

Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy
Great Minds Program®
presents

**The Ecology in Early Human Evolution:
The Role of the Tropical Forests**
featuring

Dr. Anna Roosevelt
Professor of Anthropology
The University of Illinois, Chicago



Thursday, February 18, 2010
at 4:30-5:30 p.m.
IMSA Pearson Lecture Hall

Widely accepted theories of early human evolution hold that human ancestors developed when Ice-Age climate change created huge savannas in the tropical forest belt of Africa. The idea is that a rainforest ape species ventured out in the savanna, developing stone tools and big-game hunting to survive there. In fact, all Paleolithic humans are assumed to have been big-game hunters adapted to the savannas, steppes, and tundras throughout the world. However, careful paleecological and bioarchaeological research now show that early human ancestors mainly lived in tropical forests. Tropical savannas are rare until later, after humans had developed fire and began to deforest in some areas. Furthermore, most Paleolithic humans lived by broad-spectrum foraging, not by big game hunting, which is dangerous, costly in effort, and of low and unreliable returns. Since a lot of assumptions about human nature derive from the old evolutionary consensus, we can now significantly revise our ideas about ancient and modern human behavior.