

Math Club in a Box: Activity Treasures for Student Chapters

By Betty Mayfield and Kay Somers

Creating mathematical jack-o-lanterns, playing 'Mathematical Balderdash,' presenting an informational session on money matters for college students, and 'pie-ing' the college president: These are all ideas for Math Club activities presented by MAA Student Chapter advisors at a session sponsored by the Committee for Undergraduate Student Activities and Chapters (CUSAC) at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in January 2009. These ideas can now be found at a new web site that contains the first virtual *Math Club in a Box* activities.

Abby Todd of Greenville College shared her version of a game called **Mathematical Balderdash**, based on the board game of bluffing and inventing definitions. It is played just like traditional *Balderdash*, but with mathematical words (parity, involution, geoid), acronyms (ICHM, APM) and people (William Fogg Osgood, Scipione del Ferro). Her cards can easily be edited to include new cards and even new categories.

Roland Minton and his colleagues at Roanoke College heartily recommend celebrating **Pi Day** by pie-ing math professors — and maybe even the college president — for charity. Participants buy tickets for an opportunity to throw a cream pie in the face of a faculty member. 'One of the lessons learned,' Minton warns, 'is that whipped cream quickly starts to smell bad, so Cool Whip will be used next time.'

The Moravian College Mathematical Society developed an unusual outreach activity for all students at the college called **Money Talks**. According to Kevin Hartshorn of Moravian, 'The society officers wanted to offer a service that would have immediate and clear utility for the college student community, and offered something beyond tutoring for mathematics courses.' The result of their efforts was *Money Talks*, an evening program for undergraduates on financial matters with a direct impact on their lives. They decided to focus on credit reports, student loan terms, comparing loan offers, and the relative merits of CDs and savings accounts. Hartshorn's *Money Talks Box* contains a description of the program.

At Hood College, a popular weekly event is **Math Tea**. Kimber Tysdal and Ann Stewart told us that 'Math Tea is a weekly social gathering of students and faculty hosted by the math department. We meet on Thursday afternoons, have cookies and drinks, and do something mathematical. Sometimes we play games, solve puzzles, or have an



Pi Day at Roanoke College. (Photograph provided by Roland Minton.)

interactive presentation. Other times we celebrate momentous occasions in mathematics. We try to offer a variety of activities over the course of each semester. They use a lounge area outside of the faculty offices, and move to a classroom if they need to show a movie or have a formal presentation. The Hood *Math Tea Box* contains instructions on how to set up a tea and resources for different activities, including making mathematical valentines, learning to use slide rules, and celebrating Euler's birthday.

Emma Previato of Boston University likes to involve her MAA Student Chapter in a **Mathematics Symposium** held once or twice a year on the BU campus. Students from colleges and universities in the Boston area are invited to a day-long event involving a keynote speaker and panel presentations on a theme such as Math and Poetry, African-American Mathematics, or Soap Bubbles. Previato's goals include connecting math club members at her university with those at surrounding schools.

The inaugural collection of *Math Club in a Box* activities is available online at: <http://www.maa.org/mathclubbox>. This site is a great resource for student chapters and other math clubs. If you have an activity that you would like to share with others, please submit it! Be sure to include a description, relevant handouts or other resources, advice, and lessons learned. There is information about the submission process on the *Math Club in a Box* site.

Finally, for an opportunity to describe your activity in person or hear about others' activities, see page 39 for information on the special session on **My Most Successful Math Club Activity** at the January 2010 JMM. 🌐

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