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EIU Sigma Xi Banquet to Include Award for Teaching Excellence

Mar-23-2009

James Sparks, a Mattoon High School science teacher and EIU alumnus, will be honored for his teaching excellence with an award from the Eastern Illinois University chapter of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society.

Sparks is to be presented with the 2009 award plaque and stipend during a short Sigma Xi EIU chapter meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 2, in the University Ballroom, MLK Jr. Union. The public is welcome.

Prior to the meeting, a banquet will be held, starting at 6 p.m. It will feature a buffet dinner. Those planning to attend should RSVP to Brenda Wilson at 581-2712 or bmwilson@eiu.edu by March 26; the cost is \$16 if paid by March 26, or \$20 at the door.

The evening will conclude with a lecture on "Energy and the Environment: The Central Challenge of Sustainability" by Kimberly Gray from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Northwestern University in Evanston.

Sigma Xi's Excellence in High School and Middle School Science and Mathematics Teaching Award goes to high school or middle school science or mathematics teachers who demonstrate excellence in teaching, actively involve students in critical thinking and problem-solving, actively involve students in the learning process, and teach an appreciation for science and mathematics.

Sparks received his bachelor's degree from Sangamon State University and his master's degree from EIU. As a high school science teacher in Illinois since 1981, he has promoted science through active learning in the classroom, as well as student extra-curricular activities and his own professional development.

Sparks and his wife, Kimberly, have two children and reside in Shelbyville.



Mattoon High School science teacher Jim Sparks helps students Jill Wetzel (left) and Cory Christenholz conduct an experiment with egg shells, representing teeth, to determine which brand of toothpaste whitens best.