My Piece of the Pi(e)

STUDENTS AND PHYSICISTS CELEBRATE PI DAY BY GIVING BACK

by Tara Davis, Development Manager, American Institute of Physics, College Park, MD

March 14 is always a great occasion to pay homage to the mathematical constant approximated as 3.14. But this year students and professional physicists celebrated Pi Day in an entirely new way. They used it as an opportunity to support Sigma Pi Sigma and the Society of Physics Students (SPS), organizations that have helped many physicists throughout their educations and well into their careers.

To raise awareness of and support for their programs, SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma, in collaboration with the American Institute of Physics Development Office, collaborated on a website that encouraged visitors to donate in increments of pi. The site also featured short videos and photos of students, faculty, and Sigma Pi Sigma alumni talking about the “piece of the pi(e)” they received from SPS or Sigma Pi Sigma. Homemade pies and pie servers were given away to provide extra incentive to donate. In total to date, Pi Day efforts have raised $28,104.

“I would like to give ☑ $3.14159265358979323846264338327950288419716939937510582097494459230781640628620899862803482534211706798214808651328230664709384460955058223172535940812848111745028410270193852110555964462294895493038196442881097566593344612847564823378783165271201909145648566923460348610454326648213393607260249141273724587006606315588174881…”

“My just thought it was really important to give back, and I thought it was important for me to encourage others to give,” said donor Beth Cunningham, who is the executive officer of the American Association of Physics Teachers. “I thought it was a really clever idea.”

Cunningham earned her bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD degrees in physics from Kansas State University in Manhattan. As she worked her way through tenure and prestigious positions teaching physics at universities, she realized she wanted to help others on a broader scale. “I knew I wanted to do something to help people on the national level, something to help faculty and physics educators.”

Cunningham isn’t the only physics-student-turned-physics-professional who had this realization. Philip “Bo” Hammer currently serves as the associate vice president of physics resources for the American Institute of Physics. Hammer was the director of Sigma Pi Sigma and the Society of Physics Students from 1996 until 2000, and believes the groups are important because they “honor scholarship, service, and commitment to the field and have the potential to build long-lasting affinity to physics.”

Sigma Pi Sigma president Willie Rockward created a video for the Pi Day site in which he describes how he received his first “piece of pi(e)” in 1987 when he was inducted into Sigma Pi Sigma at Grambling State University in Louisiana. Rockward, who is also chair and associate professor of physics at the department of physics at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, said he found even bigger pieces of the pi(e) by serving on the SPS National Council and by becoming an SPS advisor at Morehouse, where he has had the pleasure of inducting into the honor society his own students.

Like Rockward, undergraduate Robyn Smith also said she has received several pieces of pi(e) thanks to her active membership in SPS. “My local chapter [at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] receives a piece of the pi(e) every time we succeed and our proposal is awarded a grant that allows us to bring our excitement for physics to local middle and high school classrooms,” she said. “I personally received my own piece of the pi(e) when I was nominated and elected as zone 3’s associate councilor. As an AZC, I’ve been able to directly participate in the governance of SPS National, as well as meet other inspirational student SPS leaders from across the country.”

Help us put the pi in Sigma Pi Sigma! Donate today at www.sigmapisigma.org/the-pi-is-coming.html.
Sigma Pi Sigma and the Society of Physics Students thank you for your continuing contributions. Alumni gifts impact and enrich the undergraduate physics student experience across the country and provide the funds for innovative projects that excite and motivate students, teachers, and the public at large. THANK YOU!

2014 SPS INTERNS

www.spsnational.org/programs/internships/

SPS internships are awarded on the basis of scholastic record and potential for future success, SPS participation, and relevant experience. Interns are placed in a variety of organizations and work on research, policy, or education projects.

NICK DUFORFCALK
Lebanon Valley College
Project: Following Eta Carinae Across Periastro
Host: NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center

ASHLEY FINGER
Davidson College
Position: AIP Mather Policy Intern
Host: US House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

CALEB HEATH
University of Arkansas
Project: Developing and Revising Materials for the Physics Teaching Resource Agents Program
Host: American Association of Physics Teachers

KEARNI LOUIS-JEAN
Xavier University of Louisiana
Project: Developing the 2014 SPS Science Outreach Catalyst Kit
Hosts: Society of Physics Students and National Institute of Standards and Technology

SIMON PATANE
Vassar College
Host: American Institute of Physics

KEILY BERSON
Coe College
Project: Identifying Biomolecules in Solution
Host: National Institute for Standards and Technology

KELBY PETERSON
Utah State University
Project: Identifying Biomolecules in Solution
Host: National Institute for Standards and Technology

BENJAMIN PREIS
Tufts University
Position: AIP Mather Policy Intern
Host: Representative Bill Foster’s office (D-IL 11)

KIRSTEN RANDLE
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Project: Detecting Cosmic Microwave Background Polarimetry
Host: NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center

MARK SELLERS
Rhodes College
Project: Developing the 2014 SPS Science Outreach Catalyst Kit
Host: Society of Physics Students

STEPHEN SKOLNICK
Indiana University
Project: Bringing Physics to the Public
Host: American Physical Society

JACOB ZALKIND
Shippensburg University
Host: American Institute of Physics

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www.spsnational.org/programs/scholarships/

Several awards of up to $3,000 are made each year to individuals showing excellence in academics, SPS participation, and additional criteria as noted.

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University of Wisconsin-River Falls

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SPS Leadership Scholarship

MEREDITH GOLD
Brigham Young University

NICE JOHNSON
Coe College

CHRISTINA KREISCH
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SEAN MCLAUGHLIN
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KHADIJAH MITCHELL
New Mexico State University

PRAJWAL NIRALI
Saint Peter’s University

KELBY PETERSON
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RICHARD PRINCE
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Future Teacher Scholarship

JERIKA NEWITT
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Peggy Dixon Two-Year Scholarship

AARON BLASBAND
Collin College

Herbert Levy Scholarship

LAUREN DALLACHIESA
Grove City College

Kirsten R. Lorentzen Award

(Awarded by the Association for Women in Science)

ANGELA LUDVIGSEN
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

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BLAKE LILLY PRIZE

www.spsnational.org/programs/awards/lilly.html

Several awards of the three-volume set The Feynman Lectures on Physics are given each year to chapters or individuals that engage in physics outreach activities and share feedback from participants.

THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER
Project leader: Elliott Wainwright
Faculty advisor: John F. Lindner

RHODES COLLEGE
Project leader: Edoardo Draetta
Faculty advisor: Brent Hoffmeister

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Project leader: John Ferrier
Faculty advisor: William V. Slaton

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www.spsnational.org/programs/awards/student.htm

Awards are made to individuals for outstanding research done as an undergraduate. Recipients represent the United States and SPS at the International Conference of Physics Students and receive $500 for themselves and $500 for their SPS chapter.

HELEN MESKIDZE
Elon University
Modeling the Composition and Emissions of Gamma-Ray Burst Jet Cocoon

ZOEY WARECKI
Towson University
Structural and Electrical Properties of Electron-Doped CaMnO3, Thin Films

Honorable Mention

ALEXANDRA DAY
Wellesley College

REBECCA JOLITZ
University of California, Berkeley

LEARN MORE

For more information on SPS awards, winners, and future deadlines, visit www.spsnational.org/programs/awards/.