



American Chemical Society Susquehanna Valley Section

APRIL 2025 NEWSLETTER

MONTHLY DINNER MEETING:

The four hundred and seventy-eighth meeting of the Susquehanna Valley Section of the American Chemical Society will be the Wilkes University [Pownall Lecture](#) held on Wednesday, April 9th 2025 in Stark Learning Center 105 (formerly 101). The lecture will be followed by a reception (6:30 p.m.) and dinner (7:00 p.m.) honoring the guest speaker, Dr. Cleaves, at [The Mary Stegmaier Mansion](#), 156 S. Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre.

Understanding the Chemical Origins of Life

Henderson “Jim” Cleaves, PhD
Department of Chemistry
Howard University
Washington, D.C.



ABSTRACT: How life began on Earth, and whether it is likely widespread in the Universe, are two of science's greatest unanswered questions. The former question became formalized in the early 20th century and has undergone numerous revisions since. The history and current state of this question, and its implications for the likelihood of life beyond Earth, will be reviewed. The lecture will run about 50 minutes with a 10-minute Q&A session to follow.

BIOGRAPHY: Henderson “Jim” Cleaves, PhD, is professor and chair of the chemistry department at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Cleaves earned his bachelor’s degree at UC Santa Cruz and his doctorate at UC San Diego. After NASA postdoctoral fellowships at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the Carnegie Institution of Washington, he was a professor at the Earth-Life Science Institute at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He moved to Howard University in 2023 and served as the youngest president of the International Society for the Study of the Origins of Life for an unprecedented three terms. Cleaves’ lab research focuses on prebiotic chemistry, life-detection technologies, self-assembly processes and chemoinformatics.

DINNER:

The lecture will be followed by a reception (6:30 p.m.) and dinner (7:00 p.m.) honoring Dr. Cleaves, held at [The Mary Stegmaier Mansion](#), 156 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701. Dinner attendees may park on Wilkes University surface lots in addition to Mansion parking (see directions below). The reception will include Hors D'oeuvres and there will be a cash bar. Dinner will include Stegmaier House Salad, Aligot French Style Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans with Georgia Pecan Butter, choice of dessert (chocolate cake or cheesecake), beverage service (Coffee, Tea, Iced Tea, Soda), and a cash bar. Entrée choices are as follows: stuffed shrimp scampi, chicken parmesan, teriyaki steak kabobs, or a vegetarian option (mushroom risotto). As a result of the generosity of Henry J. and Linda C. Pownall, our guests will be provided with dinner at no cost. However, dinner capacity is limited, and reservations will be confirmed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please RSVP for the event and dinner (noting your entrée and dessert choices) to Gail Kozich (gail.kozich@wilkes.edu) or 570.408.4715 by 4:00 p.m. Wednesday, 2 April 2025.

DIRECTIONS TO WILKES UNIVERSITY:

GPS: Wilkes University parking can be accessed at 141 S. Main St, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

Detailed directions can be found at:

<https://www.wilkes.edu/about-wilkes/planning-your-visit/directions-to-campus.aspx>

Take Exit 3 (River Street Exit), from PA Route 309N then make a left at traffic light. You are now on River Street. Immediately after turning left onto River Street, you will encounter the first of 8 traffic lights. Continue on River Street to the 8th light where you will turn left (east) onto W. Northampton Street. Continue on Northampton until you reach Main St. and turn right. You can park in the Parking #12 (141 S. Main St. next to the Karambelas Media & Communication Center

Sordoni Art Gallery).

Additional parking can be found in Parking #8 (169 S. Main Street behind University Center on Main (UCOM) with entrance on W. South Street) and Parking #5

(84 W. South Street behind the Henry Student Center with entrances on S. River Street and S. Franklin Street).



detailed campus map (<https://wilkes.university-tour.com/map.php>)

parking (<https://www.wilkes.edu/about-wilkes/planning-your-visit/parking-locations.aspx>)

LOCAL SECTION NEWS:

LOCAL SECTION ELECTION RESULTS:

Chair: Allison Saunders (1 year, 1 Jan. 2025 - 31 Dec. 2025)

Chair-Elect: Megan Youmans (1 year, 1 Jan. 2025 - 31 Dec. 2025)

Treasurer: Holly Bendorf (3 years, 1 Jan. 2025 - 31 Dec. 2027)

Secretary: Sydney Bachman (3 years, 1 Jan. 2025 - 31 Dec. 2027)

Councilor: Donald Mencer (3 years, 1 Jan. 2025 - 31 Dec. 2027)

Alt-Councilor: Dee Casteel (3 years, 1 Jan. 2025 - 31 Dec. 2027)

OPEN POSITIONS IN THE LOCAL SECTION:

Do you want to use your talents to help other chemists in the Susquehanna Valley section? Listed below are examples of positions that need to be filled by willing individuals along with websites that give organizing ideas:

- Susquehanna Valley Local Section Chair-Elect
This three-year position is the usual office taken on by local chemists who want to begin to become more involved in the local section.
- WCC ([Woman Chemists Committee](#)) Chair
Help attract, retain, develop, promote, and advocate for women to positively impact diversity, equity and inclusion in the Society and the profession.
- CMA ([Committee on Minority Affairs](#)) Chair
Help increase the number & participation of racially & ethnically underrepresented scientists in the Society and its governance.
- Project SEED ([Summer Experiences for the Economically Disadvantaged](#)) Coordinator
Coordinators are responsible for establishing programs, identifying mentors, recruiting students, fundraising, and organizing activities such as field trips.
- SCC ([Senior Chemists Committee](#)) Chair
Help improve communication among senior chemists, increase the number of senior chemists' groups, and the level of their engagement within local sections.
- CCEW ([Chemists Celebrate Earth Week](#)) Coordinator
Help promote the positive role that chemistry plays in the protecting our planet.

If you are interested in learning more about these volunteer activities, please contact the section Councilor (Donald Mencer, donald.mencer@wilkes.edu).

LOCAL STEM COMPETITIONS:



A list of all STEM competitions for high school students is posted on our [website](#). If you have any questions about the contests or have suggestions for others, please contact the person indicated on the site. Questions may also be directed to the [Local Section Councilor](#).

2025 UPCOMING LOCAL SECTION MEETINGS:

May 2025: Annual Awards Banquet

REGIONAL ACS NEWS:

MIDDLE ATLANTIC REGIONAL MEETING:



The 53rd Middle Atlantic Regional Meeting (MARM 2025) - “[Celebrating 100 years of Chemistry](#)” will be held at Seton Hall University 28 - 31 May 2025.

Sponsored by the North Jersey Local Section of the ACS

NATIONAL MEETINGS:



Fall 2025 ACS National Meeting

The Fall 2025 national meeting will be a hybrid event.

The meeting will be held 17 - 21 August 2025, and the in-person event will take place in Washington, D.C.

See the [website](#) for more information.

JOIN THE ACS:

If you know of anyone who would benefit from being a member of the American Chemical Society, please direct them to the membership website: <https://www.acs.org/membership.html>

NATIONAL ACS NEWS:

ACS LEGISLATIVE ACTION NETWORK:

Legislation that may impact the chemical enterprise comes before Congress on a regular basis, and the ACS is committed to keeping its members informed and encouraging them to weigh in on high-priority issues. To see the position of the ACS on many legislative issues visit the

ACS LAN website: <https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/policy.html> To find out how to become more active in ACS advocacy activities, see the [advocacy website](#).

Joining the ACS' grassroots legislative advocacy network, ACT4CHEMISTRY will allow you to stay up to date on policy issues and contact legislators on behalf of chemistry and chemists, go to their website, follow the [Act4Chemistry X](#) account, or email advocacy@acs.org.

Act4Chemistry Advocacy Issues. To take action go to the website
<https://www.acs.org/policy/memberadvocacy.html>

Susquehanna Valley Section Web Page: svs-acis.org. Please send any comments about the monthly newsletter to your Local Section Secretary, Sydney Bachman,
sydney.bachman@stellantsystems.com