

Meeting of the Minds:

SCIENTISTS AND TEACHERS CONNECT

BY KERRY IRISH

As sons of teachers, Ethan Theuerkauf and Justin Ridge understand the limited resources and tight schedules that educators face in their classrooms.

And as graduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute of Marine Sciences, or IMS, they see the depth and breadth of research conducted in Eastern North Carolina. Ridge and Theuerkauf wanted to connect these two worlds — scientists and teachers — in a way that could benefit everyone.

"There is a wealth of world-class marine science conducted right here in Carteret County. We wanted to find a way to bring that cutting-edge science into our local schools," Ridge says.

After attending REEF, the duo and their Community of Practice, or CoP, planned the Scientific Research and Education Network — or SciREN — workshop to bring together marine scientists and local teachers. The event was held at the N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores this spring.

Scientists from IMS, Duke University, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the N.C. Maritime Museum shared classroom-ready activities and lesson plans with K-12 teachers.

The teachers discussed new findings with researchers and aquarium partners, and connected with some scientists interested in coming into classrooms.

"Everyone had lesson plans and/or suggestions of how to use their research, and all of them offered ways to bring it into the classroom," recalls Amy Sauls, a science teacher from Jones Senior High School in Trenton, who was part of the CoP.

"Wherever I have lived, wherever I have taught, I have tried to

gain partnerships with organizations who are out there to bring information to my classroom. The best way to do that is to go straight to the source, which is our scientists," adds Kelly Riley, technology teacher at Tiller Charter School in Beaufort, who attended the event.

"The workshop turned out even better than we could have imagined," Theuerkauf explains. "The scientists exposed the teachers to data and teaching tools that they can use in their classrooms to get students excited about science, and the teachers encouraged and inspired the scientists to reach out and share their research with the community."

More than 65 teachers from Carteret County and beyond signed up for the event, and 30 scientists from the local community participated. Beyond REEF, Ridge and Theuerkauf are planning to make this workshop an annual event, including an expanded program. 📍

For more about SciREN, go to sciren.web.unc.edu. View a video about the event at vimeo.com/65742403. Listen to an interview at <http://bit.ly/13RDZDq>.



ABOVE: Janelle Fleming, Jie Gao and Johanna Rosman from UNC's Institute of Marine Sciences illustrate how the wind affects water movement in various bodies of water.

Terri Kikly Hathaway