

math news

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Oh, Those Fun MATH Professors

That's right, we members of the mathematics faculty do have our lighter sides. See if you can match each of us with one hobby we enjoy.

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| __Debbie Devlin | a) turkey hunting |
| __Gerry Wojnar | b) growing eggplant, etc. |
| __Frank Barnet | c) playing guitar |
| __Marc Michael | d) off-road four-wheeling |
| __Mark Hughes | e) listening to jazz music |
| __Kurt Lemmert | f) Shakespeare |
| __Nazie Tootoonchi | g) collecting antiquarian books |
| __Laxman Hegde | h) juggling |
| __Rob Forsythe | i) studying foreign languages |
| __Justin Dunmyre | j) exercising and walking |
| __Lance Revenaugh | k) solving jigsaw puzzles |

Is Your Phone a Cognitive Hindrance?

A recent study at McCombs School of Business at the University of Austin gave participants tests that required full cognitive concentration in order to score well. Before beginning, participants were randomly instructed to place their silenced smartphones either on the desk face down, in their pocket or personal bag, or in another room. The researchers found that participants with their phones in another room significantly outperformed those with their phones on the desk, and they also slightly outperformed those participants who had kept their phones in a pocket or bag.

The findings suggest that the mere presence of one's smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity and impairs cognitive functioning, even though people feel they're giving their full attention and focus to the task at hand. "We see a linear trend that suggests that as the smartphone becomes more noticeable, participants' available cognitive capacity decreases," one researcher said. "Your conscious mind isn't thinking about your smartphone, but that process -- the process of requiring yourself to not think about something -- uses up some of your limited cognitive resources. It's a brain drain."

Having a smartphone within sight or within easy reach reduces a person's ability to focus and perform tasks because part of their brain is actively working to not pick up or use the phone. "It's not that participants were distracted because they were getting notifications on their phones," said Ward. "The mere presence of their smartphone was enough to reduce their cognitive capacity."

KME Corner

Our local chapter of KME will meet Wednesday, April 24 at 5:30. The group will elect new officers and plan for the picnic scheduled for Reading Day (May 15).



KME Corners the Market

Our Maryland Delta chapter of Kappa Mu Epsilon, National Mathematics Honor Society, recently hosted the 42nd Biennial National Convention. Participating chapters came from Alabama, Kansas (3), Maryland (FSU), Missouri (2), Nebraska, New York (2), North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania (3), Texas (2), and West Virginia.

Along with enough business meetings and more than enough food and drink, the convention featured a variety of opportunities for mathematical learning. Available were twelve student presentations (with topics such as the Sierpinski Carpet, RSA Encryption, and Disc Golf) and five faculty workshops (such as Origami, Playing the Lottery, and Game Mechanics).

At the Friday evening banquet, many long-serving KME advisors were recognized, including former and current FSU faculty members Roberta White, John Jones, Edward White, Mark Hughes, Frank Barnet, and Marc Michael. The keynote address from Ron Wasserstein, Executive Director of the American Statistical Association, was entitled "Doctor, It Hurts When I p", in which pervasive use of the statistical tool known as the p-value was explained and then questioned, criticized, and, in fact, lampooned.

Another highlight was the Recent Graduate Panel Discussion. It allowed attendees to hear advice from recent FSU MATH grads Michelle Welch, Michael Shannon, Alissa Whiteley, and Daniel Steel.

Thanks are due to the local KME members, officers, advisors, and to other FSU student and faculty participants.

Summer Puzzler

Jimmie goes to the drug store and picks up several small items having a total cost of \$11.09. Looking in his wallet, Jimmie notes that he only has a \$50 bill, which he hands to the clerk. The clerk rings up the sale and as he goes about making change from his register to give Jimmie, he makes the observation, "Wow, this is very interesting".

What did the clerk find interesting?