

# IN DISCRETE MATHEMATICS

## Using Discrete Mathematics in the Classroom

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### Speaking Discretely . . .

by Deborah S. Franzblau

I first want to welcome a new group of readers, the first group of elementary school teachers to join the Leadership Program in Discrete Mathematics. There is still time to apply for this summer (see the flyer on p. 11). If you are a high school teacher, this issue has information on two new summer activities (see p. 10). (If you are interested but the deadlines have passed, please call us anyway—there may still be spaces available.)

Eric Simonian's article, "The Tangram Magicians," (p. 3) is perhaps an ideal start for expanding our scope to the elementary level; he describes a project involving 2nd and 4th graders and high school students working together. Linda Dodge's article, "The Venn Diagram Game" (p. 5) describes a popular activity that can be adapted to many grade levels.

Our lead article in this issue, by Anne Carroll, is a practical guide to publicizing in the local news the interesting things you and your students are doing in the classroom. As you will see, this is easier than you might think. (And when you do get into the news, don't forget to send us a copy of the clipping!)

There are a variety of topics in this issue. For a great story about students addressing a real problem at their school, see "In Case of Fire" by Melissa Kennedy (p. 2). Chuck Tiberio shares an interesting number puzzle that can be used as an introduction to dynamical systems and chaos (p. 5). And, Carol Price describes her students' success in discovering their own algorithms for solving graph problems (p. 4). ❖

### Your Classroom in the News

by Anne Carroll

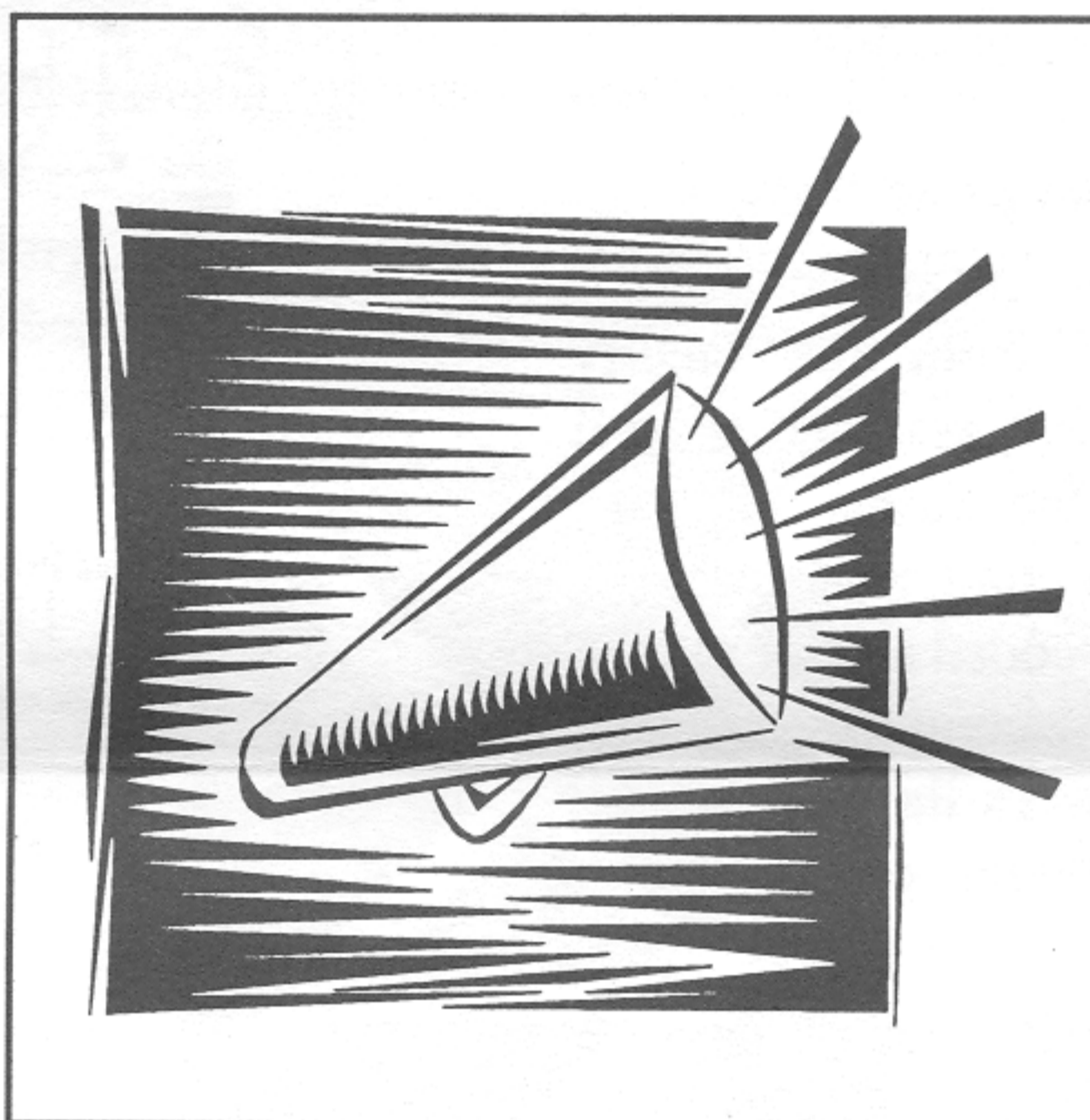
Mathematics is making more headlines these days than ever before, and we as mathematics educators can create a renewed awareness and appreciation for the "Queen of the Sciences." Believe it or not, the press is anxious for submissions about education, and they rely on school personnel to

provide the information. For example, free newspapers are hungry for well-written stories. Often, they will even come to your school to cover an event.

I was recently successful in getting one of my classroom activities in graph theory published [1]. The "hook" was the great costuming my students did for a production of "The Case of the Stolen Diamonds" [2], which made for terrific press photos. (It also helped that I am the publicity director for my school district—when news from other sources is slow, I can fill in with my own.)

Chuck Biehl's use of discrete mathematics in teaching problem-solving skills was touted in a front-page article [3] that featured his students with their wall-sized Sierpinski Triangle and discussed their attempts to solve traffic conflicts at Delaware intersections. More recently, Chuck was interviewed in the same paper, and discussed his appointment as Dean of the Academy of Mathematics and Sciences.

Even if you haven't had much experience with media relations, I hope that this article will help you make the events in *your* classroom tomorrow's headline. First, if you have a publicity director in your school or district, contact him or her about what is needed to get items published. If you are on your own, get the name of the education editor or reporter(s) at weekly and daily local newspapers which cover your school district. (In most papers, editors are listed on page two, or the editorial page; look for reporters' bylines with articles.) Direct all correspondence (including



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