Meritorious Service Awards

John Thoo
Yuba College

The Golden Section of the Mathematical Association of America proudly nominates Dr. John Thoo of the Yuba College Department of Mathematics for its service award. John's Haimo nomination citation from 2008 states "*What is extraordinary about Dr. Thoo's nominating documents for the award is the uniformity of the comments made by his students, departmental colleagues, college administrators, and off campus professional colleagues. Strongly favorable comments are not unusual coming from one or two of these groups...But it is unusual to see praise for someone from all categories...*"

Soon after winning the section's teaching award in 2008, John began serving on and revolutionizing the work of the section's teaching committee—he revamped our time line, took an active role in recruiting members to the committee and did a great deal to find great teachers and extol their virtues. While some MAA sections are no longer able to find nominees for the Haimo and/or the Alder award (John works on both), we have been so fortunate to always have absolutely fantastic nominees and winners. One committee member remarked: "*In the 5 years or so that I served on the teaching award committee, I have quickly learned just how much I appreciate John's ansatz to our profession, to teaching, and to collegiality. Working with John is simply a joy. He has seemingly endless enthusiasm, works extremely effectively, and is professional in the best sense of the word: he has clear expectations, is generous with praise (if there is reason for it) and gentle but firm with criticism (if there is reason for it).*"

While John's work for the section is so empowering and valuable to our mission, it is clear that John's service to mathematics in general is nothing short of incredible. Since it is the goal of the MAA to promote and support mathematics for students, teachers, and the public, this doesn't always have to be done in the name of the MAA. With such champions of mathematics like John, we all win BIG: In addition to serving the MAA, Dr. Thoo has been involved in *CMC*3 (California Mathematics Council, Community Colleges) for over 20 years. He has edited the newsletter and served on the board. He wrote a math history column for the newsletter for about 11 years. Even more significantly, is that he, almost single-handedly, organized and continues to keep running the Sacramento Valley Community College Mathematics conferences. These have been free annual conferences provided for community college mathematics teachers for the last 15 years.

Response

I am deeply honored to be recognized by the Golden Section, especially because I see many more-deserving individuals around me. If I have done any good at all for the Section, my students, and the profession at large, it is because of all the wonderful role models and mentors who have influenced me over the years until now and the grace of God. Although I would like to name every person in this capacity, space permits me to recognize only a few: Edward Keppelmann, David Viglienzoni, Beresford Parlett, Robert Lipton, Evelyn Silvia, Don Chakerian, Kurt Kreith, John Hunter, and Brian Winkel. I encourage everyone to be such a person to someone: share your wisdom with them, encourage them, and recognize them both personally and publicly, perhaps by nominating them for an award like your Section teaching award.

Biographical Sketch

John Thoo is a mathematics instructor at Yuba College, a community college in Marysville, California, where he has been since 1995. His journey there brought him through Cabrillo College in Aptos, Califor-

nia; Cal Berkeley in, well, Berkeley; and UC Davis. He is a father of three (ages 27, 23, and 10) and a husband of one (age x). He enjoys riding his motorcycle and would like to ride it as much as possible before he shrinks in height too much to reach the ground anymore. John is very interested in the mathematical theory of waves, which is a deep and rich area of mathematics of which he has barely scratched the surface. In fact, he knows just enough to be dangerous to himself. John also has an interest in the history of mathematics and has come to admire the wealth of knowledge that historians of mathematics possess. John encourages everyone to explore the history of mathematics, not only because it is our history, but because there are gems for the classroom to be found among the rubble.