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Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the MAR14 Meeting of
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Dwight Nicholson Medal Lecture: Science and Society

E. DAN DAHLBERG, Physics- U of Minnesota

I will present some background as to the current “scientific state” of our society and some ideas of how we got into the fix we are in. I will then describe The Physics Force a program we developed to popularize physics. It has proven to be a very successful and entertaining outreach program of the College of Science and Engineering in the University of Minnesota developed to make science exciting and fun for students of all ages, from 6 to 106. The Force performed variations of The Physics Circus, our most popular show, at Disney’s Epcot Center, parts of it were shown on Newton’s Apple and several of us have performed demonstrations on the Knoff-Hoff Show, a very successful German T.V. science program. The goal of The Physics Force is to show students and the public Science is Fun, Science is Interesting, and Science is Understandable. By all measures we have available, we are extremely successful in reaching our goals. In the last three year cycle of our University support about 110,000 residents of Minnesota (or about 2% of the total population) saw a Physics Force performance; over the last decade the total is around 250,000!