

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 23, 2009

Media Advisory

Contact: Anne Brooks Pfister
510.642.0448 - annepf@msri.org

“HARD PROBLEMS: The Road to the World’s Toughest Math Contest” Premieres at MSRI event with documentary filmmaker George Csicsery

Post-screening panel discussion on topics of talent, gender and cultural roles in math aptitude

- **WHAT** – “HARD PROBLEMS: The Road to the World’s Toughest Math Contest.” The Northern California premiere of an 82-minute documentary film following the U.S. team of high school students at the pinnacle of math competitions, the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO).
- **WHEN** – Wednesday, September 30, 2009 from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.
- **WHERE** – Simons Auditorium at MSRI, 17 Gauss Way, Berkeley (near the intersection of Grizzly Peak Blvd. and Centennial Drive). For maps, directions and parking information, see: www.msri.org/about/directions/index.html
- **WHO** – George Csicsery, the film’s director will be honored with a reception preceding the screening. Afterwards there will be a panel discussion led by former International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) medal winner and coach Paul Zeitz. Panel members will include Ryan Ko, a 2006 IMO team member featured in the film and now a student at Stanford; Melanie Matchett Wood, who in 1998 was the first American female to make the U.S. IMO Team; and leaders from MSRI’s San Francisco Bay Area math circles, Bay Area Mathematical Olympiad (BAMO), and math festival programs.
- **DETAILS** – “Hard Problems” is a feature documentary about the extraordinarily gifted students who represented the United States in 2006 at the world’s most rigorous math competition—the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO). It is the story of six American high school students who competed with 500 others from 90 countries in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The film shows the dedication and perseverance of these remarkably talented students, the demanding preparation they undertake, their individuality, and the joy they get out of solving challenging problems. Above all, it captures the spirit of math competitions at the highest level.

Although American students on the whole rank well behind many countries in mathematics, American math Olympiad teams regularly finish among the world’s top teams. While aiming to inspire and entertain, “Hard Problems” provides an insightful and thoughtful look at the process that produces successful teams, and ultimately, great mathematicians of the future.

“Hard Problems” takes a close look at exceptional students who make it to the highest levels of high school math, asking teachers, parents, siblings, and the students themselves to shed light on what produces mathematical genius and how to nurture it. As we get to know them, the students in “Hard Problems” shatter many stereotypes and clichés about the mathematically gifted.
- **HOW – FREE!** For information, the public can call MSRI’s main office phone: 510.642.0143.
- **WEBPAGE** – Visit <http://www.msri.org/specials/hardproblems>
- **SPONSOR** – Presented by the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI, www.msri.org)
- **PHOTOS** – Stills available by requests sent annepf@msri.org.

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 is involved in K-12 math education through its annual *Critical Issues in Mathematics Education* conferences for educators, math circles, the National Association for Math Circles (NAMC) and its website, and Olympiad competitions, in undergraduate education through its MSRI-UP program, and in public education through its “Conversations” series of public events. The MSRI 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.