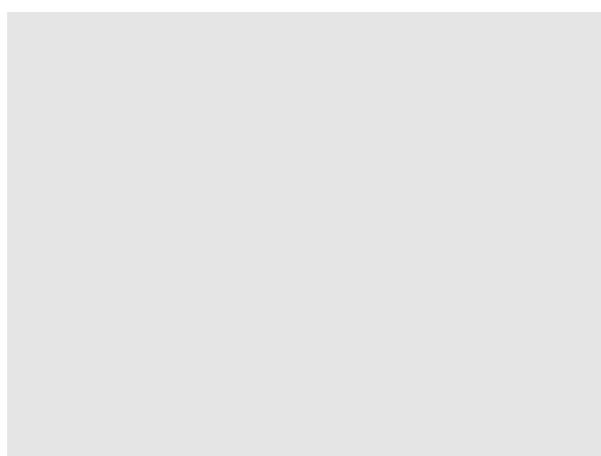


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## WKU hosting lay-friendly math symposium this weekend

By CAROLINE EGGERS [ceggers@bgdailynews.com](mailto:ceggers@bgdailynews.com) 22 hrs ago



Bruce Kessler

Submitted.

Mathematics is about a lot more than numbers. It answers questions, like how energy generated by nuclear reactions in the core of stars travels to the surface. And it advances technology, like redesigning existing algorithms for new computer architectures.

Mathematics is complex. But talking about its applications isn't, and that's what Bruce Kessler, Western Kentucky University's mathematics department head, hopes to demonstrate Friday and Saturday during the 39th annual Mathematics Symposium at Snell Hall.

"If you're just a little nerdy, and like math a bit, I guarantee you'll hear things you'll enjoy," Kessler said. "The talks are going to be really accessible."

The featured speakers this year include Suzanne Lenhart of the University of Tennessee, who will discuss mathematical models that connect humans, animals and the environment in relation to infectious diseases, and Laura Potter of Syngenta, who will discuss how to use modeling and computation to enhance seed placement to improve crop yields.

In addition, WKU students and faculty will present on their research, course assignments and senior projects.

The topics will range from abstract algebra to knot theory, which is the study of curves in three dimensions. From WKU, Claus Ernst will discuss how bending materials can generate electric charges, called piezoelectricity, and Richard Schugart will be presenting on his research in chronic wound modeling, specifically modeling the effects of different treatments on severe wounds that don't heal on their own.

"It's always an uplifting event for me," Kessler said. "Every year I'm blown away by what our students are capable of doing."

There will also be a career panel Friday at 7 p.m. for students interested in mathematics careers followed by "math theater," a 30-minute original play created by students and faculty.



In Kessler's experience, most people imagine mathematics research as doing really long numerical problems. But actually, the research tends to involve fewer numbers and more theorems, structures, patterns and symmetries.

The symposium offers the opportunity for the public to understand a bit more about mathematics research and what keeps the department busy each year, Kessler said.

"It is a good way to show what's going on here, that we have a robust learning community in the math department at WKU," he said. "This means a lot to us. I'd love for the general public to come."

The symposium will be from 3:30 to 9 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. to noon Saturday. Registration begins at 3:30 p.m. Friday.

– *For more information, visit [wku.edu/math/symposium2019.php](http://wku.edu/math/symposium2019.php).*

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## Caroline Eggers

News reporter.

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