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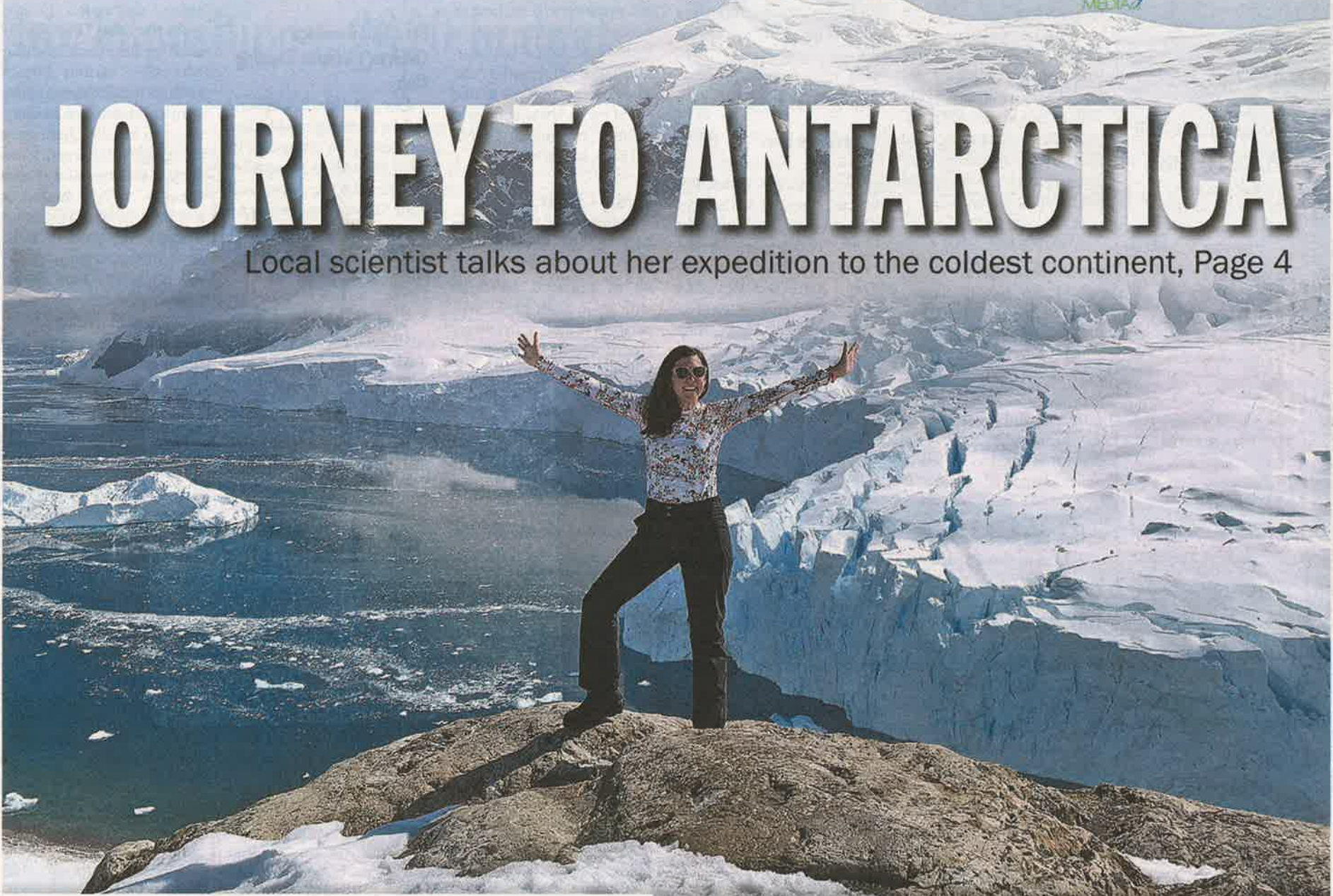
GLENCOE'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

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MEDIA

# JOURNEY TO ANTARCTICA

Local scientist talks about her expedition to the coldest continent, Page 4



Dr. Krissa Skogen stands above Neko Harbor, an inlet of the Antarctic Peninsula, during her Antarctic expedition in November 2019. PHOTO SUBMITTED

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## COVER STORY

POSTED TO GlencoeAnchorDaily.com 7 DAYS AGO

# Chicago Botanic Garden scientist shares Antarctica adventure

**KATIE COPENHAVER**  
Freelance Reporter

Antarctica is the most unique continent, environmentally, geographically, and politically. While citizens all over the world might be curious about it, only a small percentage ever have the opportunity to visit.

Local scientist Dr. Krissa Skogen made the voyage there with Homeward Bound, a global leadership training program for women in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, math and medicine) who share a passion for environmental sustainability and conservation. She gave a presentation about her experience on Friday, Jan. 10 at the Friday evening series, "Conservation Cocktails," hosted by the Lake Forest Open Lands Association at its Melody Farm Nature Preserve.

Encompassing the South Pole, the continent is special because of its remoteness, geological features and harsh conditions. The coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth of -128 degrees Fahrenheit was there. It also accounts for 90 percent of the Earth's ice, 70 percent of its fresh water and 10 percent of its land. The oscillations of the Southern Ocean, which encircles the continent, drive global weather systems.

"It's very emotional to be in a place like this," said Skogen.

Skogen is a conservation scientist at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe and an adjunct professor at Northwestern University. This is her second time presenting

at a "Conservation Cocktails" event. She was the featured speaker for "Bee Buzz," talking about the importance of pollinating insects and birds and her research on hawkmoths in June 2019.

She is passionate about increasing the number of women in the STEMM fields, which is what led her to join Homeward Bound. The 10-year-old organization selects a team of 100 women each year to participate in a year-long training and development program that culminates in an expedition to Antarctica.

Her journey took place Nov. 22 – Dec. 10, 2019, which in the Southern Hemisphere is late spring.

Tourism to Antarctica takes place in the warm months. Even among the scientific stations, 45 operate year-round while another 30 are open in the summer only. While she was there, Skogen said the temperatures ranged from the mid-20s to mid-40s.

To get there, Skogen's Homeward Bound group, composed of women from 33 different countries, had to meet in Ushuaia, Argentina, and then take a ship through the Drake Passage to Antarctica. One notable fact about the continent is that it has little vegetation. Skogen noted there are only two types of flowering plants and several varieties of moss.

The animals they observed were mainly whales, seals, penguins and krill.

"In Antarctica, wildlife has the right of way," Skogen said, noting that her group had to wait to walk on the paths until the pen-



**Dr. Krissa Skogen (right) and Katie Sizeland, of Sydney, Australia, travel by Zodiac near Port Lockeroy.**  
PHOTOS SUBMITTED



**The 100 women who took part in the Antarctic expedition pose for a photo in December 2019.**

guins passed. Safe paths were marked by fluorescent sticks in the ice and snow. Venturing off them is dangerous because the surface can be unstable and crack open.

Her group visited several scientific stations. Because there are relatively few women scientists employed at the stations, they felt empowered meeting the Homeward Bound

group. One woman from Pakistan was the first from her nation to participate in this expedition.

Another important feature of the continent is it has no litter. Organic waste is composted and deposited in the ocean. Anything else, such as plastics and metals, is shipped back to South America or Australia.

"Antarctica is a place where people can observe



**Dr. Krissa Skogen stands next to the only two flowering plants to occur on the Antarctic continent.**



**Dr. Krissa Skogen took this photo of Adelie penguins.**



**Dr. Krissa Skogen**

firsthand the influence of human activity on the environment," Skogen said and noted that the western hemisphere of the continent is warming at the fastest rate. The concern is that could disrupt the ocean oscillation and glob-

al climate.

The melting sea ice (salt water) and ice sheets (fresh water) have negative impacts on the krill and other organisms that rely on the ice for breed-

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# ANTARCTICA

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ing and survival. The good news, per Skogen, is the Commission on the Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), established in 1982, put protections in place that are still being followed.

Antarctica is committed to peace and science and is governed by the Antarctic Treaty of 1959, which has 54 signatory countries, including the United States. The treaty bans military activity on the continent, which has not been violated. It serves as a lasting example of successful science diplomacy, Skogen explained.

In addition to her positions at the Chicago Botanic Garden and Northwestern, Skogen is in her first year as a mentor in LFOLA's Center for Conservation Leadership. The center works with high school students interested in the environment. It helps them develop a practical understanding of the environment

and become stewards of the environment through educational programs and special projects selected with the help of professional mentors.

Skogen is mentoring a high school student from Zion, who is focusing on the removal of invasive species in Lake County.

Two other mentors were in the audience for her presentation. Tim Bliese, an immunologist and principal scientist at Abbott, has served as a mentor for four years, currently working with a senior in high school from Libertyville. Like Skogen, he has participated in a scientific expedition. In his case, it was to visit clinical sites in Tanzania.

Maddie Mahan is a hydrogeologist with Deigan and Associates, an environmental consulting firm in Lake Bluff that has done a lot of work to clean up the Waukegan lakefront, among other projects. She is in her first year mentoring a sophomore from Round Lake High School.

Through her continuing

involvement in Homeward Bound and her scientific positions, Skogen serves as an advocate for girls and women in STEMM. She has plans to speak at after-school programs in Highwood,

Waukegan and Chicago and at the College of Wooster in Ohio, among other colleges.

"I am committed to creating a diverse and inclusive scientific community that fosters and supports opportunities for women and underrepresented groups in any way I can," she said.

As for tourism in Antarctica, Skogen said it reached an all-time high of 51,000 in 2018. However, hundreds of vacationers on cruise cannot all get out on the continent because the accommodations and space only support a limited number of people at a time.

For those who will not ever go there, this presentation gave people the opportunity to see the continent vicariously through Skogen's photos and videos.