Alumni News: Karen Rene O’Dell O’Neill Pursuing Ph.D. in Biostatistics and Epidemiology

For Karen Rene O’Dell, Appalachian was the beginning of her college studies, but it was not to be the end.

O’Dell O’Neill graduated from Appalachian in 1981 with a B. S. in Applied Mathematics with minors in computer science, psychology, and a high school teacher’s certificate. She continued as a graduate student, completing the M. A. in Applied Mathematics with an emphasis in numerical and statistical analyses in 1983. Currently she is a Biomedical Mathematical Statistician at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN). O’Dell is currently working towards a Ph.D. in Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the University of MD.

Some of her fond memories at App were using the old punch card computers and watching Dr. Mark Harris make it look easy. She quickly learned that it is much more difficult than originally conceived. She also remembers Dr. Ernest Lane (currently Emeritus faculty) doing an excellent job teaching Topology and thinking “How am I going to use this area of math in my career?”

Her advice for students is not only to sharpen their math skills but also their communication and writing skills. As shown by her many different career choices, Karen says, “…seeking a math/statistics/computer science degree provides you with very diverse knowledge, skills, and abilities that are applicable to a wide range of careers/jobs depending upon your interests.”

Kitchens Hopes 12th Annual Math Camp Will Be Another Success

Math Camp, a summer camp for rising 6th through 12th graders, has become an institution of the ASU Dept. of Mathematical Sciences. Parents and kids alike look forward to the annual event. The 2009 Math Camp is scheduled for July 13—16. In addition, The Extended Math Camp, for high school students who plan to make teaching a career, allows twelve participants to engage in special activities throughout the year. We will have Math Camp and the Extended Math Camp again, summer 2010. It will be the last year of the Extended Math Camp—a three-year Burroughs Wellcome Grant. Send your children to Math Camp next year!

For more information about Math Camp, contact Dr. Anita Kitchens 828-262-2368.

For more information about the Extended Math Camp, contact Dr. Doug Jones at 828-262-2862.

Please also check out the Mathematical Sciences website at http://www.mathsci.appstate.edu.
Community Service + Dancing Skills = A Winning Year for Math Club

By Vicky Klima, sponsor

HOMECOMING
This past year began with a flurry of homecoming preparation that definitely paid off as we won first place for our homecoming banner and for our lip-sync routine. We also placed second for our float and kazoo band. With both wins, we became the Homecoming Champions for the second year!

FALL
In addition to homecoming, during the fall semester we had a few themed roller-skating parties. We also cleaned a street the club has adopted. 

SPRING
Spring Semester has been equally busy. We took a group trip to Asheville to attend the Parson’s Lecture, which was on visualizing the fourth dimension. We spent a Saturday at the Watauga Humane Society walking puppies.

The club also helped with the State High School Math Contest hosted by the Math Dept. We continued our street cleaning.

We went to Grandfather Mountain for the April’s Dollar Days.

UPCOMING
We’re excited to start preparations for a new year and hope that you will join us on Saturday, Oct 10 as we co-host a homecoming cookout for our alumni. We will be sending more information about the cookout once game time has been announced.

ASU Math students earn a number of honors and participate actively in research in their fields. A few of this year’s accomplishments:

Karen Perry presented at the NCCTM Western Region Conference with colleague Amy Worley, “I Wish They Would Have Told Me . . .”

Terry Austin “Modeling the Prevalence of Heartworm Disease In the Domestic Canines of Watauga County”, a talk given at The Institute for Mathematical Biology Education and Research Conference, Nov 2008.


Abigail Bishop, Stewart McClure, Jason Pearson & Jason Wilkes - all attended REUs

Ben Madison and Matt Mcmahon - had competitive internships at NIST and Oak Ridge National Labs

Terry Austin, Donna Kamarei, Tomas McIntee, Brad Wandler & Jason Wilkes - have all also been accepted into PhD programs.

We are also pleased to announce the 2009 Math Scholarship Recipients:

Susanna James - Buckland and Goodman scholarships

Emily Bryant - Goodman scholarship

Stephen Loftus - Taylor scholarship

Kimberly Eckard - Harris Math Ed scholarship

Rebecca Slier - CS and Taylor scholarships

Andrew Wilson - Patterson scholarship
Department Welcomes New Faculty Members Cook, Shirley

Bill Cook received his PhD from North Carolina State University in May 2005. His research interests include Lie Algebra Representation Theory and Vertex Operator Algebras. After graduation, Bill worked as a post doctoral fellow at Rutgers University for three years and came to Appalachian State University as a visiting professor in August 2008. He will join our tenure track faculty next year.

While new to the faculty at ASU, Bill is not new to the region or to our campus. His family moved to Banner Elk in 1993, and he took some classes in the ASU Mathematical Sciences Department while he was in high school. Bill’s wife Jessica is also from Banner Elk where they are currently living while house hunting in Boone. They have two children, Emily (age 3) and Timothy (age 1).

Kevin Shirley was born and raised in Hot Springs, AR. He received his Ph.D. in Mathematics from Vanderbilt University in 1991. He has been a mathematics faculty member at Middle Tennessee State University and Milligan College. In 2002, Kevin began working as an actuary for Transamerica. Kevin is currently an Associate in the Society of Actuaries and working toward becoming an SOA Fellow.

The past three years Kevin has been a life product development and pricing actuary. He currently develops and prices life insurance products for Transamerica to be sold at the worksite. In his spare time, Kevin enjoys hiking, camping, and kayaking with his wife, Susan and three sons, Nathan, Stephen and Joseph. He also enjoys coaching youth soccer and is currently the coach of Stephen’s U13 soccer team.

Lois Stewart Retires After 24 Years of Service to ASU

By Sandy Hicks

Over the past six years I have witnessed Lois’ dedication and service to Appalachian. She goes above and beyond the call of duty, putting in long hours to make certain that faculty and student needs are met. She is knowledgeable of all aspects of the University. She is thoughtful, considerate, and people oriented. She has the admiration, respect and appreciation of every member of the Math Department. Lois has been both a role model and mentor to me. In May of 2007, Lois spoke longingly of retiring. But instead, she and I switched jobs—I took the lead position, and she took the three-quarter position. We called it Lois’ ‘phased retirement.’ She has provided a risk-free learning environment. She has been more than willing to share her expertise with me. I have benefited from her honest criticism, insightful advice, and patient explanations. I will miss her tremendously and I wish her the very best in her retirement.

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of the ASU Department of Mathematical Sciences.

If you have news to share, please let us know.

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**Faculty News**

**Kitchens publishes math self-help book**

*Mathematics: Yes You Can! A Framework for understanding and overcoming Math Anxiety* is a 2009 publication. It is a self-help book for students who have a rough time with school math. It is also helpful for adults returning to college. If you are a teacher in high school, community college or university, this book is perfect for your students.

For more information contact Dr. Anita Kitchens  828-262-2368.

**Greenwald contributes to “mind-bending” DVD**

Sarah Greenwald’s interactive mathematics lecture has been distributed on approximately one million DVDs worldwide as a 25-minute extra for the 20th Century Fox Futurama movie “Bender’s Big Score.” The DVD won an Annie Award for Best Home Entertainment Production.

**Hirst, Palmer lead research groups as part of NSF-supported grant**

The Academy of Science, a National Science Foundation funded grant provides funding for incoming math and science students. The Academy’s goal is to help math and science students graduate by providing study halls and each student is involved in a research cluster. Dr. Jeff Hirst led a research cluster in propositional calculus and Dr. Katrina Palmer led a group working on an economic loss model.

**Mawhinney, McLemore Salinas lead Teacher Algebra Network, an MSP project**

Drs. Katie Mawhinney and Tracie McLemore Salinas are involved in the second year of a Mathematics - Science Partnership project, the Teacher Algebra Network. A collaboration of school districts in Alleghany, Ashe, and Avery counties with ASU, participating teachers explore how students' algebraic thinking develops through middle grades into high school. The project provides professional development to mathematics teachers and facilitates communication among school districts on current issues in mathematics education. More than anything though, the Teacher Algebra Network is establishing a foundation of schools in the region upon which additional collaborations can be built.