

# Oden Expedition to Antarctic

## National Science Foundation Polar Trek Project

### Office of International Science and Engineering



Sometimes the best things are just a function of being in the right place at the right time. In 2006 while I was in Washington, DC as an Einstein Fellow working for the Office of International Science and Engineering I happened to climb into the elevator with a program officer from the Office of Polar Programs. I was wearing my Challenger Center Alaska jacket and we struck up a conversation about Alaska. I shared that I was a science teacher from Alaska on sabbatical this year supporting educational outreach projects in OISE.

It turned out that this Program Officer was responsible for leasing an icebreaker from Sweden in order to open up the ice channel in the Ross Sea since one of our US Icebreakers was out of commission. Their office had talked about eventually developing an educational outreach project connected with these annual icebreaker missions, but it was November and the trip logistics were coming together in the next few weeks. I was invited up for a chat to the Polar Programs Office that afternoon and asked if I might be interested in being onboard and, in the space of a month, pulling together an educational outreach project with whatever networks I was able to access.

I was quickly partnered with a newly created OPP project called Polar Trek, which planned to start the following summer matching classroom teachers with scientists for field experiences and classroom followup. Their beta website was live so we quickly figured out how to create posts



from onboard the ship via satellite uplinks and quickly built a following of 25 classrooms that I connected with before the mission and communicated with by blog and telephone while onboard. My son who was in kindergarten at the time came up with the idea of taking his



stuffed polar bear with me, so that he could also experience the ice. Renamed Ms. Chippy in honor of a cat that was part of the Shackleton expedition - Ms. Chippy quickly became the star of my outreach sessions and the subject of many blog posts. You can see the blogs from the mission at this link - <https://www.polartrec.com/member/allan-miller> along with the following 16 years of Polar Trek expedition outcomes as the project has grown to be a great success, engaging young people in authentic polar science and exposing teachers to authentic field research experiences. Definitely a wonderful experience to have been a part of!