

VIMS celebrates pi with pie

By 3.1415926535897932384626433832

(March 15, 2013) Researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science like pi(e). They turn to pi, the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, each time they need to calculate the surface area of a phytoplankton cell, estimate the volume of a cavitation bubble, or evaluate the results of multiple random trials. They turn to pie when they have a hankering for some dessert and fun.

On March 14th (3.14—the first three digits of π), students, faculty, and staff at VIMS celebrated both the mathematical and gastronomical versions of pi(e) with a community-building and fund-raising event on the VIMS campus in Gloucester Point. The event of course began at 3:14 pm.

VIMS' local celebration of international Pi Day was hosted by the Graduate Student Association, the official administrative body of Master's and Ph.D. students in William & Mary's School of Marine Science at VIMS.

GSA members, led by Master's student Brendan Turley, marked the celebration by serving pieces of apple, cherry, pumpkin, and sweet-potato pie to gathered members of the VIMS community, who then watched as Turley and Chemical Hygiene Officer Paul Nichols were "pied" with several whipped-cream concoctions.

The pies were thrown by international students Tony Nalovic (a native of French Guiana) and Adela Roa-Varón (a native of Colombia), perhaps to recognize that mathematics is the only truly global language. To protect their undergarments from the after"math" of pi(e)ing, Turley was resplendent in a pair of blaze orange waders by Grunden, while Nichols donned a full-length Tyvek suit in white by Dupont.

Nichols "won" the opportunity to be pied by taking first place in a "Penny Wars" competition in which members of the VIMS community contributed coins to subject a faculty or staff member to a pie in the face, or paper bills to save them from this ignominious fate. In addition to Nichols—the beneficiary of \$60.94 in coins—2013 contestants were professors Carl Friedrichs, John Graves, Ken Moore, Linda Schaffner, Pete Van Veld, and Andrew Wargo. Turley was chosen as the student recipient via an anonymous vote.

"This year's event was a real success," says Turley, who in addition to studying marine genetics serves as the GSA fund-raising chair. "Overall, we raised \$340 to help support research, travel, and purchase of equipment by graduate students at VIMS."

The GSA's next fund-raising event is their annual Yard Sale, a public event that will take place in late August on the VIMS campus in Gloucester Point. For details, visit vims.edu/gsa.



Pie in the Face: Graduate students Tony Nalovic (L) and Adela Roa-Varon (R) pi(e) VIMS graduate student Brendan Turley and Chemical Hygiene Officer Paul Nichols. Photo by David Malmquist.

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