

MU ALPHA THETA NEWSLETTER

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NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Let's face it. February in Ohio is miserable. It is icy and cold with every student and teacher praying for just one more snow day. On the other hand, February brings the excitement of the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics state math competition. As I get ready to help administer and grade the OCTM, I think of all the students and teachers across the state who are preparing for the contest and who will drag themselves out of bed on the last Saturday of February to go to their regional site to take a math test.

If you are reading this you probably are also feeling that buzz of excitement as your students get ready for your local contests but if your school doesn't compete, please allow me to suggest getting involved in competitive mathematics. A good place to start is with contests that don't cost anything. Mu Alpha Theta sponsored two free contests this year. Rocket City Math League and Log 1 Math Contest are both finishing up and getting ready to award prizes in April. Both can be done from the comfort of your own school and give students the opportunity to vie with their peers academically. If you didn't participate this year, check out the Contests link at mualphatheta.org for information next year.

Mu Alpha Theta is a vibrant and growing organization, as evidenced by our ability to award so many scholarships and grants. By the time you read this, the recipients of the \$5,000 Mary Rhein Scholarship as well as the twenty-four \$4,000 Mu Alpha Theta Scholarships may have been decided. The two Andree Awards winners, for students intending to become mathematics teachers, will have been selected with each receiving \$2,500. And finally, this year's outstanding Mu Alpha Theta chapter will have been chosen for the Rubin Award.

If you have a senior who is an outstanding mathematician and has performed notable service to Mu Alpha Theta, nominate them for the Kalin Award. This \$2500 prize will be awarded at the National Convention in Boston in July. Details and application form are at the Awards link at mualphatheta.org.

Nomination information for two awards for sponsors, one student nominated (Sister Scholastica) and one peer nominated (Huneke) are also at the Awards link. You likely know a sponsor whose commitment and enthusiasm have sustained their chapter through good and bad times. Consider nominating them for one of these prestigious awards. The Huneke winner need not even be present at the National Convention, even though the winner is announced during that time.

I would also like to remind you of the three grant possibilities that are available to Mu members and their chapters. Summer Grants of up to \$2,000 are available to full members who are interested in doing a summer math program or math research. Chapters who would like to provide mathematical experiences for their members and/or other students can apply for a Chapter Grant to help offset the cost. Chapters who have never attended a convention and are interested in attending the 2012 Boston Convention can apply for a \$3000 Convention Grant. Details and application forms are at the Grants link on the website.

This year's National Convention is from July 8 until July 13 in Boston, Massachusetts. If you register before April 1st, you will save \$40 per person. Final registration is May 15th. Conventions are always a great time to meet other math lovers and practice math skills in beautiful surroundings. The Boston Park Plaza Hotel just off Boston Common is a luxury hotel in an historic city. What a great place to hold a convention!! I hope to see you there.



Elizabeth Carol Botzner, President

Thanks to those who have served Mu Alpha Theta:

Retired Sponsors:

- Parkview HS, Lilburn, GA: Melodie Carr, 12 yrs
- Parkview HS, Lilburn, GA: Amy Hammond, 12 yrs
- Morison R. Waite HS, Toledo, OH: Mary Morales,
- Melbourne Central Catholic HS, Melbourne, FL: Marjorie Hurtle
- Vicksburg HS, Vicksburg, MS: Beth Hall
- Ursuline Academy of Dallas, Dallas, TX: Marcia Koenig
- Narrangasett Regional HS, Baldwinville, MA: Greta Morris
- Spring Valley Sr HS, Spring Valley, NY: Charlie Windwer
- Starkville HS, Starkville, MS: Debby Bland
- McNeil HS, Austin, TX: Cathy Morgan, 15 yrs
- Georgetown HS, Georgetown, TX: Carolyn Hise, 5 yrs
- Dutchtown HS, Geismar, LA: Cathleen Pfifer
- St. Mary Academy – Bay View, Riverside, RI: Sally Lupica
- North Forrest HS, Hattiesburg, MS: Jessica Tutor
- Winston Churchill HS, Potomac, MD: Janice Williams, 7 yrs
- Archbishop Coleman F. Carroll HS, Miami, FL: Giulia Gherardi
- Choctawhatchee HS, Fort Walton Beach, FL: Dianne Grady, 25 yrs
- Pinellas Park HS, Largo, FL: Karen Whiteside, 20 yrs
- duPont Manual HS, Louisville, KY: Kathy Zwanzig, 3 yrs
- The Donoho School, Anniston, AL: Sandy Wingo
- Sterling HS, Somerdale, NJ: Helen Akinskas
- Morris Hills HS, Rockaway, NJ: Linda Wisneski
- Centennial HS, Roswell, GA: Tara Daas
- Archer HS, Lawrenceville, GA: Sandy McAdams
- Milton HS, Milton, FL: Sally Wales
- Gateway HS, Aurora, CO: Eileen McCarron
- Winona HS, Winona, MS: Jean Fisackerly
- Frank Scott Bunnell HS, Stratford, CT: Raymond DeGennaro
- Gateway HS, Aurora, CO: Eileen McCarron
- Westside HS, Macon, GA: Helen Rutherford, 12 yrs
- Louise S. McGehee School, New Orleans, LA: Keri Colomb
- North Lake College, Irving, TX: Ellen Miller
- Cowley County CC, Arkansas City, KS: April Nittler
- Fairfield Ludlowe HS, Fairfield, CT: Margaret Trebat
- Lakeland Community College, Kirtland, OH: Connie Sheykhany
- Pawhuska High School, Pawhuska, OK: Linda Graham

42nd Annual
National Convention

Boston
July 8-13



\$585 before April 1st
\$625 after April 1st

*Registration must be
postmarked by May 15th!*

See the National Convention link on
our website to download complete
information.

If a chapter would like a free copy of the DVD “Hard Problems,” please email Kay Weiss and ask.

NATIONAL OFFICE NEWS from Kay Weiss

Spring has sprung here at the National Office. We have leaves on our trees and the tulips are up. We are gearing up for our busiest time of year. Angela, my assistant, gets in about 9:30 AM central time. I get in a bit later and usually am here to serve you until after 6:30 PM. We are out of the office on Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, and may be closed during the National Convention from July 9 – 13, 2012.

It is important to remember to enter the names of your new members within one month of their initiation. No student may claim membership in Mu Alpha Theta until you have submitted their name for inclusion in the National Database and paid their one-time \$10 Registration Fee. When possible, it is appreciated if you can purchase merchandise on the same order with your member registrations.

Once your order is in, please remember to enter the names of your new members, grouped by year of graduation, from the “Add Full Members” link after logging in. Checking your current members in the database before entering new members will avoid duplication. Our system will not let you pay for the same student more than once.

If you have ANY problems entering names, just email the list to us and we will take care of it for you. It is not worth your valuable time if the names won't go in easily.

If you need a certificate reprinted, you can find the “Certificate Reprint” on the Merchandise page. A reprint costs only \$2 and you can email us the corrected name to enter. We will also correct our database so each name appears properly there.

Already this year, we have 93 new chapters and 63 schools that have reactivated former chapters. By June, we expect our organization to grow to over 92,000 student members in over 1900 chapters. We now have active chapters in 13 foreign countries, including our first in Malaysia.

If there is a high school or two-year college near you that hasn't started a math club yet, let them know all about us. We have many benefits to offer. Students that move from a high school to a college chapter are automatically members there, without having to pay again.

Please also let your middle schools know about Chi Alpha Mu, our middle school math club organization.

We are in the middle of our Spring Elections. If you have not received a ballot, please email me, and I will get one to you. The Governing Council of Mu Alpha Theta has financial responsibility for our organization. We meet twice a year, once in January and once in July. The eleven other members of our board of directors are responsible for setting policy and approving all spending decisions. We are extremely lucky to have such a dedicated group of individuals from around the country, who spend many hours guiding Mu Alpha Theta and its Educational Foundation. If you know a member of the Governing Council, let them know how much you appreciate their efforts. If you are interested in serving at the National level, let me know. In 2014, we will vote on new Governors for Regions 3 and 4. You can find a map of our regions, information about our governing structure, and our National Constitution online under the **About Us** link on our website.

If you have any issues you would like discussed during our meetings, please contact Carol Botzner or myself.

Please note that our newest order of honor cords has come in with a slightly lighter gold cord. If

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you have cords from last year, they will not exactly match the ones we will offer through this year and next.

Funds from both our honor cords and tassels go to support scholarships, grants, awards, and our National Convention. When a student gets an honor cord or tassel, they are providing a \$5 donation to the Educational Foundation. This is an easy way for each member to give something back to others who love math. Tassels are often not allowed on school graduation caps, so we provide these as a memento with our logo charm on each. These make a great gift to any supporter of Mu Alpha Theta. You don't have to be a graduating member to get one.

Kay Weiss
Executive Director

GOVERNING COUNCIL DECISIONS FROM THE JAN 2012 MEETING:

- \$25,000 will be available for Chapter Grants during 2012. Schools can apply for up to \$1000. Funds will be provided to pay invoices or reimburse the chapter.
- The Huneke Award will now be **peer-nominated**. Mu Alpha Theta will accept no more than one letter of recommendation from a student. The winning teacher need not be present at the National Convention and may either be a current or former sponsor.
- Mu Alpha Theta will award up to 25 scholarships this year, 5 more than the previous year.
- An increase in Convention Grant funding was approved. Mu Alpha Theta will now award up to eight grants at \$3000 each.

National Convention Grants

Mu Alpha Theta has only two \$3000 Convention Grants to the 2012 Boston Convention remaining. Each Grant will cover free registration for a sponsor and three students, who must not have graduated before the convention. The remaining funds may be used for additional student registration costs or to reimburse travel expenses. To be eligible for a grant, a Mu Alpha Theta chapter cannot have attended a national convention in the past. The intent of the grant is to allow the teacher and students to see what our national convention is all about. Only schools who have a math sponsor and three eligible students should apply.

To apply for a grant, complete the application as soon as possible, which consists of the names of the applicants and two paragraphs about the activities your chapter has participated in during the past year. We also ask how attending the National Mu Alpha Theta Convention will benefit your chapter. Email the application to matheta@ou.edu or snail mail to:

Mu Alpha Theta
National Convention Grant
University of Oklahoma
601 Elm Ave, Rm 1102
Norman, OK 73019

Schools selected will be contacted before the end of April by phone and email. The only responsibility of the winners is to fill out a survey after the convention regarding their experiences. Applying schools should be ready to submit enrollment information should they be selected. Winners of the grants are encouraged to bring more than three students. Additional attendees will be granted the early bird registration rate, as long as full payment for them is received by the May 15th deadline. So, get your application in soon!

Congratulations to Chapter Grant Recipients!

Mu Alpha Theta has begun offering Chapter Grants to help chapters promote math activities. Here are some schools who have already received funding:

Cerritos HS - CA
Funds to run 4th- 8th grade math contest (\$850)

Hudson HS - OH
Honorarium for initiation speaker (\$250)

Tomball HS - TX
Funds for performance of "Calculus: The Musical" (\$1000)

University HS, LSU - LA
Funds to run Pi Day Math Festival (\$500)

Salmon River Central - NY
Funds for trophies for elementary math competition (\$550)

Go to the **Grants** section of the MAΘ website to find out more and download an application!

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SPONSORS

MAA PREP Workshops

The MAA is proud to offer a broad range of professional development opportunities for those teaching and working in the mathematical sciences. PREP workshops are participatory and interactive, and strive to serve mathematicians at all stages in their careers. Each workshop is an extended professional development program that includes a preparatory, intensive, and follow-up component.

Cost of lodging and some meals is included in the registration fee.

To register or learn more, visit www.maa.org/PREP.

(Taken from MAA pamphlet)

- DON'T FORGET TO VOTE! -

We are voting for the **National President-Elect** and the **Governor of Regions 1 & 2**. If you haven't voted yet, please email your choice to matheta@ou.edu. Each chapter has one vote.

Steve Friedlander from Lawton Chiles HS in Tallahassee, FL and Todd Taylor from Vestavia Hills HS in Vestavia, AL are both running for the President-Elect position.

(You should have received a ballot by email that included each candidate's credentials. If not, email Kay Weiss.)

Darryl Edmunds from Highline HS in Burien, WA and Triscia Hochstatter from Moses Lake HS in Moses Lake, WA are running for Governor of Region 1.

Doris Parrino from Baton Rouge Magnet HS in Baton Rouge, LA and Summer Vaught from Little Rock Central HS in Little Rock, AR are running for Governor of Region 2.

Your vote is important. Please submit one before the **April 25 deadline**.



News from a Chapter

The Mu Alpha Theta chapter at James Benson Dudley High School in Greensboro, North Carolina has been busy in their community! From Sponsor Marvin Q. Jones, Jr:

"I just wanted to share some pictures with you from a few of the projects our chapter has been participating in. We participated in the Winter Walk for AIDS and we had about 20 members participate in the walk. We raised \$150.00+ for AIDS Research... the kids are really enjoying themselves and really learning!"

Their chapter also received a \$300 Gift of Giving grant from the Four Seasons Town Centre and Guilford County Schools (GCS). They used their grant this past December to speak with the public at their local library about questions such as "Ever wondered how a snowflake gets its shape? Or why Frosty melted? Or how much those '12 Days of Christmas' gifts really cost?" They also helped library patrons sign up for library cards and gave out information about their math tutoring options. **5**

AND THE RUBIN AWARD GOES TO...GRISSOM HIGH SCHOOL!

The Mu Alpha Theta chapter at Grissom High School in Huntsville, Alabama was the recipient of the 2012 Diane Rubin Award for its outstanding mathematics service to the community. Read about their math service projects below (taken from their Rubin Award application) and start thinking about how your chapter can promote mathematics in its community.

“Other math teams and Mu Alpha Theta chapters don’t understand why Grissom does what it does. Though Grissom’s math team and Mu Alpha Theta chapter do perform the baseline tasks to be expected from any such organizations, they routinely and fundamentally extend beyond the ordinary in their central functions. For instance, the math team does participate in local and national competitions (consistently placing at both levels), and the Mu Alpha Theta chapter does partake in service projects, but the dynamic servitude of the two groups (which often work in coalition), cannot be summarized in a few short phrases.

Rocket City Math League is a prime example of the uniquely extraordinary nature of Grissom’s math organizations. Funded with a grant from Mu Alpha Theta, the contest provides more than 3000 students from as many as ten nations each year with three rounds of five levels of individual tests and one round of two levels of team tests, which are all designed to be engaging, challenging, and fun. But what is most impressive is that the entire contest is exclusively student-run – the only contest in the country that can claim such a distinction. Math team members and Mu Alpha Theta members (often one in the same) comprise the directors, level coordinators, test writers and editors, and distributors of the competition. Rocket City Math League teaches Grissom students invaluable project-management, business, and math skills and provides a tremendous range of students from all over the world with interesting math concepts and questions. (In the contest’s ten year history, competitors from 23 countries – from Belgium to Pakistan to Australia – have participated at one point or another.) The contest is of such high quality that in the fall of 2012, Rocket City Math League tests featuring Mu Alpha Theta’s name and web address will be on display in exhibits at the Smithsonian as well as the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. This is but the beginning of Grissom’s great mass of contributions.

Grissom Junior Math Explorers and Grissom Junior Math Academy are after-school math camps for 1st-5th and 6th -8th graders, respectively. These camps connect children in the area with high school mentors who present math topics such as probability, geometry, algebra, and number theory in ways that are involving and informative. Explorers camp, with students from 27 local schools, is held for one week, and Academy camp, with students from 24 local schools, has historically been held for two, though due to popular demand, more Academy classes are offered once a week throughout the year. A typical session for each of the camps consists of an hour of appropriately challenging math lessons and games.

With a classroom size of 15 students and 5 mentors being common, these camps provide a valuable interactivity that allows students to grasp concepts much more quickly than they would in a traditional classroom setting. Throughout Explorers and Academy’s four year existence, both parents and participants have highly praised the camps. The real success of the camps comes with young minds discovering – sometimes for the first time – that math can be fun.

Though heavily invested in its newer activities, Grissom does not neglect the more traditional services characteristic of math teams and Mu Alpha Theta chapters. Volunteers from math team and Mu Alpha Theta annually orchestrate two math tournaments: Rocket City Junior Math Mania, held at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, servicing upwards of 500 students from 4th-8th grades, and the Grissom Math Tournament, held for



5th annual Rocket City Math Mania contest at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. Students were able to explore the Space and Rocket Center after the competition. (above)



the first time this year at the Space and Rocket Center, with 830 students registered from 41 elementary, middle, and high schools. Math Mania has been in existence for five years; Grissom Math Tournament has been for approximately 35. Math Mania sees competitors from as far away as Tuscaloosa, and the Grissom Math Tournament regularly hosts teams from bordering states. Both bring thought-provoking math problems to masses of students, thereby furthering the cause of inspiring mathematical exploration. In addition to work in the competitive math team realm, Grissom's Mu Alpha Theta chapter provides math tutoring before and after school to those students who seek it and also contributes volunteers to various community service projects. This year, Grissom Mu Alpha Theta partnered with the Huntsville Botanical Gardens and the U.S. Space and Rocket Center to provide volunteers for the annual Galaxy of Lights during the holiday season.



Children are literally so excited that they jump out of their seats to answer math problems at Grissom Jr. Math Explorers Camp.

Grissom's continuing tradition of service is unequivocally concordant with the greater goals of Mu Alpha Theta. The sheer volume of work that Grissom does in the name of furthering mathematical interest is certainly something that distinguishes them from others. All reports indicate that this great volume of work is not just being completed, but being completed well; this is a direct result of the passion of those doing the work. Grissom has received many accolades from parents, teachers, local businesses, the Huntsville City School System, and administrators from nearby systems. The Grissom High School Mu Alpha Theta chapter is a real force for the perpetuation of mathematics into the future."

Region 4 Governor Sam Koski given MIT Inspirational Teacher Award

Sam Koski, Mu Alpha Theta Governor of Region 4, was selected for a MIT Inspirational Teacher Award after being nominated by Dr. Angela Chang, Miami Springs High School 1993 graduate. Dr Chang just got her PhD from MIT. She did her thesis on robots and recently presented her research at the Ft. Lauderdale Museum of Discovery and Science.

Analyzing a Card Trick

Sheila Horstman of Clarksville High School in TN gave a presentation entitled "Analyzing a Card Trick" at the Chicago Texas Instrument Technology Conference. The presentation was based on an article in the Mathematics Teacher, March 2011 "AN EXCEL-LENT CARD TRICK" by Holly S. Zullo. In the article, Ms. Zullo described a simple card trick played with 15 cards in which a player selects a card and the magician finds the card after a series of three layouts. The article investigated the mathematics behind the magic trick using an excel spreadsheet. Sheila read the article and presented it as an activity doable with graphing calculators.

Her worksheets and Power Point Presentation can be found at www.mualphatheta.org > Teacher Resources > Activities. The trick can be explained using three functions: a linear function, a step (greatest integer) function, and a composite function. The composite of a linear and greatest integer function explains how a selected card chosen at random from a deck of 15 ends up always mapping to the eighth position in the deck. Instructions for using the TI-84 and the TI-Npsire to display the mathematics are posted online. The card trick is a real world example which intrigues students right away.

Please feel free to use the activity in your classroom.

Chapter Grants

Have a great idea for a chapter activity, but need funding? Sponsors have already been taking advantage of the new Mu Alpha Theta Chapter Grants. West Memphis Christian School in West Memphis, AR received a \$530 grant for Pi Day activities. Read below to hear more about it.

Math Quest for Gold

Yes, math can be fun! Students need to be provided opportunities in a safe environment that not only challenges but motivates them to want to learn mathematics. Our third annual Math Celebration/Pi Day gives all students in grades K -12 at West Memphis Christian School a chance to enjoy mathematics while also using their math knowledge to compete against their peers.

For the past two years, the students have participated in a scavenger hunt receiving clues from the math problems they solved. These clues helped each team answer trivia questions. This year, students 7th through 12th grade will be traveling through an “Enchanted Land” (the school) in search of treasure for their team. The Enchanted Land will have five designated areas: Never Never Land, Wonderful Land, Land of Oz, Narnia, and Middle Earth. At the beginning of the day students are divided into groups. Each group will be given a math problem that they must solve. The answer will guide the students to one of the special lands where a fairy princess (a willing parent) reigns. The students will present their answer to the princess. The princess will then present the team with an envelope that matches their answer. If the problem is worked correctly, the envelope will contain one of five letters that will unlock a word lock found on a treasure chest. Students will then be given another problem to solve which will direct them to another area of the “Enchanted Land”. Anytime the answer is incorrect, the envelope will instruct them to try again. The groups must work 5 problems correctly to receive all the keys to unlock the treasure chest. Each problem sends the groups to different areas of the school. Once all keys are obtained, the team must present their keys to the ogre (math teacher) who is guarding the treasure.

In the afternoon, our elementary (k-6) students rotate through three math stations which are manned by our Mu Alpha Theta students. The stations include various hands on activities. Versa tiles, dominos, Venn diagram rings, and attribute blocks are some of the manipulatives that the students will experience that day. Some Mu Alpha Theta students are responsible for picking up the elementary students and bringing them to the large area where the stations are set up. The students stay with their group and move with them through each station. Other Mu Alpha Theta members are responsible for explaining the math activity and working with the children. When each grade level has experienced a station, the Mu Alpha Theta guides return them to the appropriate classroom. It is wonderful to see the elementary students' excitement as they interact with the high school students.

During the last hour of the school day, all 7th through 12th grade students gather for more competitions. Prizes are awarded to students who can recite the most digits of pi (last year a student recited 100 digits of pi), who can guess the closest to the number of items in a jar, and a “pi” eating contest. Our “pi” is not your usual grandma’s pie! For the past 2 years we have used jalapeño peppers and sardines arranged in the symbol pi. The first year the kids were shocked when the peppers were unveiled! Last year they knew it would be something different, but they still weren’t prepared for sardines. They have no idea what it will be until they remove the lid. We allow anyone to step down who can’t stomach it, but you can’t imagine the excitement watching those who do give it a try! We haven’t decided what will be under the lid this year, but rest assured it won’t have a sweet aroma! The day ends with the students allowed to leave one minute early at 3:14 in honor of pi!

For more information on how your school can apply, see Grants > Chapter Grants at www.mualphatheta.org.

STUDENTS

FROM YOUR STUDENT DELEGATE PRESIDENT...

Hello Everyone,

My name is Daniel Kang and I am the student delegate president for 2011-2012. In Florida, the Mu Alpha Theta competition season is soon coming to an end. This is an especially poignant time for all of the Mu Alpha Theta competitors that will graduate this year. Many of us will remember Mu Alpha Theta as an organization that has impacted our lives greatly through new insights, friends, and experiences.

As my Mu Alpha Theta competition experience in Florida comes to a close, I am increasingly looking forward to the National Convention in Boston this summer. I am sure that it will be filled with exciting events and activities, as well as, new experiences for everyone. The National Convention has always been a great way for students from all over the United States and the world to gather and share their love of mathematics.

Each year, the student delegates meet during the National Convention to discuss ways to improve the Mu Alpha Theta organization. I strongly encourage you to come and attend these meetings. Each school attending the convention can designate a delegate, but all are welcome to participate. I am sure that you will have a unique perspective to contribute to our discussions.

For the students that are graduating this year, I hope that you have enjoyed your time in Mu Alpha Theta as much as I have. And, for students that do not, I hope that you continue to develop your passion for mathematics and service. I look forward to seeing many of you at the National Convention.

Please feel free to contact me at dkang55@gmail.com if you have any questions about the Student Delegation or the National Convention.

- Daniel Kang

Nominate your sponsor for the Huneke and Sister Scholastica Awards!
Applications are due June 15 and available online.

Congratulations to the following students who received summer grants:

Pamela Hu of Rickards HS
AwesomeMath

Catherine Yip of Cooper City HS
Mathworks, San Marcos, TX

Aditya Jain of Clements HS
Mathworks, San Marcos, TX

Brian Min of Trinity Preparatory School
AwesomeMath

Vivek Miglani of Stoneman Douglas HS
AwesomeMath

Funding for some programs is still available!

*Congratulations to the 2012
Andree Award Winners!*

HIGH SCHOOL ANDREE AWARD

Adam Su

Texas Academy of Math & Science in Denton, TX

COLLEGE ANDREE AWARD

Katherine N. Harbula

Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA
Former member of Midlothian HS, Midlothian, VA