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Lecture series discusses effects of climate change

Polar Palooza tackles controversial subject

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Students who attended Polar Palooza not only learned about global warming but also saw a 3,000-year-old cylinder of ice and tried on coats and boots worn by Arctic researchers.

The traveling lecture series discussed climate change and the effects of a warming world to a group of more than 200 people Friday evening at Independence Park Theatre and Cultural Center.

"It's like a traveling road show," said Geoff Haines-Stiles, Polar Palooza project director. "It's not just a lecture. We try to make it fun as well as informative."

Haines-Stiles said Polar Palooza is stopping in 25 communities where they often present the lecture for multiple groups.

Mike Castellini, associate dean of the school of fisheries and ocean science at University of Alaska Fairbanks, said the Earth is a system that responds and adapts to changes.

"What happens in the poles actually impacts the rest of the planet," Castellini said. "And what happens in the rest of the planet actually impacts the poles."

Castellini said rising temperatures have caused ice in the North Pole to melt, which is affecting polar bears and seals who depend on the ice to live. He said without the ice, both species do not have a livable habitat.

"There is even some discussion about [polar bears] becoming endangered because of the ice [melting]," Castellini said.

Charles Bentley, emeritus professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison, showed the audience the 3,000-year-old piece of ice. He said he studies ice core samples, which are drilled out of glaciers, because they provide information about variations in temperature and carbon dioxide levels from thousands of years in the past.

"It was really cool to see a piece of ice that was thousands of years old," said Jacob Anderson, petroleum engineering senior.

Jackie Grebmeier, biological oceanographer and research professor at University of Tennessee, shared pictures of animals - such as crabs and worms - that live under the ice. She said whales and ducks rely on such animals for food.

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Page 1 of 2 [next >](#)

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