

Society of Physics Students' Zone 4 Meeting at Randolph College



SPS Zone 4 Meeting attendees at Randolph College

The Society of Physics Students Zone 4 Meeting was held at Randolph College on April 17-18, 2009. Thirty attendees from Maryland and Virginia converged on campus for eleven student presenters, four invited speakers, Physics Jeopardy, field trips to the observatory and the seismograph, good food, good company, and a run on the Human-Sized Hamster Wheel.

Early arrivals were encouraged to attend Randolph College's Symposium of Artists and Scholars that was happening in parallel, and we had a dinner in the dining hall. The event really got started on Friday night with hot wings and a good round of Physics Jeopardy. A few brave souls risked life and limb, and tried to run on the Hamster Wheel. The electricity-generating Hamster Wheel was designed and built by the Randolph College SPS as a building and educational project on alternative power sources. We then spent two hours at the observatory, with Dr. Tom Michalik, Randolph College, giving a tour of the clear night's sky.

Saturday morning started with bagels and coffee, and our first invited speaker, Dr. Rob Loughman of Hampton University. Then we heard from the five student oral presenters (Ralph Edezhath, UMD; Stephanie Ferrone, UMBC; Luke Johnson, UMD; Stephanie Sparks and Josh Hadal, NOVA), plus a last minute addition of Associate Zone Councilor Jonathan Hughes talking about SPS.

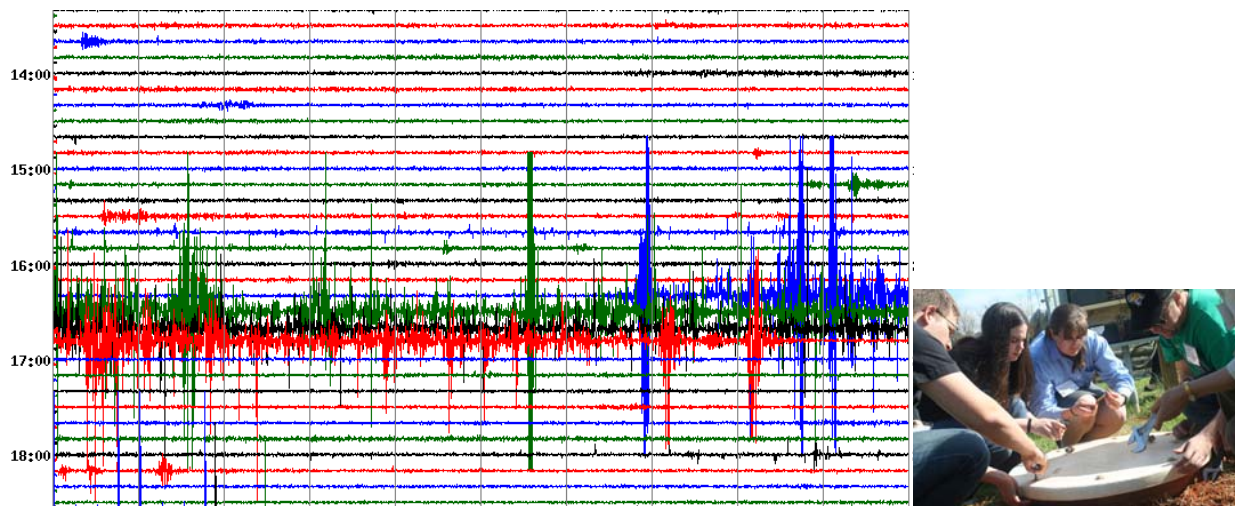
Before lunch, Dr. Tom Michalik gave a rousing presentation on time travel paradoxes, and then a Subway lunch was combined with the poster presentations (Wai Sze Cheung, RC; Doug Gonz, NOVA; Catherine Khoo and Nema Marjana, RC; Katrina Wiechmann, RC.) After lunch, we heard from invited speaker Dr. Chris Hughes from James Madison University.

The afternoon break was followed by a closing ceremony and awards: each student presenter received a certificate, and they group with the most person-miles (Towson brought six people) won special prizes from the SPS National Office.



Left: Randolph College SPS President Winncy Cheung describes her poster to Associate Zone Councilor Jonathan Hughes. Right: Winncy presents a certificate to Stephanie Sparks.

That did not conclude the meeting though, because then Dr. Tatiana Toteva gave a presentation on earthquakes, and took the group out to the Randolph College Seismograph (a short van ride away) to see how it works. When the group arrived, we did a little bit of jumping about around the seismograph, which can be seen on the seismograph trace in the picture below. Each line traces out seismic activity for ten minutes, so you can see that we arrived at about 4:26, and left at 4:58.



They came, they learned, they jumped. The seismograph is buried in a concrete bunker in the ground (right). Each line traces 10 minutes of vibrations in the ground around it. It is sensitive enough to measure large earthquakes anywhere in the world. This activity is our driving, walking, and jumping around the seismograph.

The meeting was then concluded and seems to have been a huge success. A schedule and abstract list is attached to this document or can be found at <http://physics.randolphcollege.edu/sps>.