Have a happy and safe Spring Break!

Math Awareness Month coming up
April each year is Math Awareness Month. Each year a specific theme is chosen. This year the theme is Mathematics and Climate. To find out more about this, look at the website http://www.mathaware.org/mam/09/
If you have a good idea about how to spread the word in April, bring it to a Math Club meeting!

Searching for research?
Several Universities run Research Experiences for Undergraduates in Mathematics (REU’s). These are typically 6 to 8 week programs, during which groups of students undertake original research in mathematics. Board and lodging is usually free, and in addition participants receive a stipend. Selection for these programs is highly competitive. If this is something you might be interested in look at the listing of REU’s at http://www.ams.org/employment/reu.html, and talk to one of your professors. (Deadlines for application for most of these programs is February or March.)

11th Annual NCUWM a great experience!
By Alison Lutz
This past January, Jess Brown and I had the privilege of attending the 11th Annual Nebraska Conference for Undergraduate Women in Mathematics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. There, we met students from colleges and universities in nearly every state across the country, along with representatives from the NSF, NSA, MAA, international graduate studies programs, and a variety of mathematical career fields.
Just to be in the same room with over 200 other undergrads so passionate about their studies was inspiring! The topics of their talks ranged from “Evaluation of Hypersingular Integrals using Numerical Methods” to “Self-Efficacy in Developmental Mathematics.” There were also panel discussions focused on preparing for graduate school, job opportunities in math, and the challenges of being a minority in such a male-dominated field.
The best part of the trip, generously paid for by the UNL Math Department and our own Plattsburgh State College Auxiliary Service funds, was learning about the sheer number and variety of opportunities available to undergraduate women in math, from summer REUs (research experiences for undergraduates), to research grants from the National Science Foundation, to girls-only graduate school prep programs across the country.
Though NCUWM was my first conference, I’m sure it won’t be my last! It was an incredible, unforgettable experience that helped broaden my perception of so many possibilities for the future. Thanks to the conference (and to Dr. Morrow for initiating the whole registration process), I’m certain that the opportunities for women in math, at the risk of sounding corny, are absolutely infinite!

Math major (and Math club President) Jordan Elliotorpe was again spotted on the stage at Hartman Theater, Meyers Fine Ars building…
this time with a role in the Main Stage Production, The Laramie Project. Congratulations on another fine performance!

By keenly confronting the enigmas that surround us, and by considering and analysing the observations that I have made, I ended up in the domain of mathematics. Although I am absolutely without training in the exact sciences, I often seem to have more in common with mathematicians than with my fellow artists.

M. C. Escher

“The purpose of computation is insight, not numbers.”
-Richard Hamming

“Mathematics is the art of giving the same name to different things.”
-Jules Henri Poincare
What IS going on in the Math Commons Tuesdays?

MATH CLUB!

The math club meets every Tuesday afternoon from 12:15-12:45 in the math commons (HH242). Secretary Krystal Tremblay reports as follows:

Snacks are provided and of course all are welcome to attend. We are currently discussing issues pertaining to study sessions, movie night and math conferences to name a few. The "new" club officers are as follows:

President: Jordan Ellithorpe
Vice P: Elizabeth Dukette
Treasurer: Erika Bartolucci
Secretary: Krystal Tremblay
Faculty Liaison: Allison Lutz

Pi Mu Epsilon comes to PSU

The petition process to start a chapter of Pi Mu Epsilon, the National Honor Society for Mathematics, at Plattsburgh State is underway! At the beginning of the semester, Math Club voted to bring the prestigious organization to the department, and Dr. Quenell has graciously agreed to be our Faculty Advisor. PI ME President-Elect Eve Torrence has been assigned our Chapter Liaison, and we’ve been working hard to gather the necessary information to submit to national headquarters for review.

PI ME’s purpose is to “promote scholarly activity in mathematics among the students in academic institutions,” and members must have maintained an average of at least 3.0 in all math courses for their major. For more information about PI ME, please visit their website at http://www.pme-math.org, and be on the lookout for more updates!

Opportunity knocks…

The Hudson River Undergraduate Math conference will this year be held at Union College, Schenectady, Saturday April 18. Each year several PSU students attend this conference. The deadline for contributed talks has passed. The keynote speaker this year is Dr. Erica Flapan of Pomona College, whose talk is titled When Topology meets Chemistry. For further information about this conference, talk to Dr. Greg Quenell.

Opportunity knocks again…

Dr. Jan Plaza, (computer science department) is offering a course on Quantum Computing in the Fall semester. This course might be of interest to Math major students. To find out a little about this futuristic topic, you can go a talk Dr. Plaza will give on quantum computing on Tuesday, March 24, 12:30, Redcay 111.

Plattsburgh Alum counts in Mathcounts

“As she watched the students collaborate, Peru Central math teacher Jennifer Garbera said, "It's great to see the kids working together and getting so excited about math." (Plattsburgh Press Republican, March 1, 2009). We asked Jennifer (class of 2007) to tell us more about her work with MathCounts. Her account:

This was my first year being the "MathCounts Coach" at Peru Central School. I have 6 “Mathletes” who meet with me after school to practice challenging and mind provoking math problems. For a majority of the middle school students, this does not sound like a pleasurable activity to partake in when the last school bell rings, but for my five eighth graders and one seventh grader, it is something they look forward to all week.

MathCounts is a national math club for 7th and 8th grade students who excel in math. There are local and statewide competitions in which students can show off their impressive mathematical minds. Our local chapter’s competition was held at Clinton Community College Sat, Feb. 28. Eight schools were represented at this competition; Peru, Beekmantown, Ausable Valley, Stafford, Saranac Lake, Lake Placid, Seton, and Chazy. The students are given problems in a test format. There are two individual rounds and one group round.

The questions that are asked are not your typical middle school math problems. They are tough and require sharp problem solving skills. A few of the problems even I did not know how to do! These kids however, can surprise you. They get really excited and come up with ways to solve these problems that I would never even think of! The top 3 schools from each local chapter go to the state competition in Troy. The students who make it to States are the best of the best. These students can answer a math question before the whole question is even read to them. The speed at which these kids are able to complete difficult calculations in their minds is unbelievable. Unfortunately my team didn't make it to the state competition. Maybe next year we will have better luck! For more information on MathCounts visit www.mathcounts.org

Problems, problems, problems

Here are some problems to stretch your mind. Submit solutions (answers, along with explanations of how you got them) to Nicki Jarvis in the mathematics department office. The first correct solution to each problem will earn a prize for the solver.

1. Monty Hall shows you four closed doors. There is a nice, new car behind one of them; each of the other three conceals something less desirable. You select one of the four doors. Monty then opens one of the doors you didn't select -- one without a car behind it -- and offers you a chance to change your selection. Stick or switch? Whichever you do, Monty then opens another door, one that is not your current selection, and does not have the car behind it. Once again, he offers you the opportunity to change your selection. What strategy will maximize your chances of winning the car?

2. Tile the plane with 1-by-1 squares. What is the radius of the smallest circle that can completely enclose 100 of the squares?

(Professor Quenell is our Vital Sines Problem editor.)

Closing Credits

Editor: Margaret Morrow
Thanks to the contributors to this issue!