

# CHS educator mapping out a plan

## Coventry HS science teacher Peter Stetson is one of 40 educators nationwide chosen to go to two-year program on GIS

JESSICA BOISCLAIR  
Jboisclair@ricentral.com

COVENTRY— A Coventry High School teacher, who makes it a priority to teach his students about new technology, has been chosen to attend a two-year program on Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Long-time science teacher Peter Stetson explained that he has been using GIS at the high school since 2000 to help his students get “a leg up” on other students around the state.

“This system was something suggested to me by several people working with it in the field,” he said. “They said if I teach environmental science then this is a program I should use and teach them [his students].”

He explained that GIS is a piece of software that is used to analyze the world. The device takes data that a person collects from the environment and makes a graphic image, which in turn makes a map.

Stetson said that many departments throughout the state use this device to map out various items and locations.

“The Department of Environmental Management is

using it to map the location of ponds and parks and beavers,” he said. “The Rhode Island Department of Transportation is using it to mark where roads are and to mark where roads may go and the Department of Health is using it to map where flu outbreaks are.”

He explained that every few years he applies for programs to assist him in staying up to date with the ever-changing technology of the device.

In 2009, he said he was one of 18 teachers selected from the country to travel to California for a workshop on the GIS.

“Based on going there I learned about the uses of GIS and how to use handheld GIS to collect data from around the community and make maps of that data,” he said.

He said he was able to take that knowledge into his classroom and gives his students “a hands-on experience.” Coventry High School is one of a handful of high schools in the state that use GIS.

With the handheld GIS de-

vices, his students walk the edge of the woods around the campus. On the device they would track where they walked and it would map an

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outline of the perimeter of the woods.

Also, his environmental science class has mapped the trails in town and the trees around the high school campus.

With an extension program for the GIS, they were able to determine how tall the trees will be in 20 years.

The upcoming program he was selected to attend is sponsored by the National Council on Geographic Education, the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Geological Society.

He explained that he was one of two high school science teachers chosen from a group of 40 applications throughout the country to be chosen for this program.

“I was pretty pumped to know that I was chosen out of 40 people,” he said. “To be only one of two that really put

me in a good mood.”

The nine-day workshop will be held in South Dakota at the end of June during this summer and next summer.

He explained that the workshop will educate him on taking remote sensing data from satellites. Using the data collected through the GIS, Stetson said he can draw up maps.

“We can take several hurricanes and with satellite data we can measure, using a program, the distance between the eye of the hurricane one day and the eye the next day from satellite pictures,” he said.

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