

Geography buffs add Delaware to parking lot

By **SUE DENNY**

Dover Bureau reporter

CAMDEN — Geography buffs at Caesar Rodney Junior High School unveiled a gigantic map of Delaware on Friday, a permanent addition to the school parking lot.

The map — 33 feet long and 13 feet wide — was shown to the public in honor of Geography Awareness Week, which ended Friday at schools nationwide.

The map was painted by art teacher Ray Gatti in highway paint — in bright yellow and blue — the state colors, of course.

It includes a Capitol dome, marking where Dover's location; a blue star with points indicating Camden, Wyoming and other areas where Caesar Rodney students live; and a symbol marking the geographic center of the state.

The map is the brainchild of

longtime teacher Shirley H. Jarrell, who is developing a new Delaware geography unit for her seventh-graders. While thumbing through Compton's Encyclopedia months ago, Jarrell stumbled upon a bit of little-known trivia: Delaware's geographic center is 11 miles south of Dover.

With help from Ronald Reed, a supervisor in Kent County's planning office and service center, they determined the geographic center is on a Felton farm owned by Lester and Catherine Killen.

Jarrell, who has taught at Caesar Rodney for 26 years of her three-decade career, was obviously excited as she described one of the school's newer geography lesson tools.

She hopes to have students in future classes add more details. "When the [1990] census is over, the next class can divide it into

counties and put the census populations on it," she said.

Perhaps others will want to add the state's highways and waterways.

Jarrell, who teaches seventh and eighth grade, is not a geography expert. Her field of study was English and reading and she now teaches "Reading through Social Studies" for students with low reading levels.

Jarrell was one of two teachers in Delaware honored this summer by the National Council for Geographic Education, an organization designed to help teachers plan geography curriculum.

Jarrell was nominated by her principal, Gerald A. Buckworth, who also is a state representative.

Mellie W. Joseph, who teaches senior sociology and freshman geography at Seaford High School,

was also nominated by her principal, Chester A. Baltz.

Joseph, a 1973 graduate of the school where she now teaches, describes herself as a "geo-evangelist."

"That's what I am," she said. "I love geography. I love the subject."

Six years ago, every student at Seaford was required to take a 25-question test of basic geography. Dismayed at their lack of knowledge, particularly in map reading skills, the social studies department persuaded the administration to include a geography class in graduation requirements.

Joseph wrote the curriculum for the one-semester course all freshman must take.

It includes nine weeks of map skills and nine weeks of American geography.