

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



Jeanette Shakalli

Dr. Jeanette Shakalli is a Panamanian mathematician and origami enthusiast who obtained her Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Chemistry from the University of Notre Dame and her Ph. D. in Mathematics from Texas A&M University. Since 2012, she works at the National Secretariat of Science, Technology and Innovation (SENACYT) of Panama. In 2016, she created the Program on Math Outreach in Panama with the purpose of inspiring kids and adults of all ages to rejoice in the beauty of science and math and to convince the general public that math is not only fun, but it also has many interesting applications. She is the International Mathematical Union's (IMU) Committee for Women in Mathematics (CWM) Ambassador for Panama. She is currently the Director of Admissions of the Panamanian Association for the Advancement of Science (APANAC) and the Secretary on the Board of Directors of IEEE Panama Section. She is also the Secretary on the Board of Directors of the J. Thomas Ford Gift of Life Foundation. She is a member of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), the American Mathematical Society (AMS), the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Through her Program on Math Outreach, Dr. Shakalli invites talented mathematicians to Panama with the goal of encouraging Panamanian youth to study math. So far the program has had 12 successful activities, including "Magic and Math," "Math in Disney and Pixar Movies," "Music and Math," and "Origami and Math." Exceptional mathematicians like Arthur Benjamin, Michael Dorff and Tim Chartier have traveled to Panama to share their passion for mathematics with the Panamanian population. These activities have become a family tradition to many since, after every presentation, the audience expects to hear the date, time and place of the next event. The effect that the Program has had on Panamanians and on the international guests is remarkable. For some, Panama has become a family vacation destination where they get to spread their joy for mathematics.

"Panama is a melting pot of cultures. For example, I am a Panamanian with a Greek Cypriot dad and a Panamanian mom with Chinese descent. This unique mix has shaped the person and the professional that I was meant to become. I consider myself a math champion for Panama, and no matter how many obstacles I face, I still push through with perseverance and determination that we can make the world a better place. For me, Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to show others that one person can make a difference in their community, and hence, inspire them to take action in their own way."

Lathisms was founded in 2016 in order to showcase the contributions of Latinx and Hispanic mathematicians during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated in the United States from September 15 and October 15 every year. During this time, we feature/reveal a prominent Latinx/Hispanic mathematician daily. See all the featured mathematical scientists at LATHISMS.ORG.

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