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Monday, January 26, 2004

Local Teacher Leads International Science Expedition to Panama's Rainforests and Canal

OMSI to host live broadcasts from Panama

**Satellite, Phone Interviews, Video Feeds, Digital Photos
Available To Arrange Interview, Call 703/ 276-2772 x13 or x14
or e-mail pr@jason.org**

PORTLAND, Ore.--Hiking boots and bug spray are a top priority for 4th grade teacher Heather Renz, who has been selected to lead an international science expedition to Panama's rainforests and canal, January 26 through January 31, with some of the world's leading scientists and teachers.

Nominated by OMSI in Portland, Renz will join the JASON Foundation for Education, a leading provider of experienced-based science and math curriculum and professional learning for grades 4-9. She will participate as one of eight "Teacher Argonauts" on the JASON Expedition team, working hand-in-hand with a select group of researchers, teachers and students from around the globe.

On Thursday, Jan. 29, Renz's class from Vern Patrick Elementary school will follow her journey through online reports and live broadcasts, via a direct, two-way satellite link to OMSI. OMSI will also be running live broadcasts on Wednesday, Jan. 28 and Friday, January 30. Millions more will watch the broadcast at www.jason.org.

"JASON OMSI students will travel on a virtual journey to do hands-on fieldwork with leading scientists in the unique 'laboratory' of Panama's rainforests," said Blair Baldwin, JASON Coordinator for OMSI. "During the expedition, they will interact with Renz as well as other students and teachers throughout the country."

JASON will investigate the area's unique biology and ecology, from leaf-cutter ants to howler monkeys to global climate change. The expedition will also explore the region's incredible human history and culture, including the native people of Panama and the development of the Panama Canal as one of the world's crossroads for trade, people, plants and animals.

Renz will share her discoveries, answer questions and guide area students and teachers in online activities via daily journals, live Web casts and chats, digital labs and 3-D photos on the JASON Web site.

"I'm honored that JASON chose me for this great opportunity," said Renz. "I'll be able to share this experience with my students and show them how fun and exciting science can be."

The JASON Foundation for Education is working collaboratively with the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, NASA, NOAA, The National Geographic Society, the Panamanian Government and colleges and universities around the world. These partnerships provide JASON access to top-notch researchers, who serve as role models as they work side-by-side with JASON students and teachers.

Renz has been preparing for her JASON expedition fieldwork all year by chatting online with other members of the research team and studying the expedition content through JASON print

curriculum.

The Teacher Argonaut application process consists of essay questions and faculty recommendations. It also requires teachers to submit a summary of past JASON classroom experience and demonstrate how they will share their JASON experience with members of their community and fellow teachers upon return.

Visit www.jason.org to follow Renz as she studies Panama's rainforests and shares her adventure as a Teacher Argonaut.

The JASON Foundation for Education uses multi-media tools and access to the nation's leading scientists to combine genuine scientific expeditions around the world, standards-based classroom curriculum and accredited professional learning for teachers to deliver real adventures in learning and measurable gains in student achievement.

Founded in 1944 and one of the nation's top ten science museums, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry is a world-class tourist attraction and educational resource that puts the "Wow" in science for the kid in each of us. Five exhibit halls and seven science labs offer 219,000 square feet of brain-powered fun through hundreds of interactive exhibits and hands-on demonstrations. OMSI's multi-attraction complex features a big-screen OMNIMAX Theater, the Northwest's largest planetarium, and the USS Blueback, the most modern U.S. submarine on public display in North America. OMSI is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and relies on admissions, memberships, and donations to continue our educational mission, programs, and exhibits. OMSI is located on the east side of the scenic Willamette River in downtown Portland.

For more information, please contact:

Lee Dawson, Communications Director
503.797.4586 voice
503.797.4566 fax
LDawson@omsi.edu

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