

# Trinidad trip inspires and motivates local teacher

By Jim Good

The Springboro Star Press  
jim.good@miller-publishing.com

Geri Sims brought back more than just great memories from her research trip to Trinidad. She now has a list of classroom projects to keep her and her students busy for a long time to come.

Sims left for the Caribbean Island of Trinidad on June 20 and returned June 30 after being selected as a 2008 Earth Expeditions participant to study Trinidad's ecological and cultural environment.

The adventure didn't turn out to be as rugged as anticipated, but did surpass other expectations.

"It was wonderful," Sims said. "Oh, my god. Unbelievable."

She fulfilled a long-time dream of getting up close and personal to leatherback sea turtles, a giant turtle listed as an endangered species.

She said that the time she spent with the turtles, which were "the size of my first-grade students," was the best part of the trip.

She described how approximately 50 turtles emerged from the water to build their nests in

the sand, with each nest taking about an hour to build. It took approximately 10 minutes for the turtles to lay their eggs.

She brought a wealth of knowledge back, and is excited about applying that to her classroom. She hopes to, among others: create a wetlands area at Jonathan Wright Elementary School, grow endangered plants, help raise endangered butterflies, take a field trip with her class to a nature reserve here in Ohio, and participate in the adopt-a-turtle program.

She reported that she stayed in three different places during the trip, all sheltered from the elements. She had shower facilities, but no hot water or towels, and no air-conditioning.

One downer, she stated, was that she didn't lose any weight, an event she thought would surely happen. As for food, they were provided with fish, rice, potatoes, bread fruit (a potato-tasting fruit), and other local foods.

Besides the turtles, she also observed "tons of birds," which included blue and gold macaws and hummingbirds.

And lastly, about those dreaded snakes she was worried about: Fortunately, she didn't see any.



Springboro teacher Geri Sims kneels next to a leatherback turtle while on a recent research trip to Trinidad.