

CHAIR'S CORNER

This has been another challenging year for Northern Illinois University and the Department of Mathematical Sciences. Like all public institutions of higher education in Illinois and around the nation, we have been faced with diminishing resources while at the same time enrollments have been increasing. However, we have experienced many happy events as well.

The Department of Mathematical Sciences has a long and proud tradition of excellent teaching. During the past year two members of our mathematics education faculty have received significant recognition for their teaching. Professor Alan Zollman has received one of Northern's three Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Awards for 2005. This is the university's oldest teaching award and the recipients of this award are nominated by their students. Professor Zollman is the 11th member of our department to receive this prestigious award. And we are pleased to report that this year Northern has established a new award, the Outstanding Teaching Award, which recognizes the contributions of non – tenure track educators to the teaching mission of the university. We are very pleased that Cindy Stecher was chosen to be one of the first recipients of this award, thus acknowledging what her students and colleagues have known for many years.

Congratulations to both Alan and Cindy!



For the third year the department hosted a reception and award ceremony on a Sunday afternoon in late April in the Skyroom of Holmes Student Center. This was a festive occasion for the award recipients, their family and friends, and members of the faculty. We celebrated the accomplishments of many hard working students while enjoying refreshments and a beautiful view of campus on a sunny, spring day. Attendance was so large that the Skyroom was filled to capacity. Again this year the May commencement ceremonies were held in the spacious new Convocation Center.

There was a notable retirement this year. Professor Rodney Angotti retired after 38 years at Northern. Professor Angotti was the assistant chair of the mathematics department from 1967–1971. From 1971–1983 he was the assistant dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and from 1983 until his retirement he served as chair of the computer science department. Even while serving in the college office and as chair of computer science, Professor Angotti often taught the geometry course in our department taken primarily by prospective teachers.

There has been great sadness this year as well. Dennis Filliman passed away suddenly on September 20, 2004. He was an adjunct faculty member of our department for 11 years. He taught mathematics education courses and supervised student teachers for our department. He was past president of the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Metropolitan Mathematics Club. He received the ICTM's Distinguished Life Member Award. His wife, Paula, also taught mathematics education courses for us.

A short time later our department lost one of its emeritus faculty members. Professor Dale Jungst passed away after a long illness on October 16, 2004. Professor Jungst joined the faculty at Northern in 1959. He was a strong advocate of a hands–on approach to teaching mathematics, and among his many

accomplishments is the establishment of the Mathematics Education Laboratory at NIU. Professor Jungst was held in high esteem throughout the state. He received the Distinguished Life Member Award and the Max Beberman Award from the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Frederick L. Kitterle, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, died May 3, 2005 after a six-month battle with cancer. Dean Kitterle was dean of our college since 1995. He cared passionately about students and was a champion of the undergraduate experience. He firmly supported the close bond between the research and teaching missions of the university, and he worked to incorporate research into the undergraduate experience. He launched the Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program, which has been of great benefit to many students in our department. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and our department in particular, will miss his dynamic and enthusiastic leadership.

Our department is very fortunate that three new endowed scholarships came on-line this year. The Clarence Ethel Hardgrove Mathematics Scholarship Fund was established through a large donation from Professor Emerita Hardgrove and will provide support for undergraduate mathematics majors during their first two years at Northern.

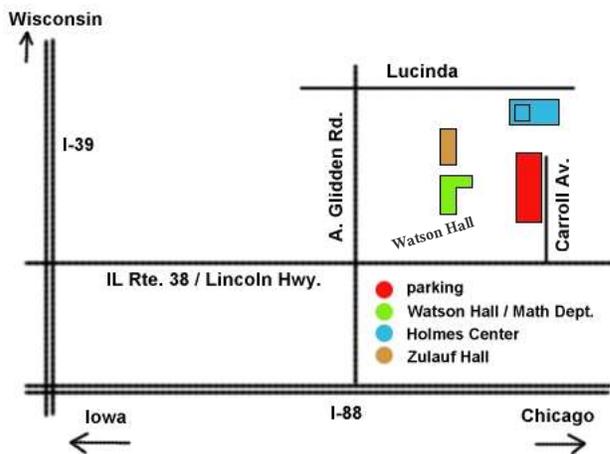
The Joseph C. and Marion E. Huber Memorial Scholarship was established by Lorene K. Steffes to honor the memory of her parents. Ms. Steffes grew up in rural Illinois and is an alumna of our department and a member of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Advisory Board.

The Dale G. Jungst Memorial Scholarship in Mathematics Education was established through the generosity of his family, and with contributions from his friends, colleagues and former students it has already reached endowment status in a few short months.

This was the eighth year in which the *Huskie Telefund* has solicited donations on behalf of the department from our alumni. We greatly appreciate your generous contributions to our scholarship funds. Each year the number of contributing alumni and the amount of their contributions have grown. We especially appreciate your support during the current times of very tight budgets. Your comments to the student callers about our department, its faculty, and its programs are passed along to us, and we find these to be encouraging and helpful. If you were not able to donate this year, we hope you will consider helping in the future. We also greatly appreciate your loyal support of our endowed scholarship funds, and your direct contributions to the department.

This is our 14th annual Alumni Newsletter. They have all been edited by Professor Linda Sons, and I wish to thank her for producing another superb issue. Let us hear from you. **If you are in DeKalb, please stop by Watson Hall 320 and say hello.**

William Blair
July 1, 2005



Graduate Student Fees Support Speakers

In 2004–2005 graduate students (and faculty) in the Department of Mathematical Sciences benefitted from the graduate student fees collected by having three speakers each present a colloquium and seminar. Our graduate student Kris Campbell serves on the Graduate Council committee which selected the award recipients during the year, while other students of our graduate program approved at the departmental level the fund requests.

Our speakers were:

- 1) In October Professor John Rossi from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, who gave the seminar "The $\cos(\pi \rho)$ theorem for meromorphic functions," and the colloquium "Equilibrium points of logarithmic potentials."
- 2) In April Professor Thomas Ivey from the College of Charleston, who gave the seminar "Special Solutions of the Vertex Filament Flow and Related Evolution Equations," and the colloquium "Which One of These Things Is Like the Other? Moving Frames and the Matching Problem."
- 3) In June Professor Eric Knuth from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, who gave the seminar "Understanding and Cultivating the Development of Students' Algebraic Reasoning," and the colloquium "Understanding and Cultivating the Development of Students' Competencies in Justifying and Proving."

FACULTY COMINGS

AND GOINGS

On sabbatical leave in the past year were Professors Harvey Blau and Hui Hu. Professor Blau was on leave for the full year, while Professor Hu took only spring 2005.

Also on leave for 2004–2005 was Professor Harald Ellers. Professor Biswa Datta took the fall 2004 for a leave, while in the spring Professors Fred Bloom and Y.C. Kwong were away.



New to the faculty for 2004–2005 were Assistant Professor David Hyeon and Instructor Peter Grabow.

DUSABLE IS HOT AGAIN!



In an effort to again save several hundred thousand dollars, the

university has once again shut down DuSable Hall for the summer. No classes are set there, and no air-conditioning is turned on there either... Of course, there is also no air-conditioning on Fridays in the entire Watson/DuSable/Reavis complex, so faculty who want to work in their offices there on Fridays or over the weekend need to adjust to a mighty warm atmosphere.

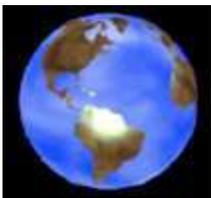
Where have all those Ph.D.s gone???

An interesting tidbit we gleaned from the files shows that of the 50 graduates of our Ph.D. program since the first graduate in 1989, 42 obtained their first position at a college in the United States or abroad.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LINDA FIGGINS!

In April the White House announced that Linda Figgins of Elgin, Illinois, had been awarded the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The award consists of \$10,000 and a banquet in her honor at the White House.

Linda taught MATH 402 (the methods course for elementary education majors) for us (and for the College of Education) off campus several times.



SMALL WORLD...
Can you figure this
one out???

Brian Vietch, our recipient of this year's *Slagell Scholarship*, was unable to attend our award ceremony on time, because he was at another awards ceremony downstairs at the Holmes Student Center. He came upstairs when he could, to find his aunt's sister in the Skyroom—unexpectedly, since he himself only found out about the reception a couple of days earlier, and had invited no one. It turns out that his aunt's sister was there because she is the daughter-in-law of Dale Jungst, and so she was on hand to mark the first awarding of the Jungst scholarship.

It seems altogether fitting that our "alumni family" should in fact really be family! Just goes to show that you can never tell what kind of impact your work will have—how could Adam Slagell have known, for example, that he would be helping out his teachers' colleague's son's wife's sister's husband's brother's/sister's son?

Great anecdote!

We WOWED them at ISMAA 2005

Twelve undergraduate students and eight graduate students went to the April Illinois Section of the Mathematical Association of America annual meeting at Knox College. The NIU group was by far the largest student contingent there and had three teams in the Undergraduate Mathematics Contest. Three students, William Ash, Milica Kozomara, and Brian Vietch, gave a talk on their solution to a problem in the Mathematical Modeling Contest held in February. The students enjoyed talks at the ISMAA such as: How Should We View an Art Gallery? (by Jean Bee Chan of Sonoma State University), Formulas for Primes (by Underwood Dudley of Florida State University), The Fibonacci Numbers—Exposed (by Dan Kalman of American University), and Explorations in the Mathematics of Other Cultures (by Phil Straffin of Beloit College). Next spring's meeting is set to be held at North Central College, so we should be able to WOW them again!

OUR NEWEST ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR & PROFESSOR

Congratulations to Ellen Hines upon her promotion to the rank of associate professor and the attainment of tenure. Professor Hines' specialty is in mathematics education. Congratulations also to Sanjib Basu of the Division of Statistics on his promotion from associate professor to professor.



Department gets TWO top awards...



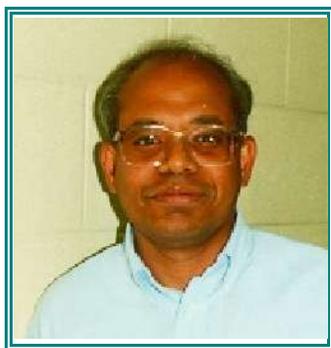
Two of our student teachers in the 2004–2005 academic year were recognized by the Exemplary Student Teacher Award. Warm congratulations to Jordan Preston and Theresa Tinsley! We are proud of you.

Math is part of P-20 grant to NIU

NIU is the recipient of a P-20 grant which begins this summer. Involved in the planning grant for a mathematics and sciences initiative in the East Aurora school district are Cindy Stecher and Alan Zollman from the Department of Mathematical Sciences. The board responsible for the grant includes NIU staff from the Colleges of Education, Engineering and Engineering Technology, and Liberal Arts and Sciences. The aim of the grant is to foster supportive connections between NIU and the public schools.

STATISTICS DIVISION GETS NEW LEADER

The new director of the Statistics Division is Professor Rama T. Lingham. Outgoing director is Professor Sudhir Gupta; thanks to Professor Gupta for his time at the top!



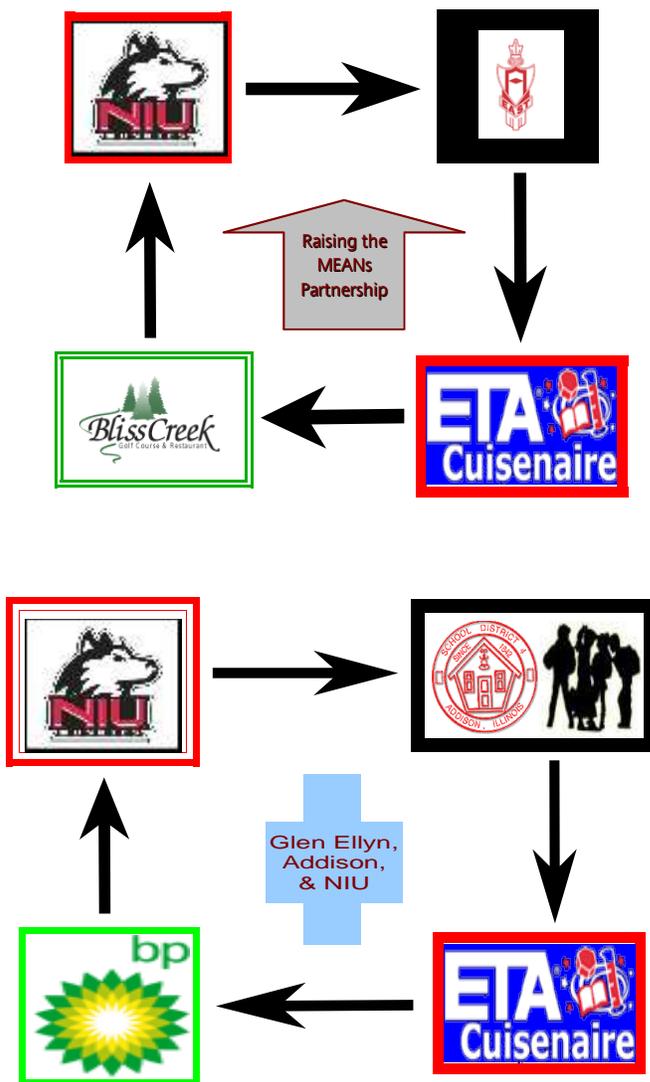
TWO

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

The Department of Education through the Illinois State Board of Education has awarded NIU two grants for partnerships in teacher development. Professor Alan Zollman is the project director for both the MEANS partnership and the MSTD partnership.

Both programs involve teachers in a two-week summer institute and follow-up work throughout the coming school year.

The MEANS partnership involves East Aurora teachers in the middle grades and is a partnership composed of NIU, Bliss Creek Golf Course, East Aurora school district, and ETA/Cuisenaire. The MSTD partnership involves teachers at the three through five grade levels who are mostly from Glen Ellyn and Addison; it is a partnership composed of NIU, the school districts of Glen Ellyn and Addison, BP in Warrenville, and ETA/Cuisenaire.



ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS

57th Annual Meeting

"Math: The Possibilities are Infinite"

October 13–15, 2005

Renaissance Springfield Hotel, Springfield, Illinois

Friends and alumni of NIU are invited to join us for a pre-banquet gathering on Friday, October 14 (approximately 4–6 p.m.). Look for the announcement of the gathering location on the ICTM message board at the conference!

ICTM Regional High School Mathematics Contest

Eleven high schools in Northern Illinois brought some 300 secondary school students along with their teachers and coaches to campus on February 26, 2005. The students participated in 11 mathematics events, some of which were individual events, while others were team competitions. The participating schools were: Antioch, Batavia, Elk Grove, Geneva, Lake Forest, Rolling Meadows, Round Lake, Conant, Lake Park, Lake Zurich, and Schaumburg. The contest committee consisted of Cindy Stecher, Nancy Leitheit, Dr. Eric Behr, Professor Gleb Sirotkin, and Professor Peter Waterman (Chair). Many others helped make the event a most successful venture.



Congratulations to our newest doctoral recipient! Lingju Kong is completing his Ph.D. in August 2005 having successfully defended his dissertation on March 25, 2005.

Lingju's dissertation "Non-linear Boundary Value Problems of Ordinary Differential Equations" was written under the direction of Professor Qingkai Kong. Professor Johnny Henderson of Baylor University served as external examiner.

Lingju has a faculty appointment at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga starting in the fall.



20th annual NIU MATH CONTEST

The annual contest had a unique experience this year in that the first and second place winners duplicated their positions from the last **TWO** years. Winners again were Matthew Drury from Deer Park, Illinois, and Michael Konrad from Lisle, Illinois. The third place award was a tie between Corey Noone and Andrew Wang.

As in previous years, the contest exam was open to all full-time undergraduates at NIU and was structured so that lower division students had as good a chance to win as upper division students. Supervising the exam this year were Professors Y. P. Hong and Gleb Sirotkin.

MATH CLUB

Officers for this year's club were Kenneth Beynon (president), David Kettlestrings (vice president), Katie Varland (secretary), and Anna Zabelka (treasurer). Faculty advisers were Professors Douglas Bowman and Daniel Grubb.

The club once again had a book sale as a fundraiser. The money was used to provide support for attending the ISMAA meeting at Knox College, Galesburg.

Besides some of the usual programming, the group had late afternoon/early evening "hang out" time in the math assistance center in DuSable Hall.

THE 2004 PUTNAM CONTEST

Ken Beynon, Tina Hauch, and David Kettlestrings represented NIU in the December national Putnam Contest sponsored annually by the Mathematical Association of America. Here's one of the problems they faced:

Show that if m and n are positive integers, then

$$\frac{(m+n)!}{(m+n)^{m+n}} < \frac{m!}{m^m} \cdot \frac{n!}{n^n}.$$

Try to show it!

2005 Mathematical Contest in Modelling

From Thursday, Feb. 3, 2005, until Monday, Feb. 7, 2005, some 664 teams of undergraduate students from across the globe participated in the CoMap modeling contest. NIU's Department of Mathematical Sciences was represented by two teams among the 249 participating teams from the United States. Both teams earned "honorable mention" recognition for their solutions to their chosen problem. Teams have two problems from which to choose, and both teams picked the same problem. One team had members Chengyang Chia and Andrew Wang. The second team had members William Ash, Milica Kata Kozomara, and Brian E. Veitch. (The second team also presented their solution to the problem at the ISMAA meeting in April.) Here's the problem on tollbooths which both teams solved.

Heavily traveled toll roads such as Interstate 95 and so forth, are multi-lane divided highways that are interrupted at intervals by toll plazas. Because collecting tolls is usually unpopular, it is desirable to minimize motorist annoyance by limiting the amount of traffic disruption caused by the toll plazas. Commonly, a much larger number of tollbooths is provided than the number of travel lanes entering the toll plaza. Upon entering the toll plaza, the flow of vehicles fans out to the larger number of tollbooths, and when leaving the toll plaza, the flow of vehicles is required to squeeze back down to a number of travel lanes equal to the number of travel lanes before the toll plaza. Consequently, when traffic is heavy, congestion increases upon departure from the toll plaza. When traffic is very heavy, congestion also builds at the entry to the toll plaza because of the time required for each vehicle to pay the toll.

Make a model to help you determine the optimal number of tollbooths to deploy in a barrier-toll plaza. Explicitly consider the scenario where there is exactly one tollbooth per incoming travel lane. Under what conditions is this more or less effective than the current practice? Note that the definition of "optimal" is up to you to determine.

ABEL PRIZE

The mathematician's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, the Abel Prize was announced by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters to go to Professor Peter D. Lax of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences at New York University. Professor Lax was awarded the 2005 prize for "his groundbreaking contributions to the theory and application of partial differential equations and to the computation of their solutions."

Professor Lax is credited with clarifying shock wave theory by solving the Riemann problem and by developing some practical numerical methods for calculating flows associated with waves. He also worked with Ralph Phillips to develop the Lax–Phillip semi-group leading to further understanding of scattering theory. And he is credited with providing great insights into the KdV equation by creating Lax pairs—the KdV equation is the model used by Korteweg and deVries in 1895 to study solitons, solitary waves used for high-speed communication in optical fibers.

Professor Lax came to the United States with his family when he was 15 (in 1941 just prior to the outbreak of World War II). He earned his Ph.D. at NYU in 1949 and has been on the faculty there ever since, but spent 10 summers consulting at Los Alamos.



HRH the Crown Prince Regent presented the Abel Prize 2005 to Peter D. Lax

Watch your cards and letters for stamps!



In May the U.S. Postal Service issued a set of four stamps celebrating more than a century of science. The four scientists pictured are thermodynamicist Josiah Willard Gibbs, geneticist Barbara McClintock, mathematician John Von Neumann, and physicist Richard P. Feynman. Mathematicians will claim Gibbs as one of their own for his creation of the modern form of vector calculus and for his work on statistical mechanics; the opening night lecture at the annual January meeting of the American Mathematical Society is called the "Gibbs lecture" in his honor. Gibbs, who dates from 1839 to 1903, went to Yale where he is credited with earning the first doctorate in engineering to be conferred in the United States, and where he taught for the rest of his life.

John von Neumann, who lived from 1903 until 1957, received the Enrico Fermi Award in 1956 for his design of a computer based on the stored-program concept which was completed in 1952 and essentially became a model for all modern computers. He developed the mathematical foundations for quantum mechanics, and together with Oskar Morgenstern produced fundamental work on the theory of games. He was together with Albert Einstein and other scientists at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ, in the 1930s, and served as a consultant on the U.S. project to build an atomic bomb at Los Alamos, NM, in the early 1940s.

AIC this Summer

The Applications Involvement Component for our Ph.D. program usually has a couple students doing their fieldwork experience in the summer. But in the summer of 2005 the number is HUGE! Here's a list of the students and their connection for summer work.

Devrim Bilgili at the Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory of the Van Andel Institute at Grand Rapids, Michigan; Kristen Campbell at the Neurology Department of the University of Chicago Hospital; Joshua Eggenberger with Collaborative Investigators for Applied Nanotechnology in Medicine which jointly operates at the Chemical Engineering Division of Argonne National Laboratory and the University of Chicago Hospital; Paul Gunsul at the Meteorology division of the Department of Geography at NIU; Cathy Poliak at Decision Support Services (a market research firm) in Naperville; Vadim Sokolov at Wolfram Research, Inc. at Champaign; Sourav Santra at the Center for Health Statistics located at the University of Illinois at Chicago; and Jonathan Szaukellis with the Decision and Information Sciences Division of the Center for Complex Adaptive Agent Systems Simulation at Argonne National Laboratory. Also doing AIC related work this summer is Mihai Racovitan with the Decision and Information Sciences Division of the Center for Complex Adaptive Agent Systems Simulation at Argonne National Laboratory.

It's been a busy spring and summer for Professor Hamid Bellout who is responsible for all the student placements.

Twin Primes Conjecture a Theorem Soon?

The twin prime conjecture says that there are infinitely many twin-prime pairs. That is, there are infinitely many prime numbers n for which both n and $n + 2$ are prime numbers (like 3 and 5, or 11 and 13).

One way to look at the problem is to study the gaps between successive primes. A variation of the more general question is to compare the gaps between pairs of successive primes with the average size of $P(n + 1) - P(n)$ where $P(n)$ denotes the n^{th} positive prime. According to the prime number theorem the average size is asymptotically equal to $\log P(n)$. Thus, the question becomes one of computing the limit infimum as n goes to infinity of the ratio of $P(n + 1) - P(n)$ to $\log P(n)$.

Early in 2003 Dan Goldston of San Jose State University and Chem Yalcin Yildirim of Bogazici University, Istanbul, released a proof showing that the limit infimum is zero, but a fatal flaw was found in the proof. Now in December 2004 the pair working with Janos Pintz of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences presented a new proof which is believed to be correct! The techniques are said to be amazingly elementary and lead to the hope that the twin prime conjecture may indeed become a theorem soon...

NEWS ACCORDING TO YOU

Each year we invite you to share news and comments. Here are some items we have gleaned this year!

After completing their degree and teacher certification requirements, NIU graduates have accepted teaching positions for the academic year 2005–2006. Here's the list we know:

Eddy Shaheen—Still Middle School in Naperville

Jim Bellon—Grant High School in Fox Lake

Candice Benesch—Hononegah High School in Rockton

Mike Miller—McHenry West High School

Jonathan Schaefer—Lyons Township High School in LaGrange

Rob Showalter—Willowbrook High School in Villa Park

Rebecca Stefanelli—Freeport High School

Theresa Tinsley—Jane Adams Middle School in Bolingbrook

Kendra Updegraff—J. W. Eater Junior High School in Rantoul

Erin Engnell—Romeoville High School

Ken Moore—Hononegah High School in Rockton

Dan Peddy—Dundee—Crown High School in Carpentersville

Jordan Preston—Elgin High School

Becky Sturdy—Lyons Township High School in LaGrange



Wedding bells in July 2005 rang for...

Randy Hammond ('01) and Jennifer Cravens ('03)

Katharine Nicholls ('96) and Marc Dams

Jennifer Lynn Nelson ('00 and '02) reported marriage to Don Smith ('99) in April 2004.

Jennifer is an analyst at Information Resources Inc. in Chicago, while Don is a project director at the University of Illinois at Chicago. They reside in Lockport.



MORE NEWS

Kevin Helmick ('90) has completed his 10th year on the mathematics faculty at Benet Academy, Lisle, IL. Kevin teaches AP Calculus and is one of the five math team coaches for Benet, the 3AA ICTM State Champion this year! Congratulations!!! Kevin resides in Willowbrook.

Kevin Sommerfield (M.S. '98) reports working as a full-time mathematics instructor at Sauk Valley Community College. Previously he served as an adjunct instructor at Benedictine University and Waubensee Community College.

Kathleen Almy (M.S. '00) has taught full-time at Rock Valley College since 2001 and recently received tenure. She also had her second child, William, in April 2004.

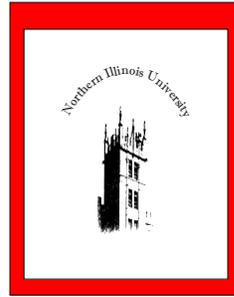
Susan Talarico (Ph.D. '89) stopped in DeKalb for a visit bringing along daughters Anya and Lenora. Susan is on the mathematics faculty at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.

We were sorry to hear that Ron Biggers died on April 23, 2005, after a stroke. Ron earned a master's degree at NIU in 1972 and was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. in pure mathematics from the University of California at Irvine. He taught at a number of institutions before settling at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, in 1989.

Alumni of 25 Years

Congratulations on the 25th anniversary of the class of 1980. Here is a listing of the Class of 1980 and their current hometowns. If you can update some of the information, we would appreciate your help.

Ms. Lauren Lee Anderko, St. Charles, IL
 Mr. Donal C. Bassler, Crystal Lake, IL
 Ms. Terry Lee Barr, Elk Grove Village, IL
 Mr. Robert James Bodlak, San Francisco, CA
 Mr. Dennis W. Brown, Burr Ridge, IL
 Mr. Scott Alan Coffland, Geneva, IL
 Mrs. Lynne M. Feldman, Lisle, IL
 Mr. Dean Albert Follmann, Bethesda, MD
 Mr. Lawrence John Garton, Rockford, IL
 Mrs. Diane Alane Gerke, Schaumburg, IL
 Ms. Cynthia Green, Painted Post, NY
 Mr. Michael Patrick Hand, Naperville, IL
 Mrs. Audrey M. Hutchcraft, Mundelein, IL
 Mr. Kenneth G. Kowalski, Northville, MI
 Mrs. Cheryl Kistner Link, Sycamore, IL
 Mrs. Kim M. McCasland, Spencer, NY
 Ms. Joan Mary Pardini, Collegeville, PA
 Ms. Denise Marie Moyse, Vernon Hills, IL
 Mrs. Peggy Jo Pflueger, Elgin, IL
 Mr. Thomas P. Prusinski, Elburn, IL
 Mr. John F. Rajca, Jr., Muncie, IN
 Mr. James W. Speaker, Richmond, IL
 Mrs. Marilyn Sullivan, Carrollton, TX
 Mrs. Diane L. Terlep, Crystal Lake, IL
 Mr. Alan Ray Vonachen, Minneapolis, MN
 Mrs. Sandra K. Veselka, Plainfield, IL
 Mrs. Susan M. Waterstraat, Oak Lawn, IL
 Mr. Paul L. Wescott, Rock Falls, IL
 Mr. Bruce David Zimmerman, Ellicott City, MD



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Web Page

Look for announcements regarding the latest activities in the department at the website



www.math.niu.edu

Also full of useful information is the page for the Statistics division at

www.math.niu.edu/StatDiv