

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MSRI sends team to represent United States at China's Girls Math Olympiad

Exceptional young women from throughout the USA—from San Jose, CA, to Boston—go to China to compete in international math contest for girls only

BERKELEY, California – The Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI) announced today that it will send a team of high school girls from throughout the United States to participate in the 2009 China Girls Mathematical Olympiad (CGMO). The international competition will be held in the southern coastal city of Xiamen in Fujian Province, China, from Wednesday, August 12 through Sunday, August 16. This is the third year that MSRI has sponsored a U.S. team to compete at the international contest.

The team consists of Cynthia Day from San Jose, California, a sophomore at Lynbrook High School; Carolyn Kim from Tallahassee, Florida, who recently graduated from Lawton Chiles High School and will attend Harvard; Patricia Li from San Jose, CA, who graduated from Lynbrook High School and enters the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this fall; Shiyu Li from Sunnyvale, CA, a senior at Cupertino High School; Ramya Rangan from San Jose, CA, a sophomore at the Harker School; Elizabeth Synge from Lexington, Massachusetts, a junior at Boston University Academy; and Shijie Joy Zheng from Shoreline, Washington, who is a junior at Phillips Exeter Academy.

The team's seven high school students were chosen from the top ranks of the female finalists in the 2009 USA Mathematical Olympiad (USAMO). Its coaches are Zuming Feng, of Phillips Exeter Academy and academic director of the USAMO Summer Program since 2003, and Jennifer Iglesias, who is a sophomore at Harvey Mudd College and was a member of the first two U.S. Girls teams, winning a gold medal in 2008. The girls will write an online travelogue with photos to capture and share highlights from their trip to the CGMO (go to <http://www.msri.org/specials/gmo/2009>).

“The CGMO is a great opportunity to encourage young women to study mathematics and to meet and work with others who are enthusiastic about developing their mathematical talents, which are so important for the future of our country,” said Robert Bryant, Director of MSRI. “We are proud to partner with the MAA and the generous donors, both corporate and private, who make the U.S. team's participation in the CGMO possible. As we have seen in sending previous US teams to the CGMO, this experience has a profound effect on the young women who participate, and it provides an inspiration to other young mathematical talent, helping them connect with the fun and accomplishment of solving hard problems.”

Founded in 2002, the CGMO began as a regional competition for teams of female students from China and other eastern Asian countries (including Russia). It was later expanded to invite teams from more countries, including the United States.

The U.S. girls math team has been award-winning since it first entered the CGMO in 2007. That first year, the U.S. team had five of its eight members earn medals: three girls, all from the greater San Francisco Bay Area, earned bronze trophies, one girl placed for a silver medal, and another girl—who tied for first place in the overall competition—won a gold medal. The following summer, in 2008, each of the eight girls on the U.S. team came home from the Olympiad with a trophy: five girls won bronze medals, one earned a silver medal, and two girls returned with gold medals.

Funding for this project is provided by Microsoft, Google, the Akamai Foundation, the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute, the Mathematical Association of America, the Shiing-Shen Chern Foundation for Mathematical Research, and the Sunlin and Priscilla Chou Foundation.

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“Microsoft Research is delighted to support the MSRI in their efforts to educate, excite and inspire young women to pursue careers in computer science,” said Daron Green, senior director, Microsoft External Research. “We are committed to increasing diversity in the sciences, and ultimately ensuring the future of innovation and scientific discovery.”

“Google is proud to support the U.S. Girls team in this year’s CGMO,” said Jordan Lloyd Bookey, Manager of Global Diversity and Inclusion Programs at Google. “In addition to increasing interest in mathematics among girls, this program fosters a valuable intercultural exchange.”

“The Akamai Foundation is pleased to co-sponsor the U.S. girls team invited to compete in the 2009 China Girls Mathematical Olympiad,” said Tom Leighton, chief scientist and co-founder, Akamai. “By supporting high-scoring students from the USAMO, the Foundation hopes to encourage these and other students to continue their pursuit of mathematics education.”

This year, the team members prepared for the CGMO by attending the USAMO Summer Program for three weeks in June. This program is sponsored annually by the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) and is held on the University of Nebraska campus in Lincoln. Its goals include broadening students’ view of mathematics and providing in-depth enrichment in important mathematical topics to stimulate the students’ continuing interest in mathematics and to help them prepare for future study of mathematics. It also helps prepare the USAMO team for international competitions, such as the CGMO and the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO).

About MSRI: The Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI, <http://www.msri.org>), in Berkeley, California, is one of the world’s preeminent centers for research in the mathematical sciences and has been advancing mathematical research through workshops and conferences since its founding as an independent institute in 1982. More than 2,000 mathematicians visit the MSRI each year, and the Institute hosts about 80 leading researchers at any given time for stays of up to one academic year. The Institute has been funded primarily by the National Science Foundation with additional support from other government agencies, private foundations, corporations, individual donors, and more than 90 academic institutions. MSRI is involved in K-12 math education through its annual *Critical Issues* in Mathematics Education conferences for educators, math circles and Olympiad competitions, in undergraduate education through its MSRI-UP program, and in public education through its “Conversations” series of public events.

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