

Brain boosts for the young



Dr. Olson enjoys a moment at the Science Olympiad National Tournament in Washington, D.C., May 2008, with colleagues who helped administer, proctor, and grade the neuroscience test. (L-R): Jay Churchill (NIH), Dr. Olson, Colleen McNerney (Society for Neuroscience), and Patty Palmietto (Science Olympiad volunteer and a critical care nurse from Missouri).

James Olson, Ph.D., doesn't mind "talking shop." A professor with joint appointments in the Department of Emergency Medicine and the Department of Neuroscience, Cell Biology, and Physiology,

Olson also arranged for the Society for Neuroscience (SfNS) to sponsor two events in the 2007 Science Olympiad National Tournament — where the high school team Olson coaches achieved the highest score in health science, won a special trophy, and earned a trip to the SfNS annual conference in San Diego.

Olson continues to invent imaginative ways to fire up the brain synapses of Science Olympiad students. In March, he organized a clinic at Wright State for Ohio students competing in neuroscience events. In April, he wrote, proctored, and graded the neuroscience event at the Ohio state tournament. In May, he attended the national tournament at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he administered and graded a neuroscience exam of his own creation.

Olson loves his work with Science Olympiad and has no plans to slow down. Sheer enjoyment is reason enough to continue; if he can help improve science education in the U.S., and maybe encourage a few promising young scholars to consider a career in neuroscience, so much the better.

Want to learn more about Science Olympiad?

Science Olympiad: <http://www.soinc.org/>

Ohio Science Olympiad: <http://www.continuinged.ohio-state.edu/scioly/>

Olson rarely misses an opportunity to promote the study of neuroscience. In addition to serving as a research mentor for students and residents, he has delivered lectures for general audiences through Wright State's Mini-Medical School program. What he enjoys most, however, is introducing young learners around the country to the wonders of neuroscience through his work with Science Olympiad.

An international nonprofit organization, Science Olympiad strives to interest K-12 students in science and improve science education. Each year, an estimated 150,000 students from more than 14,000 schools participate in Science Olympiad activities. At the middle and high school level, students form teams to compete in 23 fun yet challenging science-based events during local, state, and national tournaments.

As a Science Olympiad coach, Olson has worked with local middle and high school students for several years teaching cell biology and genetics. In addition, he created a program called "Neuroscience (This is your brain)" that was used in regional competitions across Ohio and adopted as a national trial event.