



## Classroom to Park and Back Again



*Teacher-Ranger-Teachers (TRTs) are an enormous asset to the National Park Service (NPS) as they work to link America's national parks and school classrooms, helping the NPS to connect with people of all ages and prompting them to become stewards, advocates, and protectors of national park sites across the United States and even abroad!*

One of the National Park Service's goals is to help Americans connect with their national heritage and the national treasures that are our public lands. One way parks do this is through the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program. Through this program, the NPS brings teachers into parks every summer to work as rangers. These teachers can then take the park back to their classrooms by developing curriculum-based lesson plans that draw on their summer experience.

Last summer, in 2012, White Sands National Monument had the pleasure of working with Dale Emmert from the Academy Del Sol High School in Alamogordo. As part of his duties, Dale developed and presented programs to the public and worked on several special projects, including a mammoth track presentation and a rock identification lab.

One of Dale's largest successes in connecting children to White Sands was a puppet show he presented to preschool-age children based on the book *There was a Coyote who Swallowed a Flea*. Most of the

puppets in his show represented animals that live in and around the gypsum dunefield at White Sands National Monument. A large part of the program was to stress the importance of every animal within an ecosystem. The children loved it!

Commenting on the success of his puppet show, Emmert remarked, "The goal of all interpretive activities is to educate the public about the value of a park's resources and the reasons for preserving it. Puppets are like kid magnets. They draw kids in and make them feel like they are part of the story." Dale, and teachers like him, symbolize the core of the NPS mission—to connect young and old alike to their shared cultural and natural heritage.

The National Park Service Mission is to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and

outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. It is through its supporters, volunteers, stewards, and employees that the NPS is able to carry-out this mission.

To learn more about the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program and other resources available for teachers from different NPS sites, please visit <http://www.nps.gov/teachers>.



*TRT, Dale Emmert*