

## EDUCATIONAL EVENT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Attendee's Name: Joseph Kerski Title: Geographer  
Location: Dana College - Blair, Nebraska  
Meeting Date(s): 16-17 July 1997  
Purpose of Trip: Conduct 2 workshops at Nebraska Geographic Alliance Summer Geography Institute

### Summary:



Dana College Campus, Blair, Nebraska.

The Geography Educators of Nebraska (GEON) was established during the late 1980s as part of the national network of state-based alliances supported by the National Geographic Society. GEON is an organization of several thousand classroom teachers, professors, administrators, professors, and interested citizens dedicated to promoting and improving geographic education in the schools and universities of Nebraska. The co-coordinators of GEON are Harris Payne, who teaches high school geography, and Chuck Gildersleeve, professor of geography at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Harris Payne heard my presentation at the November 1996 National Council for Geographic Education conference in Santa Barbara, and invited me to present at the institute. GEON sponsors summer institutes, teacher consultant workshops, offers small grants, provides scholarships for teacher training, and provides a clearinghouse for instructional materials.



### **Joseph Kerski on the Loess Hills in Nebraska.**

*During the first day of the institute, senator Bud Robinson from the Nebraska legislature made a presentation. He works on most of the educational legislation for the state and is responsible for funding education at all levels. The president of Dana College, Dr. Christopherson, also made a presentation. I made it a special point to introduce myself to these individuals and describe why the USGS is involved in educational outreach. Press releases of the institute activities were being written and distributed to newspapers where the educators were from, and to the Omaha World-Herald.*

Teachers from all levels and from around the state apply to be admitted to the summer institute, which lasts 2 1/2 weeks. Nearly 30 educators from the state were present. The first workshop I conducted covered the "map mysteries" module that I have developed, which is designed to increase the awareness of USGS maps as an educational tool. Each map contains a set of mysteries, designed to begin the process of inquiry about the cultural and physical environment. The second workshop I conducted was on coordinate systems, GPS, and cartography. I took a GPS reading with the participants outside the lecture hall, and we compared the readings to those calculated from the USGS topographic sheet of Blair. I also included a description of USGS digital data that can be used in a GIS-based educational curriculum, as well as other resources for educators at all levels. I also discussed the availability of geo-spatial data and referred the group to Darryl Williams and the MCMC ESIC. I described my experiences in GIS implementation with other schools, and showed examples of student work from Horace Mann Middle School.

On my way to Blair, I met with Professor Stone from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and Bob Sankey, a middle school geography teacher, in Lexington. Bob Sankey became so interested in the USGS that he plans to bring 150 students to RMMC in November. I discussed GIS implementation issues with them and made a field trip to the recently-discovered Callaway

impact crater. This was discovered in 1991 by a geology professor who was examining USGS quadrangles; again illustrating the relevancy and utility of our products. I plan to use the photographs I took at hotlinked images in an ArcView project.

Recommendation:

The USGS should continue to conduct workshops at educational conferences. As geography education continues its renaissance, a USGS presence at these training sessions will ensure that our data will be increasingly used by the educational community, and that the USGS will be looked upon as a relevant organization meeting the needs of our customers. *As this workshop showed, education receives a great amount of news media attention and is an excellent means to forge links with legislators at all levels.*



**Joseph Kerski in Blair, Nebraska.**

**\*\*end of report\*\***