



PRESS RELEASE

HISD Media Relations Department

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HISD teacher is one of six chosen for National Geographic Arctic Expedition This Summer

April 5, 2011 - An HISD science teacher will experience some climate change of her own this summer as she leaves the warmth of Texas to study the environment and wildlife of the Arctic.

Amy Blonn, a 5th-grade outdoor science educator at the Houston Independent School District's Outdoor Education Center in Trinity, Texas, will travel aboard the Lindblad Expeditions ship *National Geographic Explorer* to within 600 miles of the North Pole to explore Svalbard, an archipelago in the Arctic Circle which is the northernmost part of Norway.

Blonn is one of only six educators chosen nationwide to participate in the fifth annual National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellows program. Thanks to the unparalleled expertise of the Lindblad-National Geographic expedition team, Ms. Blonn will return to HISD with a wealth of knowledge to educate and inspire her students and professional colleagues. Ms. Blonn will also share what she has learned at conferences and other professional development events.

"This program recognizes outstanding teachers who are dedicated to improving geographic literacy in our classrooms and encouraging children to become responsible caretakers of our planet," said Sven-Olof Lindblad, founder of Lindblad Expeditions. "We are delighted that these outstanding educators, who are so strongly committed to hands-on geographic education, will journey to Arctic Svalbard with us."

The National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Fellows program was established to honor former National Geographic Society Chairman Gilbert Grosvenor's lifetime commitment to geographic education. Funding to support the annual expedition was provided to the National Geographic Society by Sven-Olof Lindblad and Lindblad Expeditions in 2006 to mark Grosvenor's 75th birthday and to honor his service in enhancing and improving geographic education across the United States.

"The partnership with Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic is an ideal fit of our two missions," said Gil Grosvenor, chairman of the National Geographic Education Foundation. "We believe in the value of educational travel, and Lindblad's programs are the best. Teachers who are recognized as Fellows will have experiences they will never forget."

"HISD is extremely proud of this great recognition that Ms. Blonn has received," said Lupita Hinojosa, Assistant Superintendent for School Choice. "This opportunity will not only enhance Ms. Blonn's professional growth, but most importantly, it will positively impact the instruction that our 5th grade students receive."

HISD's Outdoor Education Center hosts about 250 fifth grade science students each week. Ms. Blonn's outdoor classroom is in the piney woods along Lake Livingston, where she engages students in experiential science lessons including aquatic entomology, forest study and conservation, with a focus on environmental stewardship. The HISD Outdoor Education Center

is located about 100 miles north of Houston at Camp Olympia. Amy Blonn leaves for the expedition on June 23.

The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 298 schools and more than 200,000 students. The 301-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area with nearly 30,000 employees.

For more information, visit the HISD Web site at www.houstonisd.org.
