**Metro State Marches for Science**

**KATHRYN GANFIELD**

[**ul5097yl@metrostate.edu**](mailto:ul5097yl@metrostate.edu)

“Science is the underpinning for everything. Whether people believe it or not, it exists and it needs support,” said Elizabeth Hudman, Metropolitan State alum and retired staff member. That was the message she wanted to send through her participation in the Minnesota March for Science on Saturday, April 22. She joined with dozens of Metro State community members and thousands of marchers to promote the importance of science in society.

Chanting and carrying signs, marchers moved from the Cathedral of St. Paul to the Capitol, where they heard speakers including University of Minnesota climatologist Mark Seeley and Rep. Betty McCollum, D-MN. St. Paul police estimated 10,000 people participated.

Prior to the march, more than forty members of the Metro State community gathered at Boyd Park in the Cathedral Hill neighborhood. Natural sciences professors Mark Asplen and Kate Ries, and librarian Jennifer DeJonghe organized the event with the support of the Metro State Interfaculty Organization (IFO). The Wednesday before the march, they offered a poster-making party.

**Message of the March**

For Asplen, the March for Science was a family matter. With his infant son in a carrier on his chest, Asplen addressed the Metro State contingent before the march. “Marching for science as a professional totally makes sense, but today I want to talk about marching as a dad,” said Asplen. “Because I think really what this is about is the future,” he said. “I want my son to live in a world where he’s not afraid to question, to question facts, theories, new things.”

Asplen carried a yellow poster board with a drawing of a bird and the words “This is what a dinosaur looks like.” He urged marchers to communicate a science-positive, non-partisan message, because “science can be under attack regardless of political ideology. Anything from anti-vaccination to climate denial – it can come from all places.”

Social science major Gail Miller brought family members, friends and her pit bull Juniper to the march. “I am new to the activist movement,” said Miller. “It’s just too important to not get involved. I’ve been doing more and more, and all kinds of events are on my radar now,” she said. Miller attended the march to support investments in science and education. “I’m worried about the cuts to everything from the EPA to Head Start. This is the only way we have to communicate to authority that we’re not in agreement with what they’re doing. This is the best way I know how to be heard,” Miller said.

**Alumni Activists**

First College alum Larry Yank arrived to Boyd Park on bicycle. He heard about the march from his son Josh, a graduate of Metro State’s Master of Science in Technical Communication program. Yank graduated in 1999 with an individualized major in natural history and ecology education, which led to his work as liaison to American Indian families in St. Paul schools. He hoped a huge turnout at the march could get the administration’s attention. “Presence is ultimately important,” said Yank. “We need a large groundswell of people coming out. We need to be out en masse to really have an effect.”

Alum and staff retiree Elizabeth Hudman heard about Metro State’s participation in the march from her former colleagues in the library. “I was planning to march anyway but it’s sure nice to go with people you know and make a bigger voice,” she said. She’s been an activist since the 1960s, and takes a long view on the impact marchers can make. “This is energizing the grassroots, and that’s important. I don’t think it will make an immediate change. But I think it’s about getting people stirred up and active,” Hudman said.

**The March Goes On**

Professor Asplen said efforts to promote science in the community and on campus will continue. “This is isn’t a one-day march,” he said. “We are coming together as a community of scientists and everyone who’s passionate about science. We agree we want the current and future administrations to adopt data-sound, data-supported practices.”

Asplen pointed to the brand new science education center, its energy-saving solar panels, and a new 2-course science GELS requirement as evidence of Metro State’s commitment. “Science is on the rise at Metro State,” he said. **“**We just hired two new chemists as full-time faculty. I’m very optimistic for the growth of natural sciences.”

The department is focused on serving science majors and non-majors alike, he said. They offer a broad array of courses in biology, chemistry, environmental science, geology and physics. Discussing climate change data and dispelling misconceptions in the classroom is vital, he said. “The goal of the sciences at Metro State is to help inform citizens. To get students engaged in science, in data, in data-driven decisions, in curiosity— which is a fundamental part of the scientific method—and to understand what science is and what it is not,” Asplen said.