Stories of the Titanic and a Local Atlantic City

Delgado spoke about the volume of plastic that now pollutes our oceans and shared an image of a beer can resting in the Titanic's underwater graveyard. "You wouldn't see that at Gettysburg," he said.

Trash poses a serious threat to sea life and the ocean ecosystem, which he says is "the lifeblood of the planet."

He also calls the ocean the biggest museum on our planet.

Stockton students, faculty and staff visited that same museum this past summer to map a local shipwreck off Atlantic City, the Robert J. Walker.

Steve Nagiewicz, a Stockton alumnus, diver and a teacher at Atlantic City High School, shared his experiences working with Stockton's field station to document the Walker, which sank in 1860 and was mostly forgotten until NOAA surveyed the site after Hurricane Sandy.

Although one is nearly three miles undersea, the other 85 feet, both the Titanic and the Walker share similarities in history, drama, the loss of lives and both have been mapped using advanced sonar equipment, Nagiewicz, of Brick Township, explained.

The Walker conducted half a million surveys before it sunk, and its story got buried in time as the Civil War took center stage, Nagiewicz said.

Nagiewicz helped to map the wreck with Steve Evert, manager of Stockton's field station and assistant director of Academic Labs, Dr. Peter Straub, professor of Biology, Dr. Mark Sullivan, associate professor of Marine Science, and students Chelsea Shields, Jamie Taylor and Walter Poff. Vince Capone, owner of Black Laser Learning, advised the sonar team and data processing. Advanced volunteer divers from the New Jersey Historical Divers Association and NOAA conducted the follow-up dives and physical measurements in August 2014.

"There are still relatives of Walker sailors who now know the history of this wreck," he said.

The expedition utilized Stockton's extensive array of underwater sensing equipment to provide side scan sonar imaging of the wreck site and subsequently to develop a preliminary map for diving operations. Students engaged in Dr. Peter Straub's Summer Intensive Research Experience (SIRE) program collected and interpreted the sonar data to serve as a benchmark to assess the wreck over time, and they joined Nagiewicz on the stage to share their perspectives.

The students pointed out key features of the wreck as sonar imagery and ROV footage from the Walker expedition was presented to the audience. The ROV Shearwater was on display outside the Campus Center Theatre.

The Walker mapping is an educational experience that most students don't get until they're out in the profession, Nagiewicz said. And it's the kind of experience that employers look for on resumes, said Delgado.

The vast majority of the ocean is unexplored territory. "The ocean is our final frontier. We need you out there," Delgado said. # # #