

## MentorNet:

### *Inspire the Next Generation of Scientists and Engineers*



Have you thought about giving back to the physics student community but didn't know where to start? Consider joining MentorNet, a nonprofit e-mentoring network. This one-on-one mentoring program provides a platform for making a big difference in the life of a student without ever leaving your inbox.

*MentorNet seeks mentors who are:*

- Science and engineering professionals;
- In industry, government, or academia;
- Active, on leave, or retired.

*To match with proteges who are:*

- Pursuing a professional future in the fields of engineering and science;
- At the community college, undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, or early career faculty levels.

The Society of Physics Students (SPS) has partnered with MentorNet since 2006. In addition to helping recruit mentors through Sigma Pi Sigma, all student members of SPS are eligible for free mentoring services. Said one SPS student, "Not only do you get to meet some really interesting people, you get the advice you need from very knowledgeable people... I'm with my second mentor in four years of being involved with MentorNet, and both mentors I've had were, and are, wonderful."

A mentoring relationship officially lasts eight months. Because mentors and students interact entirely by email, they can communicate wherever and whenever they choose—from the office at 8am, a coffee shop at 7pm, or an

accelerator control room at 3am. Topics of discussion vary, but career advice and support are common themes.

*Interested in being a mentor?*

Go to [www.MentorNet.net/mentor](http://www.MentorNet.net/mentor) and select *Join Us*. When you get to the section on professional society memberships, be sure to select Sigma Pi Sigma!

## Adopt-a-Physicist: *Connect with High School Physics Students*



Help high school students explore what it's really like to be a physicist—sign up to be "adopted" by a high school physics class through Adopt-a-Physicist.

High school students (and sometimes their teachers) don't always have a good sense of what you can do with a degree in physics or how physics connects to the real world. Adopt-a-Physicist, a program led by Sigma Pi

*I believe that Adopt-a-Physicist is the most important activity that Sigma Pi Sigma engages in. At a time when our country needs to encourage and support students interested in math and science, this program provides high school students with a one-on-one discussion with professional physicists.*

-Brad Roth, Oakland University, Adopted physicist 2006-2009

Sigma, addresses this problem by connecting physicists and students directly through online discussion forums. In this program "physicist" means anyone with a physics degree, regardless of whether the degree holder works in physics research, journalism, engineering, healthcare, computer programming, or music.

Participating physicists are responsible for creating a Facebook-like profile and hosting an online discussion forum for the students that adopt them. All communication with students takes place in the online forum during a designated 3-week period.

The discussions cover topics ranging from career advice to dark matter to favorite reality TV shows. "I was impressed with the level of curiosity expressed by some of the students regarding the ultimate fate of the universe, time travel, etc.," said one physicist after participating. "It was fun for me set aside my regular work to think about these things and I recalled that when I was a teenager, I had similar questions and thoughts."

As evidenced by the diverse membership of Sigma Pi Sigma, people who earn degrees in physics go on to all sorts of fascinating careers. If you are interested in sharing your story with high school students, visit [www.adoptaphysicist.org](http://www.adoptaphysicist.org) today for information about upcoming sessions!

# Ken Ford

## *Honorary ΣΠΣ Member Recognized by Tutor.com*

### What brought you to Tutor.com? How long have you been here?

My friend Gary White, who heads the Society of Physics Students at the American Institute of Physics, drew my attention to Tutor.com in the fall of 2007. I was retired from a career that included both college and high-school physics teaching, and was looking for a way to stay connected to students, so I signed up and have been tutoring since December 2007.

### What is the most rewarding part of tutoring?

The VARIETY. Every session is different, and most are challenging. It's wonderful when the student "gets it" and shows appreciation.

### Do you have any funny or touching Tutor.com stories?

One interesting, offbeat session was with a student whose assignment was to design an astronomical observatory, no-holds-barred on cost or location. We had fun discussing the parameters and the student settled on a high-altitude site in South America.

### What interests do you have outside of Tutor.com?

I do some consulting and continue to write. Currently I am working on a book on quantum physics for the general reader. Tentative title: *101 Quantum Questions*.

### Anything else you would like to share?

The big news from the phone company is that our summer home in the woods of northern Pennsylvania has broadband access for the first time ever. That means I can do some tutoring this summer.

*Tutor.com is an on-demand tutoring services website that connect students to a professional tutor online when they need help in math, science, social studies or English. SPS has partnered with Tutor.com to recruit more on-line physics tutors and many SPS and ΣΠΣ members have participated successfully. Tutors set their own hours, earn extra income, and work from the comfort of their own homes. If you are interested in becoming a tutor, details are available at [www.sps-national.org/partnerships/tutor.htm](http://www.sps-national.org/partnerships/tutor.htm).*



*Ken Ford was recently named Tutor.com's Tutor of the Month. The Q & A at left is a reprint of the interview that was featured in their newsletter, and the*

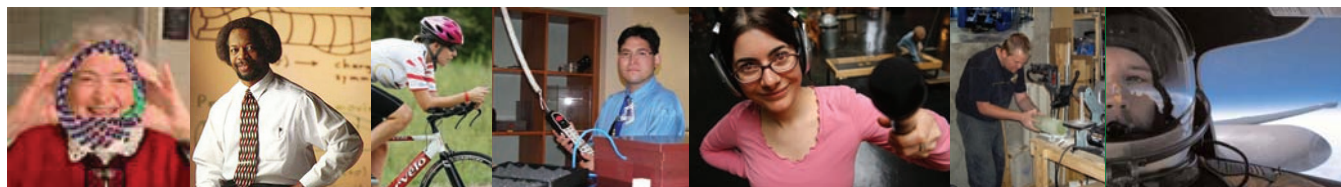
*commentary below is from Ken himself.*

Here's a picture. It is 17 years old – taken back when I was only 66 – but I rather like it because it is informal and shows my non-physics side. The plane in the picture is a Cessna used to tow gliders. Flying small planes and gliders was my passion for fifty years. After I stopped flying a few years ago, I detoured from physics long enough to write a book called *In Love with Flying*.

More incidental data: I have seven children and thirteen grandchildren.

It's OK if you want to mention my age, since you probably don't have too many 83-year-old tutors.

Again, thanks for the quite unexpected honor. It will be a stimulus, too.— **Ken Ford**



## Hidden Physicists

One of Sigma Pi Sigma's greatest assets is its diversity. Stemming from a common interest in and aptitude for physics, our members have gone on to pursue a multitude of interesting and unusual career paths. Now, more than ever, we seek to draw on the wisdom and experience of our alumni. With help from the American Institute of Physics, Sigma Pi Sigma is attempting to locate the names and whereabouts of people with BS, MS, or PhD degrees in physics whose careers have taken them away from the "traditional" physics community. We ask for your help in finding the universe of people who are trained in physics—what they do and where they are. As the physics community faces new challenges and opportunities, we would like to engage these "hidden physicists" in the fellowship of physicists. Therefore, if you work outside the traditional physics community, please consider sharing your story. Also, if you know of others in similar situations, please encourage them to contact us. Several responses will be selected for publication in each issue of *Radiations*. Submit your story on the Sigma Pi Sigma website at: [www.sigmapisigma.org/radiations/hidden\\_physicists.htm](http://www.sigmapisigma.org/radiations/hidden_physicists.htm)