

SPOREPRINTS

Department of Plant Pathology & Environmental Microbiology

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

CONGRATULATIONS

PPEM Fall Graduates!



Three students will be graduating in fall commencement scheduled for December 20, 2014 in The Bryce Jordan Center.

Dr. Grace O'Keefe successfully defended her PhD dissertation on chrysanthemum white rust on October 9, 2014. In addition to Grace passing her PhD defense, she was also selected the seminar exchange student with Ohio State, presenting on December 8th at The Ohio State University. Grace was advised by Dr. Don Davis.



Dr. Laura Ramos successfully defended her Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Molecular genetic study of *Erwinia amylovora*: rpoN, argD and pyrC genes" in Sept, 2014. Laura was advised by Dr. Tim McNellis.



Dr. Vasileios Bitas successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from the soilborne fungi *F. oxysporum* and *V. dahliae* promote plant growth and enhance biotic and abiotic stress resistance in *A. thaliana* and *N. tabacum*" in Sept, 2014. Vasileios was advised by Dr. Seogchan Kang and is currently a post-doc with Dr. David Geiser.



New PPEM Ph.D. Candidates!

Congratulations to **Chris Smyth** (advisor Dr. David Geiser), **Anita Behari** (advisor Dr. Gretchen Kuldau) and **Rob Harvey** (advisor Dr. Don Davis) who all passed their oral candidacy exams this past semester!



25 Year Service Award!

Judy Sinn, Sr. Research Assistant received her 25-Year Service Award on November 25, 2014 at the Nittany Lion Inn. Thanks for all your years of service Judy! Well deserved!

ASM Poster Winner!

Sara (Atyeo) Klee (McNellis lab) won first place for her poster titled "Using fluorescent labeling to gain insight into fire blight disease development", presented at the meeting of the Allegheny Branch of the American Society for Microbiology at Lycoming College, November 7-8, 2014.



NOTEWORTHY NEWS...

Drs. Seogchan Kang, Yinong Yang and Maria Jimenez-Gasco were successful on their proposals on plant volatiles, genome editing and study of the insect pathogenic fungus *Metarhizium* as an endophyte.

Dr. Maria Burgos-Garay (Ph.D. '13), sent the following note ...

"Hi everyone. We moved to Atlanta a couple of weeks ago. I started working for CDC/OID/NCEZID branch. It is a fun project working with antimicrobial susceptibility isolates to be used for diagnostic purposes. My family and I love Atlanta. My children are getting ready for college. I am excited for them. We all miss Happy Valley and the friends we made while in State College. Hope everything is going well for all of you. Happy Holidays from warm Atlanta".



Congratulations to Maliheh Safari, who submitted the winning PPEM t-shirt design and **Sarah Bardsley**, who headed up the successful PPA Coffee Mug sale and located the unique and appropriate design for the department coffee mug.

PPEM's Halloween Party – which was held on Friday, 10/31 was a success, with the following winning costumes...

- 1st: Ed Kaiser - The Used Car Salesman
 - 2nd: Judy Sinn - The Dragon
 - 3rd: Jennie Diehl - The Human Herbarium
- (photo by N. Wenner)



Dr. Yinong Yang visited the J. R. Simplot Company in Boise, Idaho during Nov. 11-13, 2014 and presented an invited seminar titled "Genome editing technology to breed non-transgenic, genetically improved crops". Dr. Yang met with the Director of Plant Science Division as well as managers and research scientists from Molecular Biology, Transformation, Biochemistry, Pathology and Agronomy groups and discussed about new technologies and challenges involved in breeding transgene-free potato with improved agronomic traits. He also toured Simplot Plant Sciences laboratories, greenhouses and potato processing facilities. The J. R. Simplot Company is one of the largest privately held food and agribusiness companies in the nation. Recently, Simplot Plant Sciences team developed the Innate™ potatoes which are resistant to bruising and contain lower levels of asparagine and sugars. Reduction of sugar and asparagine increases storage time and decreases the levels of acrylamide, a potential carcinogen formed from asparagine and sugar at high temperatures during frying and cooking. The Innate™ potatoes were genetically modified via RNA interference technology and approved for commercial planting by USDA on Nov. 7, 2014.



On December 11th the **PPEM** department held its annual **Holiday Party** at the **Hilton Garden Inn – College Hall** an enjoyable time was had by all in attendance!



NOTEWORTHY NEWS CONTINUED...

Reminders for Holiday Break....from Roxanne Lease, Facilities Coordinator

'Tis the season. In preparation for the University holiday closing, and to keep the flies/roaches from taking over, please keep these dates in mind:

Compost bin (blue bin in room 13): The compost bin will be set out Monday a.m., Dec 15. Any compostable materials you generate after that will need to be taken outside to the bins located at the end of the Botany greenhouse.

Bio-waste (white bins in room 13): Last bio waste pick up will be Monday, Dec. 15. After that time you will need to hold waste in your labs until after Jan. 4.

Janitorial: Depending on which week your lab/office is on the cleaning schedule, the last of the office/lab garbage pick-up will be either the week of Dec. 8 or Dec. 15. Between then and Dec. 18, you will need to get your garbage to the trash cans in the hallways. After Dec. 18, if you have garbage that will decay over break, please take it to the dumpsters located at the southwest end of the Botany greenhouse.

Power down: Please remember to turn off any unneeded equipment over the break. This will help reduce energy waste as well as help protect the equipment in the event there are power issues with the building (surges, outages).

Make sure you close and lock all windows.

Building temperature shut backs: Starting Dec 23 the building temperatures will start to drop back to 50F except in exempted rooms. If you will be working in Buckhout over the break, please plan accordingly. **The use of space heaters is prohibited unless given permission of OPP.**

Additional Reminders.... Any items that are newsworthy – Department-related (faculty/staff/student) events, awards, publications, trips... please send to Sandy for inclusion on the website and in SPOREPRINTS. Photos from these events are appreciated, whenever possible.

UPCOMING EVENTS...

- December 20 Commencement
- December 24-January 4 -- *Holiday Break*
- January 12 Classes Begin
- January 19 Martin Luther King Day – No Classes

Name this Disease and Casual Agent...



If you are interested in competing, send both the common name of this disease and its causal agent to Sandy in an e-mail with "SporePrints Contest" on the subject line. Only contestants who submit entries with both answers correct will be considered winners. Winners will be determined and their names posted on the Mailroom bulletin board one week after SporePrints is distributed. At the Dept. Award Ceremony, the individual with the most wins, will receive recognition and a travel award. The host is tomato as well as other vegetables.

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. <http://plantpath.psu.edu>