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Students Compete in GIS Day Olympiad
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(St. Petersburg, Fla.) Nov. 8, 2007 More than 100 Bay Area students will attend the Environmental Science, Policy and Geography Program GIS Olympiad Wednesday, Nov. 14 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the USF St. Petersburg Campus Activities Center to celebrate National GIS Day. Thirty-five fourth-grade students from Perkins Elementary School and 75 from H.B. Plant High School will compete in a GIS Olympiad of interactive activities and a Campus Treasure Hunt.

The GIS Olympiad will include Google Earth Riddle Gymnastics, American Frontier Fencing, Greco Roman Puzzle Wrestling, ASD Archery, Arc Explorer Athletics, Native American Map Lacrosse and an award ceremony. During the treasure hunt, students will use coordinates for locations across campus to find the treasure. USF St. Petersburg graduate students will facilitate the activities. Most of the GIS applications presented are local studies and software demonstrations focusing on the benefits of different geographic programs. See more at www.stpt.usf.edu/gisday/.

Barnali Dixon, PhD, assistant professor at USF St. Petersburg said, "GIS bridges the gap between the scientific community and the general public by communicating scientific findings visually through maps, graphs and charts. This is particularly true for environmental problems. If you are shown a map of an aquifer and how contamination could affect your drinking water quality, the public is better able to relate to the risk and its urgency."

Geographic Information Systems are computer-based mapping tools that take information from a database about a certain place such as streets, buildings, water features or terrain and turn it into visual layers. Demonstrations, poster displays, presentations and general information will be available throughout the day and are open to the public.

A forum titled Critical Need Assessment for Data Exchange Capabilities, Interoperability, Seamless Spatial Coverage and Web-based GIS will be held from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. in the CAC. It will include a round table discussion.

GIS is used throughout the world to solve problems related to the environment, health care, land use, business efficiency, education and public safety. Home power supplies, patrol cars and fire trucks keeping neighborhoods safe and delivery trucks function more efficiently because of GIS and the planning it helps provide. This technology helps businesses place ATMs and restaurants conveniently, allows maps to be pulled off the Internet, and helps farmers grow crops efficiently with fewer chemicals.

GIS Day is a global event held each year on the Wednesday of National Geographic Society’s Geography Awareness Week which is Nov. 12-16. More than 80 countries participate and teach individuals and organizations the benefits of GIS technology.

- USF St. Petersburg -