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*January 21, 2009*

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## **Maria Monks receives Alice T. Schafer Prize**

(January 21, 2009) The Association for Women in Mathematics presented the NINETEENTH ANNUAL ALICE T. SCHAFFER PRIZE to **Maria Monks**, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in Washington, D.C. The Alice T. Schafer Prize for Excellence in Mathematics by an Undergraduate Woman was established in 1990 and is named for former AWM president and one of its founding members, Alice T. Schafer (professor emeritus from Wellesley College), who contributed a great deal to women in mathematics throughout her career. The criteria for selection include, but are not limited to, the quality of the nominees' performance in mathematics courses and special programs, an exhibition of real interest in mathematics, the ability to do independent work, and, if applicable, performance in mathematical competitions.

Maria Monks, a junior mathematics major at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has already written six research papers; one has been accepted for publication by the Journal of Combinatorial Theory Series A, three have been submitted to leading research journals, and the other two are in nearly final form. On five of these six papers she is the sole author. Her outstanding work is already so widely known in the mathematical research community that she gets

invitations to speak at mathematics meetings and in research departments. At the same time, Monks does exceptional work in her classes at MIT and has achieved a perfect grade point average. She has furthermore contributed phenomenal service to the mathematics community, for example by coaching the USA China Girls' Math Olympiad team.

Maria Monks' outstanding research abilities, her exceptional course work and her great leadership in the mathematics community make her this year's winner of the Schafer prize. Maria's response to the citation particularly thanked her father who she says "opened my eyes to the beauty of mathematics and served as a coach, teacher and mentor throughout my childhood, inspiring me to pursue my love of mathematics to the best of my ability."

Additionally, the accomplishments of three outstanding young women, all senior mathematics majors, were recognized on Monday, January 5, 2009. AWM was pleased to honor **Doris Dobi**, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, **Nicole Larsen**, Georgia Institute of Technology, and **Ila Varma**, California Institute of Technology as honorable mention recipients in the Schafer prize competition.

*The 2009 Joint Mathematics Meetings was held January 5-8 in Washington, DC. For further information on the Schafer Prize including past winners and the complete prize citations honoring Maria Monks, Doris Dobi, Nicole Larsen and Ila Varma, please visit <http://www.awm-math.org>.*