UPCOMING GEOGRAPHY CLUB NEWS AND EVENTS

T-Shirts:
Buy a Geography T-Shirt! Perfect Holiday presents for friends and family! Only $10 per shirt! $15 for tie-dye! And they come in 6 different colors! E-mail maggie.strassman@gmail.com for more info or stop by Sunshine’s office (room 160 Science Hall.)

Meetings:
The UW Geography Club meets every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in room 388 Science Hall. We usually eat FREE PIZZA and we are always looking for new projects, so bring your ideas! Everyone is welcome.

AAG:
We’re going to Vegas, baby! If you are interested in being part of the Quizbowl team at the National AAG Meeting, or if you want to just come along for the ride, stay on the lookout for updates from the Club about deadlines and Quizbowl tryouts! Go to aag.org to learn more about the meeting, held March 22-27, 2009

For more info about the club, email maggie.strassman@gmail.com

GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK HUGE SUCCESS

By Adam Nellessen

The Geography Club, alongside the Elementary Education Club, recently participated in Geography Awareness Week. According to a National Geographic website, GAW is a program launched in 1987 by presidential proclamation which is held every third week in November to promote the importance of geography education in the United States. This year the Geography Club, with incredible help and organization from GIS Certificate Program Manager Karen Tuerk, visited 22 local area elementary school classrooms to give interactive presentations focused on Africa. The presentations included activities that attempted to show the diversity of cultures, physical features, languages, and other aspects of the continent. Overall, the presentations went amazingly well, from the enthusiasm of the presenters to the excitement of all those in the classrooms, which ranged from kindergarten to 5th grade. The organizers chose the theme of Africa because, of all the continents, Africa is the one about which studies show young children know the least. Diversity across space was the biggest idea that Club members tried to emphasize in order to enlighten the children about the so-called “Dark Continent.”

AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR BOB OSTERGREN

Q: Where are you originally from?
A: I grew up in the Twin Cities, and went to the University of Minnesota.

Q: What got you started in Geography/European studies?
A: Like so many others, I discovered geography late. I was originally a history major before I became interested in historical/cultural geography.

Q: What are you currently researching?
A: I am currently working on a book with one of my former graduate students, entitled Building Nazi Germany, in which I am exploring how during the 1930s the Nazis made special use of space and architecture to further their political agenda.

Q: Do you have any advice for undergrads?
A: I think our majors should try to get to know the field as broadly as possible. Take as many courses as you can, and don’t be afraid to branch out into different areas of the discipline.

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surrounded by history majors in my School of Ed classes, because I get lonely being the only geography major considering teaching as a career, in part because I hope more undergraduates with a passion for geography, they won’t assume our major’s contribution to society is our ability to recite all 50 state capitals.

I’m also being the only geography major surrounded by history majors in my School of Ed classes, but also have absolutely atrocious knowledge of history if it was taught as infrequently and carelessly as geography is. But even when it is taught, it is often a collection of facts that students are to memorize from a textbook. The general population doesn’t typically see it the way us folks at Science Hall do: as a dynamic and integrating process of exploration.

This seems great, right? The older neighborhoods in Milwaukee. Before I arrived, I had no idea what to expect. I feared it might resemble the class I remember taking in 7th grade, which was really a history class inexplicably labeled geography on my report card. Fortunately this wasn’t the case, as I arrived to find the students being taught about the seasons. The students soon were tasked with mastering contour maps and vertical profiles, as well as learning about immigration and globalization. We even had a geocaching activity with GPS units outside the school.

This all seems great, right? Then why is it said that Americans don’t know their geography? Perhaps this is obvious. Not every school has a geography class taught in this way, especially high schools. Americans would have an absolutely atrocious knowledge of history if it was taught as infrequently and carelessly as geography is. But even when it is taught, geography is often a collection of facts that students are to memorize from a textbook. The general population doesn’t typically see it the way we folks at Science Hall do: as a dynamic and integrating process of exploration.

I hope more undergraduates with a passion for geography consider teaching as a career, in part because I get lonely being the only geography major surrounded by history majors in my School of Ed classes, but also because Americans should get an opportunity to learn the importance of our discipline. Then hopefully, someday, when we tell people we are geographers, they won’t assume our major’s contribution to society is our ability to recite all 50 state capitals.

Tune in next semester when I write about the State of Geography in a high school near you!