



LIGHTS, CAMERA, LEARNING:

New Ocean Filmmaking
Camp Helps Bilingual
High School Students
Acquire Key Skills

Photos by Scott Taylor



A new community project funded by the Duke University Marine Lab is helping bilingual high school students from Carteret County improve their proficiency in science and English, and learn leadership and networking skills.

Marine Lab PhD student **Maria de Oca Echarte** launched the six-week-long Ocean Filmmaking Camp this summer in collaboration with **Sarah Noll**, ESL program coordinator at West Carteret High School (WCHS).

“The camp uses filmmaking and blogging as fun, hands-on ways for ESL students to improve their science and English literacy, while exploring the marine environment and learning about the ocean conservation challenges facing Carteret County and the world today,” de Oca Echarte says.

The camp was offered free of charge to the students, thanks to financial support from the Marine Lab (**Cindy Van Dover**, director) and donations of time, resources and expertise from numerous volunteers at other local institutions.

Six students took part in the inaugural camp. They were: **Evelyn Cupil-Garcia**, **Akina Obata** and **Zhuying Zhang**, 9th graders at WCHS; **Aurelio Garcia**, a 10th grader at WCHS; **Ana Paola Rodriguez**, an 11th grader at WCHS; and **Veronica Martinez**, a 9th grader at Croatan High School.

In addition to learning about marine science and filmmaking, the students were required to blog about their experiences in English at sites.nicholas.duke.edu/ofc-duml.

During the first half of the camp, the students toured sites around Carteret County and met with marine biologists, conservationists and other experts to learn about the region’s coastal species and ecosystems and the natural and human forces that affect them. The students also learned basic video, editing and scriptwriting skills from de Oca Echarte, a native Spanish speaker from Spain with a background in filmmaking. Assisting de Oca Echarte was **Suzanne Lewis**, videographer at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, and **Liza Hoos**, a filmmaker and 2013 Master of Environmental Management graduate of Duke’s Nicholas School.

During the second half of the camp, the students split into two filmmaking teams. One team produced a short film about sea turtle ecology and conservation for the N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores; the other produced a promotional film for Marshallberg Farms, a cattle and fish farm located 10 miles east of Beaufort that has served as the site of N.C. State University’s Marine Aquaculture Research Center since 2009.

The idea for the camp sprang from conversations de Oca Echarte and Noll had while de Oca Echarte was a volunteer biology tutor for ESL students at West Carteret High School this year.

“We were talking about the unique challenges these students face, and I pointed out the problem of ‘summer slide,’ which disproportionately affects the school’s economically disadvantaged children, including English language learners,” Noll says. “Many of these students end up ‘staying at home’ for the summer, where they do not hear or speak English. They lack the opportunities that many of their more privileged peers have to travel or participate in summer camps and internships. Due to lack of transportation, they may not even have the chance to spend time hanging out and having fun with their schoolmates. Maria came up with the idea for this camp as a fun way to give the students networking, teamwork and leadership opportunities while honing their English and science literacy.”

Securing funding, lining up the guest speakers, and working out the other necessary logistics to hold the camp this summer—just months after they had first discussed it—was a challenge, de Oca Echarte says, but ultimately the rewards have far exceeded the frustrations.

“One of the hardest things was winnowing down the field of applicants,” she says. “We had only six spots to fill and an overwhelming number of excellent students who applied. We are already looking forward to next summer when we hope to include more students and more guest speakers.”

You can learn more about the Ocean Filmmaking Camp by checking out its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/OceanFilmmakingCamp.



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Photos provided by Bill Pan