

# ODYSSEY



Volume 9  
Summer Issue 2013

A PUBLICATION OF FUND FOR TEACHERS



Teachers on the banks of the Rio Napa River.



Bulletin board with photos from their fellowship.



Ava and Amy's rooms post-tornado.

## *Learning about Weather from Rainforests and Raging Tornadoes*

Teachers serve as “first responders,” often managing students’ emotional, nutritional, medical, psychological *and* educational needs. On May 20th in Moore, OK, teachers protected students’ lives: deciding where to seek shelter, shielding students from an F5 tornado and helping them emerge from mangled debris. We salute and honor each of them. Four of those first responders are also Fund for Teachers Fellows.

Ava Wilhelm, Amy Chase, Nona DeCarlo and Lynn Breton explored Ecuador’s Rio Napa River in June 2010. Their research and subsequent lessons focused on a rainforest’s climate and environmental forces. Ironically, weather wiped out the artifacts, books and bulletin boards they assembled to create a rainforest curriculum for their fourth graders.

Each spring since their fellowship, the teachers lined their halls with 3D murals depicting different layers of the rainforest. Students created terrariums in 2-liter bottles to observe

components within a closed system, i.e. rainforest. Using Venn diagrams and bar graphs, classes compared local precipitation levels to those in nations with rainforests. These group projects, led by the teachers who shared authentic experiences, created a collaborative atmosphere of learning. On May 20, teachers and students together experienced the full force of nature in “Tornado Alley.”

Amy huddled her students next to Ava’s in an interior section of the building as warning sirens wailed. Surveying a darkening sky, Amy saw the approaching tornado and screamed for everyone to take cover. Ava and Amy drew students close as the storm hit, walls toppled and the roof disappeared, exposing them to flying debris, rain and wind. Meanwhile, Lynn corralled students into a bathroom stall on the other side of the school. She tried opening an app on her phone for light, but pushed the camera button, instead. Unknowingly, Lynn captured

the tornado’s two-minute trek overhead. CNN broadcast these moments in which Lynn’s voice is heard screaming above the mayhem, “You’re okay! We’re okay!”

After the tornado passed and people began stirring, Ava held onto all she saw of Amy – her foot protruding from a collapsed wall. She kept shaking the foot and screaming for Amy, who couldn’t hear her due to temporary hearing loss. When a parent pulled Amy from the rubble, Ava finally let go.

*Continued on page 4*

Apache Corporation, founding sponsor of Fund for Teachers, established a matching grant supporting the **Shelter Oklahoma Schools** fund.

The company pledges to match the next \$500,000 raised to build storm shelters and safe rooms in Oklahoma schools. This challenge is in addition to Apache’s initial \$500,000 gift. To take advantage of the matching grant, visit [shelteroklahomaschools.org](http://shelteroklahomaschools.org).



2000 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 100  
Houston, Texas 77056-4400  
713-296-6127 or 800-681-2667  
Fax 713-296-6134

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Walter Smith**, Chairman  
Retiring Managing Partner  
Baker Botts L.L.P.

**Karen K. Webb**  
Executive Director  
Fund for Teachers

**John Gulla**  
Executive Director  
Edward E. Ford Foundation

**Dorothea Engler**  
Director of Special Projects  
BPE

**G. Steven Farris**  
Chairman and CEO  
Apache Corporation

**Robert L. Hughes**  
President  
New Visions for Public  
Schools

**Christopher Santiago**  
Vice President  
Global Corporate Services  
NASDAQ OMX Group

**J. Jeffrey Edmondson**  
Managing Director  
Strive

### FOUNDER

Raymond Plank

### LOCAL PARTNERS

AchieveMpls  
Alabama Public Television  
BPE  
Chicago Foundation for Education  
Expeditionary Learning  
John P. Ellbogen Foundation - Wyoming  
Los Angeles Education Partnership  
Marcus Foster Educational Fund  
MfA – Math for America New York  
New Visions for Public Schools  
Red Wing Public Schools Foundation  
Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence  
Public Education Foundation - Chattanooga  
San Francisco Education Fund  
Strive Partnership  
The Blake School  
The Saint Paul Foundation  
Tulsa Community Foundation  
Vadnais Heights Area Community Fund  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

### PROGRAM LOCATIONS

Alabama	Oakland
Boston	Oklahoma
Chattanooga	Red Wing, MN
Cincinnati/Northern	San Francisco
Kentucky	Saint Paul, MN
Los Angeles	Texas
Louisiana	Vadnais Heights, MN
Minneapolis	Washington DC
Mississippi	Wisconsin
Nebraska	Wyoming
New York City	

## Our Mission

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and 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 their school communities.



WWW.FUNDFORTEACHERS.ORG

## From the Executive Director

Splashing in the surf, sipping umbrella drinks and sliding into a hammock -induced coma sound like the ideal delights of summer. It's just not the way 530 preK-12 teachers awarded Fund for Teachers grants are spending *theirs*. These Fellows, knowing that summer is the ideal time to nurture the learning that ripens in fall, are participating in workshops, attending seminars, volunteering with NGOs, conducting research and completing field work to make the upcoming school year more (fill in the blank).



Karen with Dottie Engler, BPE, and Corey Scholes, Kauffman Foundation.

More **engaging**. "When students see me with lions on the Serengeti during my fellowship, the concept of conservation becomes real."

More **enlightening**. "I never knew that geo-engineering is used to manage water encroachment in Venice, Amsterdam and Washington DC. I didn't even know what geo-engineering was."

More **entertaining**. "After learning how to construct and play a djembe in West Africa, I taught my students the same thing as part of our World Music unit."

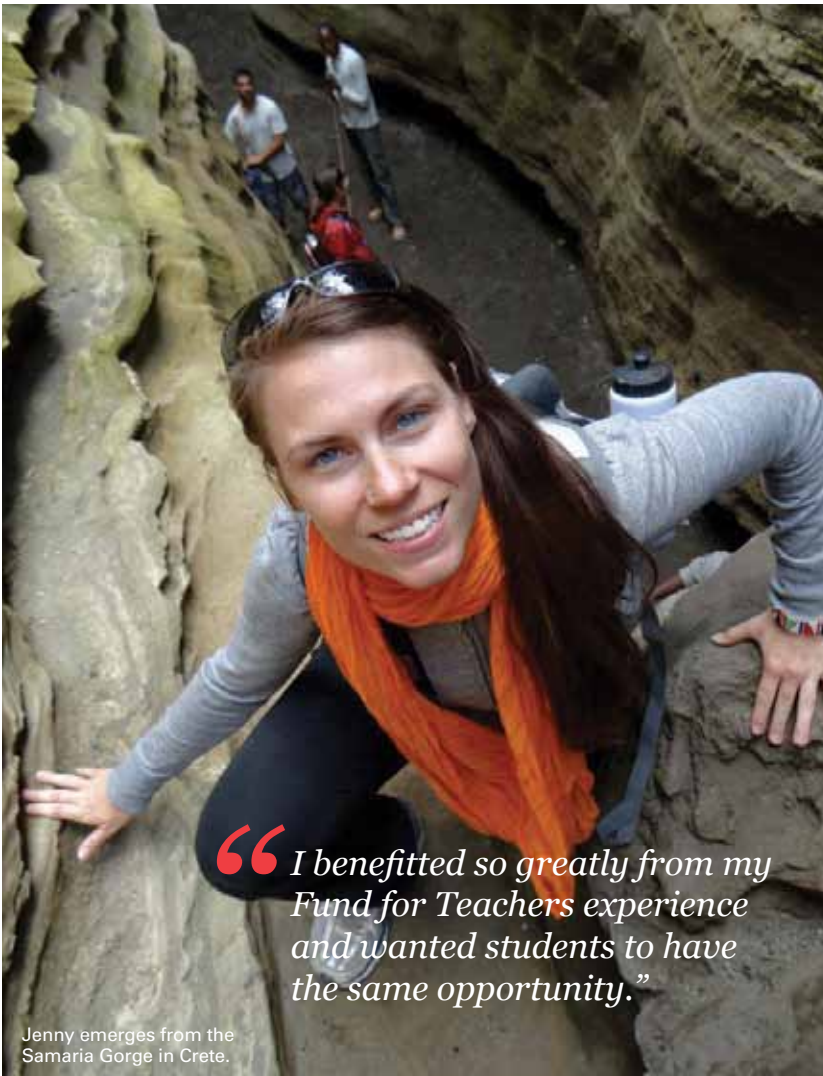
We ask so much of our teachers, trusting them to be first responders, fully expecting them to guide every student toward futures as prepared, productive citizens of a global economy. To accomplish such a huge undertaking and impact the whole child, teachers need to be "whole educators." Our grants help teachers reach this state of equilibrium, then advancement, by providing opportunities to grow, reflect and recharge during the summer.

The future of America depends on the expertise and global aptitude of our populace. Teachers respond; whether our 2013 class of Fellows' pursuits take them across town or around the world, I am confident that they will end with engaged, enlightened, entertained and educated American students.

Knowledge born of experience trumps all. Join me in support of these summer sojourners. Be a first responder.

May your summer be filled with purpose and a bit of sand between your toes.

Karen K. Webb  
Executive Director



Jenny emerges from the Samaria Gorge in Crete.

*“I benefitted so greatly from my Fund for Teachers experience and wanted students to have the same opportunity.”*



Jenny's Urban-Eco club cleans up a shoreline on Earth Day 2013.

## *Paying it Forward*

Jenny Hinz arrived home on a high last summer after completing her fellowship in Greece. She enthusiastically shared with graduate school peers about the Creativity Workshop in Crete and the International Conference on Education in Samos; about how her learning would impact students at Prospectives Calumet High School in Chicago. Two teachers mused “There should be a Fund for *Students.*” And Urban-Eco was born.

Jenny, along with those two teachers, spent last fall establishing a 501(c)(3) organization: filing articles of incorporation, submitting them to the IRS and drafting bylaws. They selected Africa as the fellowship destination and named the new nonprofit organization *Urban-Eco* to reflect their urban students and the ecological nature of the experience. Finally, using the Fund for Teachers application as a template, the teachers created a student version and publicized the opportunity in November.



Co-founders Jenny Hinz and Lindsey Hagen at 5K run.

Fifteen students applied, six stood out and were awarded grants to experience Africa in the summer of 2014. These “Fellows” will spend the next two years researching Africa and raising \$4,200 to cover individual expenses. Students sell homemade fudge, soy candles, and Urban-Eco T-shirts. The co-founders coordinated a 5K run in May to help defray costs and are planning a dinner/concert benefit the week before school starts. Teaching colleagues even

donate proceeds from Arbonne and Mary Kay sales to the cause.

The co-founders also chartered Urban-Eco clubs at their schools to foster scientific inquiry and accommodate students unable to commit to the two-year fellowship.

“I benefitted so greatly from my Fund for Teachers experience and wanted students to have the same opportunity,” explained Jenny. “On the South Side of Chicago, kids don’t go outside – it’s too dangerous. We want to expose them to the wonders of Africa, but also encourage them that Chicago offers incredible opportunities to explore nature. We want to open the world to them.”

**Those interested in supporting Urban-Eco can visit [http://urban-eco.org/About\\_Urban-Eco.html](http://urban-eco.org/About_Urban-Eco.html).**



Searching for Quetzal bird in the Panamanian countryside.



Roasting coffee beans, the region's chief export.



Demonstrating planting techniques in the new school garden.



Bringing brown bags and cafeteria trays into the garden for lunch.

## Not Lost in Translation

Two days after her wedding last summer, Anne-Catherine Mauk boarded a plane for Panama – not for her honeymoon, but her Fund for Teachers fellowship. “I set my wedding date before getting the grant!” she laughed.

Anne-Catherine teaches at the Academy of Multilingual Immersion Studies in Cincinnati, where the Hispanic population exploded by 300% in the last five years. She works at one of two schools in the district serving this demographic and most of her students are native Spanish speakers from Mexico or Central America.

Yet, Anne-Catherine couldn't speak Spanish.

“I was not equipped with the cultural and language knowledge to fully address my students' needs within the context of their life experiences, families, and communities. I also didn't understand how these contexts affected assimilation into their newly adopted city,” explained Anne-Catherine. “I believed experiencing life as a second language learner in a new country would help me better understand my students' challenges, and those of their families.”

So she waved goodbye to her new husband and spent six weeks in Panama, a country that closely reflects the provinces from which the majority of

her students come – agricultural, poor, with little technology and strong cultural roots. Her first empathetic experience arrived when she flew into Costa Rica and crossed the Panamanian border.

“So many technicalities! So many forms!” she recalled. “I didn't fill mine out correctly and was continually directed to different parts of town for approvals. Not speaking the language, I couldn't understand their instructions. I started weeping and realized that my students' parents must feel the same way.”

This “A-ha!” moment prompted Anne-Catherine to translate common school forms into Spanish. She also compiled resources for parents entering the school system: bus routes, library card applications, community events calendars – anything to help them feel less isolated.

Her new ability to conduct parent/teacher conferences in Spanish demonstrates respect and care. The father of one student remembered her need for a translator the year before and asked why she had since learned Spanish. She replied, “So I can talk with you about your daughter.” The parent got choked up, then, so did Anne-Catherine. “He recognized that a teacher cared enough about his daughter to try

and communicate directly with him.”

In addition to language skills, Anne-Catherine also instilled Panama's spirit of community into the school last spring. Spending five weeks in the agricultural region of Panama, she learned to appreciate the people's relationship with the land. Anne-Catherine obtained a grant from the Lowe's Foundation to transform an empty lot adjacent to the playground black top into 200 sq. feet of raised beds flanked by long picnic benches. Teachers and students maintain the gardens and enjoy the safe space for rest and reflection.

Anne-Catherine returns to Central America (at her own expense) this summer, living and working on a permaculture farm to strengthen language skills and learn Mayan practices of sustainable agriculture.

“Families enter my class fearing that I'll force students to lose their native language and cultural identity,” she said. “The point is not to adopt manifestations and culture of a new place, but to give students a chance at academic success and America's mainstream workforce.”

With the Statue of Evangeline, an Acadian girl immortalized in a Longfellow poem.



Playing a traditional Acadian game with string.



Dancing a jig to Acadian tunes.



A local volunteer demonstrates an Acadian toy.

## Cajuns: More Than a Duck Dynasty

Louisiana is “Cajun Country.” But, what are Cajuns and why are they primarily in Louisiana? The state’s third grade curriculum included a unit on state history that relied on worksheets and one text book chapter to tell the colorful Cajun, or Acadian, story. Danyé Pelichet and Demetria Scott realized the opportunity to inject some spice into the unit and, with a Fund for Teachers grant, made a pilgrimage to Acadie provinces of Canada to research Louisiana’s heritage.

Last summer, the teachers explored the oldest Acadian settlements across New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. They visited areas where Acadians lived as fishers and farmers, and interviewed local experts about the roughly 12,000 people deported by the British in the mid-1700s who resettled in southern Louisiana.

“Our fellowship revealed the rich history, culture and *joie de vivre* of the Acadian people,” said Danyé. “We returned home with a much better understanding of the settlers’ zest for life that transferred thousands of miles to our state.”

This spring, Demetria and Danyé produced a grade-wide “Louisiana Day” with the help of a local women’s club dedicated to preserving the state’s history. The event included various stations at which students met Acadie settlers dressed in authentic clothing as trappers, fishermen, farmers and family members. Music, games and recipes discovered on their fellowship added Cajun flavor characteristic of the lively immigrants.

“The Acadian diaspora profoundly impacts our state and is always included on standardized tests, but our students really knew so little about it,” said Demetria. “Because of our fellowship, a previously over-looked area of social studies is now a vibrant, multi-sensory unit that makes history literally come alive for students.”

(Louisiana Day photos courtesy of Stacy Gill, *Zachary Today*.)



Student-made Cajun Mardi Gras masks.

## Learning about Weather from Rainforests and Raging Tornadoes

(Continued)

“A colleague’s first words when she saw me were ‘You lost all of your rainforest material!’” said Amy. “And we did. It probably landed two counties away.”

All of the cars and even the stripes on the parking lot were gone. But Briarwood Elementary students and staff survived, and Amy knows the school community will make sure school resumes this fall.

“The materials I used to teach for the past nine years will change; we’ll have to be flexible,” she said. “But, we’ll maintain high student expectations, create safe places for students to spend seven hours a day, and process what we’ve gone through together.”

A 26-year veteran of Briarwood, Ava agrees that teaching and learning will continue in spite of the chaos. “I’ve taught for a long time. School is school. We will persevere. We will get new materials.”

Ava’s colleagues at the Oklahoma Science Teachers Association drove in to help unearth remnants from her room. Finding nothing, they sat with Ava the next day and compiled a “wish list” for her dream science lab. A firefighter escorted Amy to search for her “Teacher of the Year” award, but the tornado stole it, along with whiteboard off the wall.

Although no material evidence remains from the rainforest fellowship, the memories and knowledge live on in poignant ways. A former student who lost two siblings in the storm approached the teaching team after the community-wide memorial service. Offering him hugs of consolation, the young man responded saying, “I learned so much about rainforests in your class. Remember Juan, who guided you through the trees?”

“It just shows how important school is, it was something he could hold onto,” said Ava. “In the midst of tragedy, he reverted to what he enjoyed learning.”



Happier times in the Amazonian rainforest.

**Editor’s note:** Three days after the tornado, a new teaching team from Moore, OK, embarked on a Fund for Teachers fellowship to New Zealand. Team member Cassandra Moore expressed relief at the opportunity to continue learning after such a terrifying experience, and guilt over leaving her community in need. A tornado warning delayed her flight.



With her host family outside their home.



A class photo from Nepal.



The austere Nepali classroom.



Elephant (and Stephanie) bath time at Royal Chitwan National Park.



A classroom at the refugee camp.



Stephanie's "Newcomer Group" in Minneapolis.

## Creating a Refuge at School

Stephanie Burnes lived and taught English in the Himalayan foothills last summer without any creature comforts, including running water. This deprivation led to what she calls “the most fun teaching” she’s ever done and prepared her to teach the influx of Nepali students at Andersen United Community School in Minneapolis.

“I learned how simple a joy it can be to teach,” Stephanie said. “From an American standpoint, there was nothing. With just a whiteboard and a marker, I offered some of my most effective instruction. I didn’t waste time worrying about what I didn’t have, but focused only on students’ needs and how I could meet them. It made me a better teacher.”

After completing her teaching assignment and homestay, Stephanie ventured out to find the refugee camp where many of her students were born

and lived until immigrating to the United States. She relied on a guidebook to travel across Nepal by train and arrived at the camp after calling a student’s parent from the back of a rickshaw for last minute directions.

*“I learned how simple a joy it can be to teach.”*

These extreme measures to identify with her students reflect Stephanie’s determination to engage them. “When a student’s background becomes the basis for learning, the learning sticks,” she explained. “When I appeal to something that is a part of their identity, the student becomes motivated and learning becomes authentic.”

Stephanie now understands why her Nepali students are prone to “cheating”

– it’s honorable in their culture to help others complete work. She knows that the child who refuses to keep her shoes on in class does so out of respect for her teacher, not as an act of rebellion. Stephanie reframes situations into “behavioral” or “cultural,” and helps colleagues do the same.


“Before my Fund for Teachers fellowship, I maintained a defined idea of lessons and what I needed to teach. Now, I realize I was wrong about most of it,” she said. “The fundamentals are creativity, imagination and relationships. Whether in Nepal or Minneapolis, strong, positive relationships with students are key to making their learning successful.”

# FFT 2013 BY THE NUMBERS

## 530 TEACHERS AWARDED

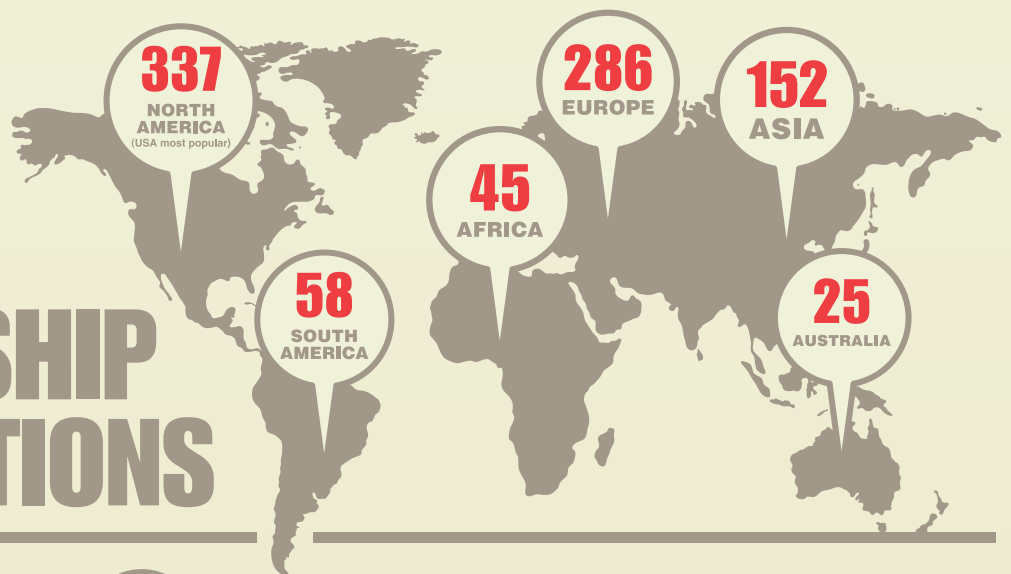


## SCHOOLS 352 IMPACTED \$2M GRANTS AWARDED



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
FFT SENT THREE TEACHERS TO ANARCTICA.

## FELLOWSHIP DESTINATIONS



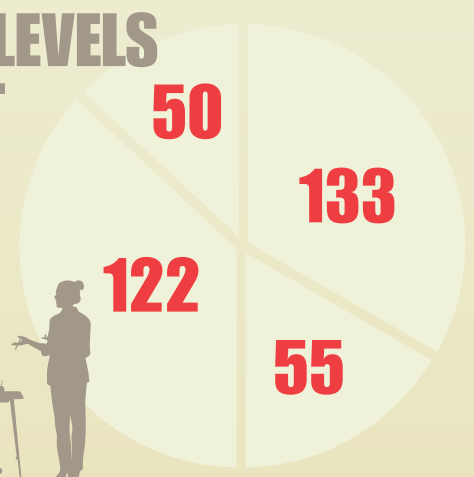
## SUBJECT AREA OF FELLOWSHIP



ADVANCED EDUCATION/LEADERSHIP .....	5
HISTORY / SOCIAL STUDIES .....	52
LANGUAGE / CULTURAL IMMERSION .....	46
LITERATURE & WRITING / LITERACY .....	63
SOCIAL JUSTICE .....	9
SPECIAL EDUCATION .....	9
S.T.E.M. ....	35
VISUAL / PERFORMING ARTS .....	45
OTHER .....	59

## GRADE LEVELS TAUGHT

122 ELEMENTARY  
55 MIDDLE  
133 HIGH  
50 PREK-8/12





Fund for Teachers  
2000 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 100  
Houston, Texas 77056-4400


*Follow our Fellows as they pursue new knowledge during summer to affect students this fall. Daily posts on our Facebook page, Twitter, Instagram and blog document the what, where and why teachers are learning with Fund for Teachers grants.*



 [facebook.com/fundforteachers](https://facebook.com/fundforteachers)

 [#fundforteachers](https://www.instagram.com/fundforteachers)

 [twitter.com/fundforteachers](https://twitter.com/fundforteachers)

 [fundforteachers.tumblr.com](https://fundforteachers.tumblr.com)