

## Fellowships Impacting Teachers, Classrooms and Communities

# Students tackle Erie Canal rewatering project as part of school curriculum

A teacher dreams. That dream comes into fruition with a Fund for Teachers fellowship. The fellowship inspires teachers, students and schools. The school takes the reins in leading a community-wide effort.

That's exactly what has transpired at Genesee Community Charter School in Rochester, New York.

Shannon Hillman, a sixth grade teacher, applied for a FFT grant to research the relationship between select European canals and their surrounding communities.

She visited Ireland, England, Scotland and Italy.

"I was able to bring back numerous resources for the school staff and students to use regarding information on the canals, simple machines and community benefits due to revitalization," explained Hillman.

Her fellowship was inspired by a larger endeavor undertaken by her students.

A year ago, sixth graders began studying canals because of the rich heritage of the Erie Canal, once running through the heart of downtown Rochester.

They discovered that in 1900, it was rerouted around town, and eventually the abandoned canal was used as part of a mass transit system. Today, it is an unused tunnel running through the city, with a roadway atop.

Inspired by research from Tom Grasso, a director at the World Wildlife Fund, Hillman's class began looking at potential for rewatering the historic canal.

The students did their research. Broken into four groups chaperoned by teachers or administrators and parents, the children set off to visit San Antonio, Oklahoma City, Providence and Ottawa, Canada.

All are superb examples of communities

which have rivers or canals in the heart of the city. Those that have been revitalized have become a hub for recreational activities, tourism and economic growth.

The students met with mayors, developers, marketing personnel and other dignitaries who helped them encompass the project's magnitude.

"The students were very well received in

those four communities," said Hillman.

"Each group gained different valuable information such as taxes, the historical significance and the far-reaching impact on the community."

After returning home, they analyzed data collected, built spreadsheets with valuable statistics and prepared a written

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**Students met with Mayor David N. Cicilline in Providence, Rhode Island last year to learn more about that city's rewatering efforts. Below, they are working on canal revitalization reports with Principal Lisa Wing, seated, and Lisa O'Malley, curriculum coordinator.**



## FUND FOR TEACHERS

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*from the executive director...*

# Fellows head back to school with a renewed focus, energy

Back to school means something different this year to 599 teachers from across the country. Each used their grant funds to reflect on their own teaching practice and design a personal, stimulating and challenging project to pursue during their fellowship.

For some, this meant cultural experiences that challenged basic life assumptions. Others, like Shannon Hillman from Rochester, New York, seized the chance to augment an ongoing school and community project.

All have benefited from experiential learning opportunities that sent them back to their classrooms equipped with new and powerful metaphors to guide student learning.

Around the world there is a strong sense of the need to build community.

Fund for Teachers is a vehicle for making the link between American teachers and the shared values that advance and maintain the growth of that community.

We expand our efforts through affiliations. Our annual Partners' Retreat enriches the collaboration.

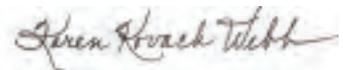
Wyoming provided the time away and space to share wisdom, communal expertise and plan the 2007 outreach.

Corporate and civic leaders like our Board of Directors, Jones Apparel Group, John Gibson and many others ensure that our work continues to be essential, engaging and offers educators the edge they need for optimal performance.

All of the lessons learned, roads traveled and dreams realized were made possible by you, our friends and supporters. Your efforts and support help sustain the opportunities for learning that make a Fund for Teacher's fellowship unique.

I hope that you read this newsletter with pride, satisfaction and the knowledge that you make this possible. Your input is always welcome.

All my best,



**John Gibson, Houston's 2007 Fund for Teachers campaign chairman is greeted by Karen Kovach Webb.**

## OUR MISSION

Fund for Teachers enriches the professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and on their school communities.

[www.fundforteachers.org](http://www.fundforteachers.org)

# Teachers foster community of understanding

Two Fund for Teachers fellows strayed off the beaten path of pyramids, camels and Nile River cruises while visiting Egypt this summer. In their pursuit to build a global classroom, Linda Comminos of Chicago and Lama Jarudi of Boston made a special trip to the Abu Sir Girls' School.

The one-room school, located 10 miles south of Cairo, was completed a year ago, and provides educational opportunities for 35 girls.

Abu Sir Girls' School was constructed as a part of an initiative begun by Raymond Plank, founder of Fund for Teachers. His far-reaching goal is to build 200 Egyptian girls' schools by the end of 2006. To learn more about Abu Sir and other girls' schools, visit [www.springboarded.org](http://www.springboarded.org).

"The school felt like a bright haven in Abu Sir," said Jarudi. "It was a colorful and vibrant place. The walls were filled with bright hand-made posters in reds, yellows and blues.

"It was also remarkably quiet and secluded."

The American teachers were greeted in a welcoming ceremony by students singing an Egyptian song.

Comminos presented the school with a quilt made by her Chicago art students.

"I wanted to bring them something that my students were a part of," said Comminos, "to build a connection between the two classrooms."

Jarudi chose letter writing to create a

relationship between her Boston students and those at Abu Sir.

With the recent creation of an Arabic program at her school, Jarudi's challenge is the identification of new methods of teaching Arabic and classroom materials that support the pilot program.

"I proposed a pen pal program to one of the teachers," explained Jarudi.

"This will be especially effective since her girls are learning basic English and my students are learning basic Arabic.

"I hope to use this connection between the two schools to increase my students' understanding of modern day Egypt and build



Linda Comminos presents a handmade quilt as a gift from her Chicago students to the Abu Sir Girls' School.

a feeling of friendship," said Comminos.

"The world becomes smaller every day and, through education, our students can foster a community of understanding."



Linda Comminos, right, is shown reviewing work completed in the Abu Sir Girls' School on her visit.

Photos courtesy of Thomas Hartwell



# Canals

Continued from Page 1

and oral presentation on their findings for Rochester's mayor late last spring.

"He loves the idea, and is still talking about it," said Hillman.

The students also received a supportive role from local media.

As a continuation of the two-year canal project, students will make comparisons with the downtown Rochester plan to the European sites.

The students will also interview people who work and live in the downtown area, as well as suburban areas, to get a feel for interests and issues that might impact the rewatering project.

The entire class recently returned from the World Canal Conference in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

"It was the first time children had attended this conference, which is held in locations throughout the world on an annual basis," explained Lisa O'Malley, curriculum specialist.

She points out that the students, along with learning their history, math, reading and writing, also learn about the social skills necessary for meeting with dignitaries and making professional presentations in a timely manner.

"It has been an overwhelming experience for our teachers and students," she said.

Genesee Community Charter School is one of more than 140 Expeditionary Learning Schools. These schools take a unique approach to education. Its curriculum is developed around a single subject that encompasses every aspect of the learning process.

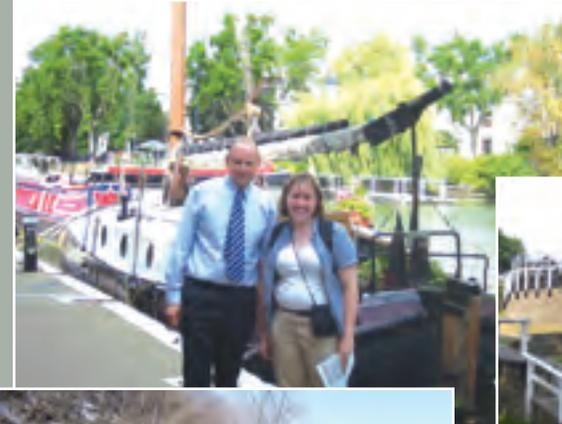
"Our school is filled with passion for learning," said Principal Lisa Wing, "and we get the students involved, using the community as a resource."

"This is not a typical faculty," explained Wing. "The teachers pursue their own professional development and challenge other teachers to build a stronger culture. We journey into the unknown and take risks."

Rochester is now in the process of preparing a feasibility study on the project.

No matter what the outcome, this is one example of a community that has shared in making a dream become a reality through the efforts of a teacher, classroom and community proclaiming a united interest.

Teacher Shannon Hillman visited European sites to learn more about the canals that have shaped history and how they are currently being used. The top right photo shows the famous Venice Canals, used for transportation. Below that, Hillman meets with Duncan Ferguson of British Waterways at the Five Rise Locks on Leeds in Liverpool Canal. On the top left, she is shown with Lin Ingley, also of British Waterways, in Birmingham, England. Below that is an area of London known as Little Venice. Hillman is pictured with Jon Guest, also of British Waterways.



Sixth graders met with Oklahoma City's Mayor Mick Cornett last spring. They are shown on the right with an historian at the Rideau Canal in Ottawa.



Hillman's sixth graders visit the historic aqueduct remaining in Rochester's Erie Canal. Now in disrepair, the goal is to fully investigate the potential of rewatering the area.

# COMMUNITY OF LIFELONG LEARNING...

With 17 classroom teachers at Genesee Community Charter School, seven have applied for and been awarded Fund for Teachers grants. Their eagerness to be exposed to new interest areas and develop incredible curriculum for their students is undeniable. Learn more about their special projects that are impacting students, each other, the school and community.

## MELISSA CONKLIN

This enthusiastic third grade teacher traveled to Australia to study radio and optical astronomy.

Even with tremendous preparation, she admits she sometimes felt out of place. However, she used this as a personal challenge and recognizes more about what her students sometimes feel in the classroom.

“Learning is fun,” she said. “There are no limits to what you can challenge yourself with.”

One of the most promising results of her trip came when she returned home. After sending postcards to her students through the summer, she encountered a student who disliked reading non-fiction materials. He told her he had gone to the library to get a book about what she was learning because of her postcard.

## CHRIS DOLGOS

As a second and third grade teacher, Dolgos elected to research and study raptor migration, why birds of prey migrate and where they go. He attended a workshop at Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania and plans to continue in his learning efforts by studying migration at Cape May, New Jersey this fall. Since Rochester is located on a major migration route, he will now be able to better assist his students in identifying birds of prey as well as how to collect data and identify migration patterns. They will also address how local raptors have adapted to the urban environment.



## CARRIE HAYMOND-HESKETH

“I had the biggest ‘aha’ experience of my career as a result of my fellowship,” said Carrie Haymond-Hesketh, a music teacher. “I discovered my own creative style, and in turn, am now able to help students evolve their creative abilities.”

She traveled to Austria to attend the International Music Education Seminar at the Orff Institute.

A major product emerging from her fellowship is a recorded CD of students’ original compositions. Incorporating the other expeditions, students prepared works based on the salmon life cycles and bird migration.

“With my expertise in creating music and the other teachers’ abilities to teach important content, students have a rich background knowledge when expressing their ideas about these subjects artistically,” she explained.

With this year’s canal project, she is taking a more indirect route.

“Students are taking a musical tour of European history beginning with medieval music,” she explains. “That gives them more contexts to apply what they are learning in terms of geography, social studies and history.”

## KERI GONZALEZ

Following a fossil digging field trip with kindergartners, this teacher decided to enlarge her knowledge of prehistory by attending a hands-on excavation of dinosaur bones in Bynum, Montana. During the six-day seminar, she worked side by side with paleontologists, which she considers an invaluable source of insight and content for teaching her students and on future personal expeditions.

She recalls a night when parents visited the school and one student was talking about the fact that the area had once been covered by a warm sea.

“The parent was commenting that they had no idea and exclaimed ‘I can’t believe it.’ The child replied, ‘You should, we found the fossils to prove it.’ ”

## JEAN HURST

Alaska and a study of salmon beckoned to this teacher. As a second grade teacher, she incorporated the salmon hatchery experience in her classroom last year. Students raised the salmon during their studies and then during a year-end celebration, released the fish into local streams.

“We had to learn about raising the salmon, how restocking of streams is conducted and how to apply for restocking permits to release our own fish,” she noted. “And of course, we learned about Seth Green, a local man who was the founder of artificial propagation of fish.”

Hurst explains that places have stories, and the impact FFT fellowships have on a school allows them to step back and see the larger picture.

## PETE HILLING

Like Hurst, he studied salmon hatcheries in Alaska, and this year completed a modified version of her experiences in his fourth grade classroom.

“Thanks for the FFT opportunity,” said Pete Hilling, who applied when he taught at Genesee Community Charter School. He has since moved to World of Inquiry School in Rochester, which proves that continuing education and knowledge keeps expanding.



# 2 teachers + 1 passion = connection

It's a small world after all.

Last winter, Chicago's Gloria Moyer and Boston's Paula Bress unwittingly submitted individual applications to pursue the same summer fellowship. Both have taught more than 25 years, and share a dedication for educating visually impaired students.

"I have always wanted to visit England's schools to see the difference in how students are taught in Braille," said Moyer.

"To be able to develop something that was entirely my own idea was an incredible fantasy come true."

Little did she know Bress was tapping into her own passion for Braille literacy with a similar proposal.

"I was pretty amazed to discover there was someone with the same type of fellowship," said Bress.

"The way we found each other was amazing," she explained.

"We both contacted Claire Wilson at the Royal National Institute of the Blind in London.

"She mentioned that there was another American teacher doing the same thing. I decided to be a detective and went to the Fund for Teacher's Web site," she continued. "There, I found Gloria."

The duo met in London, where they found it more productive to visit Braille literacy sites together. They conducted comparative studies of the London reading programs and their own teaching practices.

"It was great to visit the heart of Braille literacy with someone who could relate to the excitement of the moment," said Moyer.

"We would share about our students and Braille progress. Paula and I became quick friends."

This fall, the collaboration between the teachers continues.

They communicate about implementation of new information and skills they acquired, and how it translates into their respective classrooms.



**Gloria Moyer, left, and Paula Bress meet in London.**

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*Get connected coast to coast. Share in knowledge exchanges. The **FELLOWS FORUM**, a Fund for Teachers discussion board, is the perfect way to share grant experiences and teaching practices. Join the Fellows Forum at [www.fundforteachers.org](http://www.fundforteachers.org) and click on Fellows.*

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## JNY Back to School, Back to Style makeovers begin with Minneapolis

Fund for Teachers participated in the 2nd Annual Back to School, Back to Style contest. Winning teachers from Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Chicago, New York and Oakland received wardrobe makeovers from Jones New York and school makeovers from Jones New York, The Home Depot and Hands On Network.



## Gibson named to chair Houston 2007 campaign

John Gibson, president and CEO of Paradigm, has been named chairman of the 2007 Houston Leadership Committee.

Gibson's exuberant and philanthropic spirit are a great asset to the Houston program, as he garners support for the fund-raising campaign.

As a part of this campaign, Fund for Teachers is hosting its 2nd Annual Fund Run on Feb. 10.

For additional information about the 5K and Kids K Run/Walk, visit [www.fundforteachers.org/fundrun](http://www.fundforteachers.org/fundrun).



# LOCAL TOUCH • GLOBAL REACH

## *The Power of Partnership*

Partner representatives gathered in Ucross, Wyoming in August for the fourth Fund for Teachers Partner Retreat.

The group capitalized on its collective knowledge of education issues and the Fund for Teachers' granting process for the systemic identification and replication of best practices.

This annual distillation serves to enhance the effective outreach to teachers in the local education foundations' respective markets.

"Although we come from different organizations and diverse backgrounds, we are all bound by a common vision of excellent education and a commitment to supporting the teachers who work to meet the hard challenges of education," said Dottie Engler, director of Special Projects at the Boston Plan for Excellence.

"This meeting reaffirms our individual and collective contributions as part of the FFT organization to make our work a positive force in improving education."

Partners shared their experiences from years of commitment to education reform, and many left with new contacts and fresh ideas for their respective organizations.

Partners meeting in Ucross were Mindy Armbruster, Public Education & Business Coalition; Lili Brown, New Visions for Public Schools; Ron Berger, Expeditionary Learning Schools; Dottie Engler, Boston Plan for Excellence; Janet George, Achieve! Minneapolis; Safi Jiroh, Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute; Kris Reichmann, Chicago Foundation for Education; Sarah Rossi, Chicago Foundation for Education; Dayna Rowe, Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence; Carrie Jo Short, The Saint Paul Foundation; Emily Stratton, Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and Monica Sudduth, Marcus A. Foster Educational Institute.



**Fund for Teachers partners from around the country gathered in Ucross, Wyoming to collectively set goals for the upcoming year.**



## NEWS ITEMS OF NOTE

### TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to fellows Maureen Costa, Maureen Gannon, Angela Hedley, and Maria Leite, who were honored as Boston's Teachers of the Year.

### ROCKEFELLER AWARD

Frederick Bohem, Fund for Teachers chairman and former COO of Rockefeller University, received the 2006 Rockefeller Award for Extraordinary Service June 15. The award recognizes individuals whose service exemplifies David Rockefeller's commitment to the institution.

### JNY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Fund for Teachers was one of the four nonprofits benefitting from the Jones Apparel Group Charity Golf Classic held at the Trump National Golf Club in New Jersey Aug. 14.



Shown left to right are Robert Poole, Diana Burroughs, Wesley R. Card, , Karen Kovach Webb and Jamie Rosenberg.

### SHOP FOR EDUCATION Oct. 14 - 21

Ten percent of the sales price from the following Jones New York lines — Collection, Signature, Sport, Dress, Suit and Outerwear — are being donated to Jones New York In The Classroom. Shop at Macy's, Boston Store and Carson Pirie Scott.



### HATS OFF TO BCG, MAGI

Thanks to the Boston Consulting Group and MAGI Educational Services for the donation of its services to Fund for Teachers. Both are conducting research and analysis for the foundation's expansion and sustainability.



*Photo courtesy of Rockefeller University.*

## DONORS GROW TALENT

Your donations made it possible for 599 teachers from across the country to continue their quests for learning.



*'Antigua holds a special place in my memories. Not only was I a Peace Corps volunteer there 23 years ago, but it is also the place that helped me realize I was a teacher. This summer's language classes will help me greatly when I return to the classroom where 12 out of my 28 students speak Spanish.'*

Heather Knopp — Colorado



*'Our trip to Zimbabwe was a life-changing event that will impact the lives of many students here and abroad. The value of the trip is immeasurable as we continue to learn from the experience and strengthen relationships made during our visit.'*

Cindy Scarberry — Oklahoma

*'My time in New Zealand turned out to be the most empowering experience I can ever remember. This trip changed my life. It taught me to work hard for something I really want. I will carry that burning desire to work for an outcome back to my classroom. My students are getting a more inspired, harder working, creative teacher.'*

Lucy Klocksinn — Chicago



*'I've become friends with teachers from all over the USA, Australia and Iceland. After 21 years, I was starting to get a little burned out with inner city teaching. However, after my trip to Iceland to study volcanology and global warming, I can't wait to get back to school to share what I've learned with my students! Experiences like this rejuvenate me as a teacher.'*

Sandy Jernberg — Minneapolis



*'I've been secretly proud that I'm pretty much self-taught at guitar and completely self-taught at ukulele. But, studying instrument fabrication and music theory has given me confidence in what I know, and the understanding that there is much to learn. I can't wait to practice and apply what I've learned.'*

P.J. Murray — New York City

Teachers around the country are thinking, creating, connecting and sharing. You can, too!

**Apply now at [www.fundforteachers.org](http://www.fundforteachers.org)**



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