

HOTLINE

The Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory is a United States Department of Energy Facility

Science on Saturday — Twenty Two Years and Going Strong

Operations on the Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor were in full swing and the Princeton Beta Experiment — after being converted from the Princeton Divertor Experiment — was creating kidney-shaped plasmas for one second. And for the first time, a group of high school students came to hear science lectures through a new program called Science on Saturday.

The year was 1984 and the place was PPPL. By 1989, the Science-on-Saturday program drew more than 100 high school students, parents, teachers, and area residents to hear talks that focused on fusion, lasers, space studies, fiber optics, and immunology. The program, initiated by former PPPL'ers Fred Dylla and Dennis Manos, was part of the Lab's educational outreach. As Dylla stated in a 1990 letter, "The intent of the program is to bring together students and scientists from Princeton University and New Jersey corporate research laboratories for lectures and discussions on recent developments in science and technology ... We hope this program will generate enthusiasm for science and, perhaps, motivate interested students toward pursuing science careers."

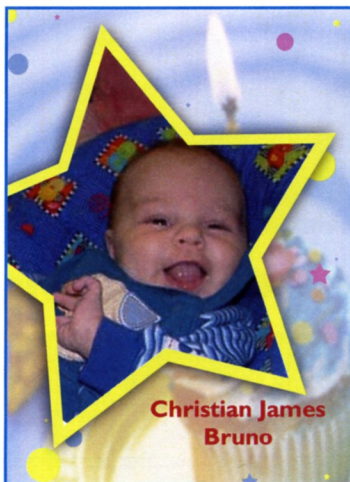
Fast forward to the present. The goal is still the same, and now the wintertime Saturday morning lecture series draws an average of more than 300 people of all ages to hear about topics that range from evolution to fusion and from forensics to microbiology. This year's series kicked off on January 14 and will conclude on March 11 (see link to listing of talks on the web at www.pppl.gov).

PPPL engineer Ronald Hatcher, co-organizer of the series, said, "Our challenge is to present a program that is timely in terms of research topics, varied, and accessible to a primarily lay audience. It is encouraging to see how well the lectures are received by the community, and that with each year the popularity of Science on Saturday continues to grow." Co-organizer James Morgan, involved with the program for the past eight years, said, "Almost every lecture draws an overflow capacity crowd. Our team begins working on getting speakers months before the series begins, always with an eye for a balance of interesting, current, and sometimes provocative science-based talks. It is so rewarding to see how much everyone who attends — students and seniors alike — get out of the lectures." ●



A collage with a sampling of photos from Science-on-Saturday talks, including PPPL physicist and Nobel Laureate Russell Hulse (far left, second row), PPPL's David Cylinder (far right, third row), and U.S. Congressman Rush Holt (middle, fourth row).

Hats Off to Employees with New Family Additions



**Christian James
Bruno**

PPPL's Patti Bruno and her husband, Jay, welcomed son Christian on September 8.



PPPL'er Russell Feder and his wife, Rebecca, welcomed son Brandon on October 21.



Alexander Daniel Tishinin was born on August 1 to Olga Tishinin, of PPPL, and her husband, Dennis.

Irene Raftopolous, daughter of PPPL's Steve Raftopolous and his wife, Pera, was born on November 11.

Jeffrey Pursell (at left), son of PPPL's Jackie (Robinson) Pursell and her husband, Torrey, was born on May 15.

**Congratulations
to all the new
parents at PPPL!**

PPPL Selects New Cafeteria Contractor



PPPL has selected Whitsons Food Service as our new dining and vending service contractor. The first day for Whitsons was January 9. Whitsons is a family-owned and operated company formed in 1979. The new Cafeteria Chef-Manager is Mark Clayton (above) Welcome to PPPL!

United Way Campaign Total

PPPL donated a total of \$32,245 to the United Way campaign for 2005, with 39 percent of the Laboratory participating in the annual campaign. On December 1, PPPL held a meeting for staff, which included information about United Way programs and a presentation by HomeFront, a local agency that receives funds from the United Way to help homeless families.

Anyone who contributed to the 2005 campaign was entered in the Grand Prize drawing on December 23 for a \$200 American Express gift card. Janardhan Manickam won the Grand Prize. Congratulations, Manny, and thanks to everyone who contributed to the United Way! ●

In an Emergency at PPPL — Dial 3333

The number to call for emergencies at PPPL is ext. 3333. Department and Division heads recently distributed red-and-white "Emergency — Dial 3333" stickers to their staffs. All employees are asked to place these stickers on their office telephones. If you did not receive a sticker, please contact Bill Bryan at ext. 3435. Thanks for your cooperation. ●

Hotline

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Spotlight

Name: Dana Mastrovito

Position: Software engineer in the Computer Division, with responsibility for NSTX control systems, database work, and developing and writing software for physicists to use in analyzing and visualizing experimental data. Mastrovito also works on special projects, such as writing software for PPPL's Miniature Integrated Nuclear Detection System (MINDS) project.

Quote: "I came to PPPL in 2000 after receiving a bachelor's degree in physics in 1998 from Ursinus College in Collegeville, Penn., and spending a year at Michigan State University taking graduate courses in nuclear physics."

My job at PPPL is a perfect fit in terms of my interests. I studied physics in college and have been around computers all my life, with a natural ability for operating them. But I didn't want to limit my work to computing, so combining physics with it works well. The job keeps me occupied and interested. I'm always learning and I get to manage my own work and projects, plus it's a good environment.

Mastrovito knew about fusion energy research through her studies, but initially was interested in doing theoretical high-energy physics work, spending a couple of summers at Los Alamos National Laboratory as an undergraduate student. When she returned to the area from Michigan, she began looking for job and saw an opening in her field at PPPL, which led her to the world of fusion research.

The computer engineer occasionally works in the NSTX Control Room when the machine is operating, but prefers working in her office where there are less interruptions and she can listen to music. "I have MP3s on all the time."

Other interests: Mastrovito, who grew up in Pennsylvania and continues to live there, loves dancing, reading books, riding her bicycle on the Delaware Canal towpath, and serving as a mentor to a high school student.

"I've been dancing since I was 4, and do ballet, jazz, tap, and modern dance. I formed my own dance company in college, named Escape Velocity, which did an annual performance at the college." The company still exists. And how did she select the name for the troupe? "Escape velocity is



the velocity a particle needs to reach to escape the earth's atmosphere," said Mastrovito, who continues to take classes at Bucks County Dance Center in Bensalem and at Koresh School of Dance in Philadelphia. Mastrovito also loves to read, especial English literature and the work of Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Because some of her activities are solitary, she decided to take up one that allowed her to interact with others. "I happened upon a volunteer program called Philadelphia Futures, which matches mentors with high school students. I just started being a mentor to a sophomore student over the summer, and I am committed to being her mentor until she goes to college," Mastrovito said. The program includes many activities, including a monthly book club for the students and mentors. "I really like being a mentor."

And the last of her loves is the cute guy with bushy white hair and mustache, and a genius intellect — the one who came up with the world's most famous equation, $E=mc^2$. "I'm an Albert Einstein maniac," Mastrovito freely offers. In her office is an Einstein doll, a poster of Einstein, and an enhanced black-and-white photo that places Mastrovito with the famous physicist. "I love Einstein. He was not just a scientist, but a great person. I am fascinated by him. Who isn't? After all, he was the man of the century." ●

Science Bowl Volunteers Needed February 25

About 40 volunteers are needed for the New Jersey Regional Competition of the National Science Bowl® to be held at PPPL on Saturday, February 25. If you are interested in serving as a judge, timekeeper, moderator, or scorekeeper, please send an e-mail to James Morgan at jmorgan@pppl.gov. No experience necessary! ●

It's Party Time!

Staff Come Together to Enjoy Food, Entertainment, Prizes, and Cammeraderie at PPPL Holiday Bash

Food, fun, gifts, decorations, music, conversation, and a skit added up to a winning combination on December 23, when the Laboratory hosted its annual holiday party for staff. A buffet luncheon was served in the LSB Lobby and Dining Room, followed by a presentation of *The Robfather* in the Auditorium and a raffle.

Clockwise from top right: (1) Carl Szathmary ladles some sauce while, from left, Mark Snyder, Shanda Hamilton, John Jenner, Marisol Rivas, and Jerome Siegel look on. (2) The "Not Ready for Tritium Players" perform in the skit, *The Robfather*. From left are Ray Camp, David Gates, Mike Kalish, and Andrew Post-Zwicker. (3) PPPL Director Rob Goldston presents David Gates, who portrays him in *The Robfather*, with a ham for being the biggest "ham" in the production. (4) Stefano Bernabei (standing) and Larry Jones enjoy the lunch in the Lobby. ●



- **PLASMA & FUSION 101 FOR STAFF** — Tuesday, February 7, Noon — New Science Ed Lab ●
- **TOUR FOR NON-TECHNICAL STAFF** — Wednesday, February 15, Noon — MBG Auditorium ●
- **Bring your lunch to both and learn more about fusion research.** ●
- **Register by sending an e-mail to pwieser@pppl.gov** ●