with a mad passion for science. She keeps her science classes alive with her eccentric and fun lessons. Mrs. Wilkening also has had two kids go through Wilson herself. Patrick, her son, was actually part of this school's first kindergarten class, and Jeannie, her daughter, just graduated from here last year. Now Mrs. Wilkening is getting the chance to go on a trip of a lifetime.

Until her seventh grade year, Mrs. Wilkening wasn't really as interested in science as she is today. But then in seventh grade her teacher, Sister Ann, let her class use hot plates. This was a big mistake because Mrs. Wilkening boiled over sugar and water and it caught on fire. From then on, she was hooked on science. Throughout her life before Wilson, Mrs. Wilkening had many scientific jobs, such as her two jobs with a company called IBM. One of them was making computer tape and the other was being a systems engineer. Mrs. Wilkening also held a job as an engineer in chemical plants and spent some of her time in college air quality monitoring. But then she got tired of keeping her scientific ambitions to herself. So she moved on to doing something where she could share her excitement with other people-teaching seventh grade science.

Mrs. Wilkening is now getting ready (is there or has returned by the time you're reading this) to go to Barrow, Alaska for a scientific trip with a program called Polar TREC, which is a program that pairs teachers with researchers as part of the international polar year. Out of all of the 250 teachers that applied to go on this trip, Mrs. Wilkening was one of the twelve chosen. She is on a project called Oasis. One of the scientific things she will do will be taking snow sample and then analyzing them for chemicals. After all, project OASOS is all about researching the physical, Chemical, and optical qualities of snow. Since Mrs. Wilkening is going to be outside in the freezing cold weather of Alaska, she actually has to take a cold weather survival class, and is receiving all new clothing meant to keep her warm from PolarTrec. She's also organizing for when she'll be gone by getting a sub ready and setting up podcasts so she can inform her science classes of everything going on in Alaska while she's there

Something Mrs. Wilkening really hopes will come out of the experience of her trip is her students gaining knowledge about the connections between our actions, Arctic climate change, and climate change happening here. She believes that this will help us understand more about events happening in the world. This isn't the last we'll here of Mrs. Wilkening's trip. When she comes back, we hope she'll share all the great detail of her trip with us.

Annie Cristelli