

Greenwich residents venture deep into the Canadian wilderness

By Colin Gustafson
Staff Writer
Stamford Advocate

Article Launched:08/12/2008 01:00:00 AM EDT

GREENWICH - Cos Cob resident Luc Hardy, 52, and his daughter, Ainhoa, 14, could hardly believe what they were witnessing when they stumbled across a gaping, seawater-filled fissure in the snowy terrain of the Canadian Arctic last month.

The two had spent the afternoon of July 22 on an educational group-hiking expedition across the "Ward Hunt" ice shelf in northern Canada when they saw a crack in the ice and a huge chunk drifting away from the main shelf.

"The ice had split apart completely," said Hardy, a self-employed venture capitalist who organized the trip.

Until then, the ice fissure had been viewed only in satellite photos by scientists studying global warming, he said.

Now, they were seeing it "for the first time, first-hand."

The discovery was the highlight of a four-week trip that brought a group of young travelers - from Los Angeles, France, Germany, Italy, Kenya, Canada and Greenwich - and adult scientists from across the globe to the Arctic wilderness of Canada to observe the impact of climate change.

"We want to teach the younger generation about this, so they, hopefully, can solve the mess that some of us adults have created," Hardy said.

The expedition was part of the second annual "The Young Ambassadors of the Arctic," a youth-education program that raises money for Green Cross International, a nonprofit environmental group founded by Mikhail Gorbachev. The program, which Hardy co-founded, received \$300,000 in sponsorship this year from groups such as the Reed Smith law firm, Hewlett Packard and clothing supplier Napapijir.

Last summer, the program brought a smaller group to Greenland to learn about biodiversity and to study the impact of global warming on bird migration. This year, a larger group of about 16 people ventured back into the Arctic - this time via Canada - to observe the impact of global warming on the 3,000-year-old Arctic glaciers and ice shelves, many of which are splitting apart.

When the explorers stumbled across the cracked ice in Ward Hunt last month, they'd been shooting photographs and recording the geographical coordinates of ice formations with the Canadian scientist, Derek Mueller, who first discovered the ice fissures in 2002.

"This ice has become destabilized with cracks over the past six years, and recent open-water conditions (on) the ice shelf have facilitated the latest break off," Mueller said. "The group's observations will help me place exactly when" the split occurred.

In addition to trekking across Ward Hunt, the group also explored Iqaluit in Ottawa, Canada and flew to Resolute Bay, in northern Canada.

Hardy plans to bring a new group to the Russian Arctic next year to study geopolitics and learn about the impact of oil pollution on the environment.

- Staff Writer Colin Gustafson can be reached at colin.gustafson@scni.com or at 625-4428.

Close Window

Send To Printer