

JPBM Math Awareness Month (MAM) Information:

<http://www.mathaware.org>

What is Math Awareness Month?

Mathematics Awareness Month, held in April each year, has recently been expanded from Mathematics Awareness Week. Its goal is to increase public understanding of and appreciation for mathematics. It began in 1986 with a proclamation by President Ronald Reagan, who said in part:

Despite the increasing importance of mathematics to the progress of our economy and society, enrollment in mathematics programs has been declining at all levels of the American educational system. Yet the application of mathematics is indispensable in such diverse fields as medicine, computer sciences, space exploration, the skilled trades, business, defense, and government. To help encourage the study and utilization of mathematics, it is appropriate that all Americans be reminded of the importance of this basic branch of science to our daily lives.

In the first year, Mathematics Awareness activities concentrated on national-level events, such as opening an exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution on mathematics and hosting a Capitol Hill reception. Since that time the focus has shifted to activities at the local, state, and regional levels. Over the years, the general purpose has consistently been to increase the visibility of mathematics as a field of study and to communicate the power and intrigue in mathematics to a larger audience.

Activities

Activities for Mathematics Awareness Month are generally organized by college and university departments, institutional public information offices, student groups, and related associations and interest groups. They have included a wide variety of workshops, competitions, exhibits, festivals, lectures, and symposia.

Each year, numerous proclamations for Mathematics Awareness Month are issued by elected officials, frequently in connection with special meetings and events arranged to observe the week. Media coverage has been consistent and positive.

The number and breadth of activities increases annually. For example, one college has now sponsored a high school mathematics day for seven years to encourage women to continue their studies in mathematics. Participation and support has increased each year. At one university in 1991, two departments - mathematics and architecture - cooperated to plan and produce an interactive traveling exhibit that provides hands-on experience for such topics as codes, tilings, chaos, geometry, graphs, and computer science. That exhibit was used as a model for a new mathematics exhibit at the Baltimore Museum of Science and Industry. High schools are increasingly involved in Mathematics Awareness Month activities. One school held daily contests including a scavenger hunt and trivia quizzes. Other high school classes have appreciated lectures given by mathematics faculty from nearby institutions.

Themes

Each year a national theme is selected and theme materials are developed and distributed, in recent years using electronic vehicles. Summaries and results about each year's activities are collected each spring. New approaches and materials are considered each year.

To focus efforts and encourage participation, AMS, MAA and SIAM leaders, department chairs, selected high school teachers, public policy representatives, and leaders of related associations are sent Mathematics Awareness Month packets each year. Materials include visuals - a color poster and/or postcard, resource lists of materials available to supplement local activities, and media announcements which can be tailored to specific MAM events.

The results of Mathematics Awareness Month, as measured by available information, indicate that this observance reaches thousands of faculty, teachers, students of all ages, parents, and other community members, public policy leaders, and business persons.