



Photo: Reidar Hahn, Fermilab

A public hunger for physics

Does the public care about particle physics? In this issue of *symmetry* we read about a few cases that hint the answer is yes.

A debate about string theory in Washington, DC, in March, attracted a sold-out crowd of 600 people. The two-hour debate and discussion between Brian Greene and Lawrence Krauss, moderated by Michael Turner, commanded a ticket price of \$25. For a few hours of entertainment, these 600 fans were prepared to pay more than twice the going rate for the latest Hollywood fare. A few disappointed aficionados hovered around the entrance trying to buy tickets, but there were none to be had.

Meanwhile, Fermilab asked nearby residents to volunteer for its community task force. More than 80 people applied to serve on the task force, which meets monthly to learn about Fermilab's plans and advise the physics laboratory on how it can best work with its neighbors. To gain one of the 25 positions on the task force, volunteers had to go through a demanding application process that even included interviews. These people saw that participating was worth the investment in effort and commitment.

Many people have a stake in physics, because of its cultural influence or because of how it affects their communities.

This issue of *symmetry* is the 25th since we launched in October 2004. The feedback we have received consistently is that readers most enjoy the magazine when it is showing how physics is simply another part of their own personal universes. They are enthused by stories of how people achieve scientific discoveries. They are entertained by what scientists do outside the laboratory. They want to get their hands on the science-related artworks we showcase. They love hearing what physics outsiders think of the physics community.

For this issue, we asked *The New Yorker* cartoonist Roz Chast to interpret particle physics for our cover and for a feature story on searches for dark energy (see page 10). Chast reacted to particle physics in the way that many non-physicists do: by seeing science as part of an attempt to answer the fundamental questions that all curious people ask themselves.

The public does want physics and we are grateful that we are part of an effort to show how it enriches lives intellectually, culturally, and personally.

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