

Rebecca Goldin Named 2008 Falconer Lecturer

The Association for Women in Mathematics and the Mathematical Association of America are pleased to announce that Rebecca Goldin will deliver the Falconer Lecture at MathFest 2008. Goldin, an associate professor of mathematics at George Mason University, was selected for this honor because of her contributions to mathematics and mathematics education.

After earning a bachelor's degree in mathematics with honors from Harvard University, Goldin spent a year in France at the École Normale Supérieure collaborating with Bernard Teissier on toric varieties. She then returned to Cambridge to pursue her doctorate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she investigated the cohomology ring of weight varieties under the direction of Victor Guillemin. A two and a half year NSF Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Maryland was followed by an appointment to the mathematics department at George Mason University, where she is now a tenured associate professor. She was recently elected to the Council of the American Mathematical Society and serves on its Science Policy Committee. In 2007, she became the first winner of the AWM's prestigious Michler award.

Goldin's research investigates symplectic geometry—a field that arose from the study of geometric structures underlying classical and quantum physics, but has become of great importance in modern differential geometry. She is a leader in work centered on Hamiltonian group actions and the study of topology and geometry of symplectic quotients. Her work has been called “influential,” “elegant,” “precise,” and has been funded by several NSF research grants.

Since joining the non-profit, non-partisan Statistical Assessment Service (STATS) as Director of Research, Goldin has been involved in the correction of scientific misinformation in the media. She has written articles regarding misinformation resulting from bad science, politics, or a simple lack of information or knowledge. Recent topics have included the health pros and cons of breastfeeding, the known and unknown impacts of alcohol, and estimation of



Rebecca Goldin and son

deaths in Iraq since the U.S. invasion.

Goldin says: “There is nothing more satisfying to me than to feel that I am putting my energy into the things I care most about—my family and science in a broad sense. Science and mathematics are really everywhere, and I hope I can convey this perspective in my lecture at MathFest this summer.” Her topic will be “The Use and Abuse of Statistics in the Media.” Cathy Kessel, president of AWM, comments “This is very timely. We need discussion of this topic.”

Dr. Goldin lives in Washington with her husband, Giorgio Ascoli, and children, Benjamin, Ruben, Gabriel and Jonah. She loves to “give unsolicited advice to young mathematicians, especially women interested in math and science.”

MathFest 2008 will be held July 31–August 2 in Madison, WI. The Falconer lectures were established in memory of Etta Z. Falconer (1933–2002). Her many years of service in promoting mathematics at Spelman College and efforts to enhance the movement of minorities and women into scientific careers through many forums in the mathematics and science communities were extraordinary. Falconer lecturers are women who have made distinguished contributions to the mathematical sciences or mathematics education. Recent recipients of this honor include Katherine St. John, Trachette Jackson, Fern Hunt and Bozenna Pasik-Duncan.