Supporting Physics
by William DeGraffenreid, California State University, Sacramento

At Sigma Pi Sigma and the Society of Physics Students, we are working to support physics students through our scholarships, awards, and programs, which provide students with experiences they otherwise might not have. The call for supporting and encouraging students to pursue STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)-related fields is increasing in the midst of budget and economic uncertainty on many levels.

Donations to Sigma Pi Sigma and SPS support a wide range of programs. Some of these programs directly benefit individual students. Our Leadership Scholarships give awards of $2,000 – $5,000 to truly outstanding young physicists to encourage their study of physics and pursuit of high scholarship. We also have specific scholarships for students at two-year colleges and for those interested in pursuing a career in education. Our reporter program enables students to attend professional meetings, where they have the opportunity to develop their communication skills by interviewing speakers and writing an article that is shared in our publications and on our website. These articles provide a glimpse into what happens at meetings for those who aren’t able to attend themselves.

A number of our programs support larger groups of students. Our Marsh W. White Awards, Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Awards, Future Faces of Physics Awards, and Blake Lilly Prize recognize chapters at campuses around the country and support their outreach efforts. Collectively, hundreds of physics students have benefited from these programs as they carried out science fairs, physics magic shows, public lectures, and even an occasional pumpkin-tossing event. In addition, thousands of community members benefit from participating in these programs each year.

While monetary donations are always welcome, there are other ways that you can help that don’t require you to write a check. Local SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma chapters are always looking for people to speak at their meetings. Students are interested in hearing about career possibilities. By giving an hour or two of your time, you could inspire a young physicist. If you’re interested in making yourself available to students in your area, please let us know and we’ll make the introduction.

As you read this issue, you’ll learn more details about the programs and opportunities we provide. With the help of you and your Sigma Pi Sigma colleagues, we hope to not only continue to offer these programs, but to expand them!

Society News

Mary Beth Monroe
Remembering a lifelong champion of SPS
by Toni Sauny

The Society of Physics Students joins the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT) and many others in the physics community around the country in mourning the loss of Mary Beth Monroe on August 27, 2013. Mary Beth was a lifelong member of SPS and served as the SPS chapter advisor at Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde, Texas, where she taught for over 38 years. She was dedicated to her students and consistently devoted her work to their development. Mary Beth served in many leadership positions, including several terms as the SPS zone 13 councilor and various roles in the Texas section of the AAPT and the national AAPT. One of her many contributions was leading a study to establish the important role of physics education at two-year colleges, a study resulting in guidelines that continue to have an impact.

In memory of Mary Beth Monroe, friends and colleagues have expressed interest in supporting an endowed scholarship in her name. For an in-depth feature on Mary Beth’s legacy, and information on the memorial scholarship, please see the Fall 2013 issue of The SPS Observer magazine, at www.spsobserver.org/2013/fall-singularities.pdf.