

**SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER**

---

**MONTHLY DINNER MEETING:**

The four hundred and eightieth meeting of the Susquehanna Valley Section of the American Chemical Society will be held on Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 7:00pm at Academic West 214 on the campus of Bucknell University. The speaker will be Professor Sarah Smith of the Chemistry Department at Bucknell University in Lewisburg. The presentation will be preceded by a buffet dinner at 6:00pm at Academic West 111. Please RSVP to Charlie Guttendorf ([cg029@bucknell.edu](mailto:cg029@bucknell.edu)) by 4:00pm September 10th, who can provide additional information.

***Understanding the Role of Sequence and Structure in the Function and Design of Antimicrobial Peptides***

Professor Sarah Smith  
Bucknell University

**ABSTRACT:** As antibiotic-resistant bacteria spread worldwide, the need to develop novel antimicrobial agents is urgent. We hope to take inspiration from antimicrobial peptides (AMPs), which are small protein fragments produced by organisms throughout nature, and that have broad-spectrum antimicrobial activity. However, there are limitations to the development of therapeutics based on AMPs, including their expense and instability in biological systems. We are working to better understand the relationships between the amino acid sequence, biophysical properties, antimicrobial activity, and specificity of native AMPs. I will discuss our work in identifying the impact of a single amino acid change on the antibacterial properties of a class of AMPs, Cecropins, produced by *Drosophila melanogaster*. I will then describe our successes in designing shorter AMPs based on these Cecropins, and our ongoing work to elucidate the mechanism of action of both the full-length and truncated peptides.



**BIOGRAPHY:** Prof Smith graduated from MIT with degrees in chemistry and biology, performing undergraduate research in the lab of Prof Stephen Lippard. She completed her PhD in 2016 at the University of California, San Diego in bioinorganic chemistry in the lab of Prof Akif Tezcan. She moved to the University of Toronto as a postdoctoral fellow to work with Prof Shana Kelley, using synthetic biology to design electrochemical-based devices for disease detection. She started her independent career at Bucknell University in 2018.

**DINNER:**

Dinner will be at 6:00pm on campus at Academic West 111. Please RSVP to Charlie Guttendorf ([cg029@bucknell.edu](mailto:cg029@bucknell.edu)) by 4:00pm September 10<sup>th</sup>.

---

**DIRECTIONS TO BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY:**

Address of the Academic West Building: 616 Coleman Hall Dr, Lewisburg, PA 17837

<b>East of Lewisburg:</b> 1. Interstate 80 West to Exit 210A 2. Route 15 South 3. At 11th traffic light (the first light after crossing Route 45 (Market Street)), turn left onto Moore Avenue. (Look for the Bucknell Athletic Stadium on the left.)	<b>West of Lewisburg:</b> 1. Interstate 80 East to Exit 210A 2. Route 15 South 3. At 11th traffic light (the first light after crossing Route 45 (Market Street)), turn left onto Moore Avenue. (Look for the Bucknell Athletic Stadium on the left.)
<b>South of Lewisburg:</b> 1. Take Routes 11&15 North 2. When Routes 11 & 15 split, stay on Route 15 3. Approx. 7 miles after Selinsgrove / Shamokin Dam, you'll come to a stop light. Bucknell is on your right. (Look for the Bucknell Athletic Stadium on right.)	<b>North of Lewisburg:</b> 1. Take Route 15 south 2. Once past Interstate 80, turn left on Moore Avenue at the 11th traffic light (the first light after crossing Route 45 (Market Street)). (Look for the Bucknell Athletic Stadium on the left.)

Online campus maps can be found at: <https://www.bucknell.edu/admissions-aid/plan-visit/maps-directions-parking>

---

**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:**

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ Bucknell University

October 2025 @ Wilkes University

November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ Lycoming College

---

---

## LOCAL SECTION AWARD RECIPIENTS 2024-2025

### ACS Longevity Awards

DR. FREDERICK SAULS (50-year member)  
DR. BRUCE WILCOX (50-year member)

### Joseph Priestly Service Award

DR. DONALD MENCER      Wilkes University

### Ron Blatchley High School Chemistry Teacher of the Year Award

MS. DONNA BARRETT      Scranton Preparatory School

### National Chemistry Week Awards

**6-8 Category**   SOPHIA REINER      Upper Dauphin Area School District  
Teacher - Ms. Madison Renn  
**9-12 Category**   KATHERINE LEGG      Honesdale Area School District  
Teacher - Ms. Michelle Tonkin

### David H. Frederick Memorial Awards in High School Chemistry

#### EXAM A WINNERS

GAVIN MAUST	Mid-West High School Teacher - Ms. Jenna Mowery
JAMES KUPETZ	Old Forge Jr./Sr. High School Teacher - Ms. Adrianna Rupprecht
JONAH CAHN	Abington Heights High School Teacher - Ms. Carolyn Siwak
JACE THOMAS	Hanover Area Jr./Sr. High School Teacher - Dr. Jocelyn Holodick-Reed
BLAKE BLASICK	Danville Area High School Teacher - Mr. Paul Dennehy

#### EXAM A RUNNERS-UP

SOPHIA WHITCOMB	Line Mountain High School Teacher - Dr. Shelley Herb-Fausey
JACK PETERS	Selinsgrove High School Teacher- Mr. Alex Hunter
TRINITY BILBAY	Jersey Shore Area Senior High School Teacher - Mr. Alex Hunter
MCKENZIE CAWLEY	Central Columbia High School Teacher - Ms. Leah Kubasek

#### EXAM B WINNERS

RAYMOND CHEN	Mid Valley Secondary Center Teacher - Dr. Jacob Bank
MATTHEW BEDFORD	Scranton Preparatory School Teacher - Ms. Donna Barrett

## EXAM B RUNNERS-UP

KRISTEN KUHN	Mifflinburg Area High School Teacher - Mr. Matthew Wells
LILY HEAD	Honesdale High School Teacher - Michelle Tonkin
KENDALL MATASH	Berwick High School Teacher - Ms. Christine Readler

## College Award Winners

EMILY BIRCHARD	Commonwealth University - Bloomsburg
JULIA REYNOLDS	Bucknell University
HEATHER M. KEMPER	King's College
JUAN MARTINEZ	Lycoming College
JESSICA SUSKI	Misericordia University
GRACE MCDONALD	University of Scranton
CHRISTINA VO	Susquehanna University
SAMANTHA ANDES	Wilkes University

---

## 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](mailto:donald.mencer@wilkes.edu)).

---

---

## REGIONAL ACS MEETINGS:



### *ACS Middle Atlantic Regional Meeting*

The 54<sup>th</sup> Middle Atlantic Regional Meeting (MARM 2026) - “[Molecular Milestone: Crafting a Sweet Future Through Chemistry](#)” will be held in Hershey, PA 17 – 19 May 2026.

MARM 2026 will be an in-person event.

---

## NATIONAL ACS MEETINGS:



### *Spring 2026 ACS National Meeting*

The Spring 2026 national meeting will be a hybrid event. The meeting will be held 22 – 26 March 2026, and the in-person event will take place in Atlanta, Georgia.

Abstract submission ends September 29, 2025!  
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>

---

## 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](mailto: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-accs.org](https://svs-accs.org). Please send any comments about the monthly newsletter to your Local Section Secretary, Sydney Bachman,  
[sydney.bachman@stellantsystems.com](mailto:sydney.bachman@stellantsystems.com)