INTRODUCING AN AMS MEMBER

Chris Castillo

Associate Professor of Mathematics, Cecil College

Member Type: Introductory
AMS Member Since: 2009
Primary Field of Research: Permutation Polynomials over Finite Fields
Dissertation Advisor: Robert S. Coulter
Undergraduate Institution: Towson University
Favorite Non-Math Hobby: Rockhounding
Erdős Number: 4
PhD-Granting Institution: University of Delaware

Favorite Memory From an AMS Conference or Event:

Starting with my first Joint Meetings (New Orleans 2007) and even continuing throughout today, I remember seeing mathematicians giving talks and even walking through the halls whose names I recognized from textbooks and seminal papers – names like Michael Artin, Gilbert Strang, Benedict Gross. For me, it humanizes mathematics knowing that these are not just names but actual people in the flesh.

How would you describe to a non-math person that mathematics (or at least your area of specialty) is beautiful?

I am fascinated by structure. Certainly mathematics gives us a vocabulary to describe structure and relationships in the world around us, but the structure of mathematics is also inherently beautiful. Starting from just a few simple axioms we can build up massive structures that enable us to describe the way numbers behave (Fermat's Last Theorem) or why the object behaves (The Classification of Finite Simple Groups). As a more "accessible" example, the statement of Cauchy's Integral Formula is a surprising result (at first) for a student who has taken calculus, and amply demonstrates the richness of the field of complex numbers. With this last example, we find both structure and simplicity (of a sort) – in short, beauty.

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