

# Press Release

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## TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO DO WELL IN MATH

The last year of the old millennium was a good year for the Detroit Metro Chapter's MATHCOUNTS program. Among about 100 middle schools statewide, Parcels Middle School's four-student team, having placed first in our Detroit Metro Chapter competition, won the state team competition and had one mathlete in Washington DC to represent Michigan at the national competition.

On February 19, 2000 the Detroit Metro Chapter will again conduct its annual MATHCOUNTS chapter competition for seven and eight graders, **mathletes**, who on a chilly Saturday morning will arrive at the U of M Dearborn Campus with their math-coaches to test their skills during four hours of intense problem solving exercises. Like well-prepared athletes, their initial nervousness will quickly vanish as they work their way through round after round of problems only interrupted of brief doughnut and juice breaks. Soon their parents will start showing up as we approach the made-for-TV countdown round in which the better mathletes will face each other, two at a time, in head-to-head competition to solve problems like: "How many positive four digit even numbers can be written without using any of the digits 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4? - You have got 45 seconds!

The 1999-2000 competition will be the sixteenth time the Detroit Metro Chapter of **MSPE** sponsors a MATHCOUNTS competition for seven and eight graders from a number of **Detroit junior high and middle schools**. The good news is that the number of participating schools has been slowly but steadily increasing and, quite noticeably, so has the number of parents who show

up to watch their youngsters in a state of deep concentration. The not so good news is that there are still far too many schools which do not take advantage of this exceptional offer from **MSPE**.

MATHCOUNTS was conceived in 1982 with NSPE and CNA Insurance Companies as original sponsors as a nation-wide junior high/middle school program to motivate students to do well in math. **“To motivate students to do well in math”** is to make them confident and excited about math. So, how does one do that? First, **MATHCOUNTS is dressed up as a sports event**, including mathletes, team sport, practice problems arranged as warm-ups and workouts. Preparing a team for participation in the annual MATHCOUNTS event is like preparing for a sporting match: practice, practice and more practice; tension, team spirit and friendship, only this time it isn't physical - it's brains that are being developed. Furthermore, MATHCOUNTS goes to great lengths to make participation in the program as exciting and easy as possible, not only for the students, but also for the math coach, even if she or he is not a math teacher. But the fact remains, that the bulk of the effort, the real work, is in the weekly - or more likely twice-weekly - practice sessions and, for all their inherent rewards, these sessions remain an extracurricular activity. Is it worth it? Well, we have noticed that once a teacher has experienced MATHCOUNTS, he or she normally returns the following years.

An exciting new feature was added to the local MATHCOUNTS program last spring. **General Motors, EDS and 3M**, all longtime corporate supporters of the MATHCOUNTS program on the national level, will again this spring invite to a **MATHCOUNTS RECOGNITION DAY**. This event was conceived as an opportunity for leading industries to express their appreciation to the teachers/coaches and students who have chosen to distinguish themselves among their peers by participating in the MATHCOUNTS program. The event stresses participation over winning, and all participants in the local chapter competitions are personally invited to visit a corporate facility where scientists and engineers actively engage the mathletes in discussions of how math is used to develop the featured products and techniques. Judging from the responses of the teachers and mathletes, last year's event was an overwhelming success. Now, we just hope that the word is

getting around, that those who participate in MATHCOUNTS get to experience “some pretty cool stuff” while being taken serious by some pretty important people.

If you, as a member of MSPE, would like more information about our MATHCOUNTS program, or know of a school in your neighborhood that you would like to see actively participate in our program, please call this writer any time. Or even better, join us for an hour or so at about 11:00 AM on February 19, 2000 at the U of M Dearborn Campus. Just follow the signs. We will have a doughnut and a cup of coffee ready for you.

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