



## Director's Matters

By H. Frederick Dylla, Executive Director

### On your marks...

Winning isn't everything, but it is gratifying. The 2011 US Physics Team sprinted to the finish of their 10-day training camp at the University of Maryland yesterday. The 20 most accomplished high school physics students from around the United States, selected after a rigorous competition, came to the DC area to do what they do best—physics. You might think that this cast of talent was all seniors, bound for Ivy League schools in the fall. That's true to some degree. Most of the seniors (less than half of the team) plan to attend Harvard, Princeton, MIT, or Caltech come August. Yet the other team members still have some years left in high school, and four of the "best and brightest" just completed their sophomore year. (No doubt they'll earn a spot on future years' teams.)



Mentors—masters in their field of teaching physics to high school students—travelled with the team to help coach them, alongside members of the University of Maryland physics department. The tutelage involved hands-on laboratory experiments, theory, and computation. NASA scientists Jonathan Gardner (Chief, Observational Cosmology Laboratory) and Neil Gehrels (Chief, Astroparticle Physics Laboratory) also spoke with team members about their work. When the mentors were

not instructing, they were preparing the culminating reward for the students' efforts: another exam. These test results will identify the five top-scoring students who will constitute the travelling team—the US delegation to the International Physics Olympiad, which will be held this year in Bangkok, Thailand. Check the [AAPT website](#) today for the big announcement.

AAPT works many months on this program to make the competition as widely available as possible throughout US high schools. AIP and its Member Societies financially support the effort. Each year the travelling team is able to show the world how much talent is being generated by US schools; the team

members often come home with accolades. The team's record of success from 1986 to 2010 includes 41 gold medals, 28 silver medals, 29 bronze medals, and 11 honorable mentions. Keep up with what the students are doing and read about their experiences through the [team blog](#).



Olympiad scientists model the origins of the solar system by tossing balls onto spandex (tossing "planetesimals" onto the "fabric of the cosmos," some might say). SPS Director Gary White (back center) leads the demonstration. Photo by Matthew Payne, AAPT.



AIP government relations staff assisted AAPT in arranging a visit to Capitol Hill. Students met 12 congressional representatives, including physicist Rush Holt (D-NJ), shown at left. They also went to the White House Conference Center for a personal meeting with Carl Wieman, Nobel Laureate and Associate Director for Science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Congratulations to the students, their mentors, and the UMD physics department staff, and to AAPT for developing excellence in physics.

The SPS Summer Interns start today. I will formally introduce them in next week's issue. In the meantime, please join me in welcoming them for a summer of high activity.

## PHYSICS RESOURCES CENTER MATTERS

### Of egg drops and accelerometers: Physics Day @ Six Flags America

On Friday, May 13, more than 6,000 middle and high school students descended on Six Flags America in Bowie, MD, for a day of thrilling rides—and volunteers from the ACP and the SPS were there to greet them! Each year, schools from the Washington, DC, metro area are invited to bring their physics, science, and math students to Six Flags on a Friday when the park is not open to regular visitors. The students get a chance to experience centripetal force, velocity, and gravity on a scale they can't replicate in the lab. In conjunction with AIP, APS, and AAPT, regional SPS members engaged students with an egg drop competition, science demos, and accelerometers enclosed in vests that students could take on the rides. Check out the [AAPT's Physics Day photo gallery](#)

[on Flickr](#), and visit [www.learner.org/interactives/parkphysics](http://www.learner.org/interactives/parkphysics) to learn more about amusement park physics.



Photos from left to right:

Regional SPS members and volunteers from AIP, APS, and AAPT prepare to greet students for Physics Day at Six Flags America. Photo by Tracy Schwab, AIP.

AAPT's Melissa Lapps helps students with their entry in an egg drop competition during Physics Day at Six Flags America. Photo by Matthew Payne, AAPT.

Thomas Olsen (left), Assistant Director of SPS—joined by SPS member David Jacome (center in green shirt), Saint Peter's College—helps outfit students with accelerometers for the "Superman, Ride of Steel" roller coaster during Physics Day at Six Flags America. Photo by Matthew Payne, AAPT.

## AROUND AIP

### What keeps Member Society treasurers up at night?

On May 18, AIP and Member Society treasurers convened in College Park at the headquarters of AAPM, this year's host society for the annual Society Treasurers' Meeting. Representatives shared their biggest concerns about protecting the financial well-being of their respective organizations and exchanged information on several topics of mutual interest. This forum is an opportunity to exchange ideas and concerns.



Standing, from the left: Monty Shaw (SOR), David Feit (ASA), Michael Brosnan (AAPT), Michael Stephens (APS), Kelly Clark (AAS), Richard Baccante (AIP), Gigi Swartz (AIP), Cecilia Hunter (AAPM), Joe Serene (APS), and Angela Keyser (AAPM). Inset is Peter Stockman (AAS).

## WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS WEEK

Tuesday, May 31

- SPS Intern Orientation (College Park, MD)

Thursday – Sunday, June 2 – 5

- AIP Executive Committee Retreat (Lambertville, NJ)

### **Member Society Events**

May 28 – June 2

- ACA Annual Meeting (New Orleans, LA)

We invite your feedback to this newsletter via email to [aipmatters@aip.org](mailto:aipmatters@aip.org).

For past issues of this newsletter, visit the [AIP Matters archives](#).