



## NIEHS Spotlight

- [Director's Honor Awards](#)
- [International Day Celebration](#)
- [Comments on Strategic Plan](#)
- [Community Outreach: Breast Cancer Coalition](#)
- [Director's Holiday Reception](#)

## Science Notebook

- [NTP: High Throughput Screening](#)
- [Sigma Xi Student Research Conference](#)
- [Artificial Light Stimulates Breast Cancer](#)
- [High-Fat Diet and Pollution Linked to Atherosclerosis](#)
- [Gene May Suppress Lung Inflammation](#)
- [Papers of the Month](#)



## After Hours

- [Astrid Haugen: Wife, Mother, Black Belt](#)



## Did You Know?

- [Holiday Craft Fair 2005](#)
- [eOPF Files Are Here](#)
- [New Resources in the NIEHS Work/Life Center](#)
- [Tom Goehl Retires](#)
- [Blood Drive Results](#)
- [Up and Coming](#)



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# NIEHS Spotlight

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## Director's Honor Awards

*By Blondell Peterson*

Director David Schwartz presented NIH Merit Awards to NIEHS' best during the annual Director's Annual Honor Awards Ceremony on Dec. 15 in the Rodbell Auditorium. Fellows Award for Research Excellence, Unsung Hero and Peer Awards were also presented. NIH Director's Award recipients were recognized at the ceremony as well.

Schwartz said the holiday season is a time for everyone to reflect on the year and be thankful for the things they have and all the potential opportunities in 2006. He also said the award ceremony was a time to publicly recognize some extraordinary individual contributions to the success of the NIEHS mission in 2005.

Schwartz expressed his deep appreciation for the commitment and dedication of all NIEHS employees. He said there were numerous research accomplishments by NIEHS scientists, and many new programs were implemented to address the challenge of focusing on human health. Schwartz noted that national press organizations including the New York Times, LA Times and Wall street Journal newspapers, several magazines and television stations, recognized many of these accomplishments throughout the past year.

Sam Wilson, NIEHS deputy director, read citations and presented the following NIH Merit awards:

### **OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**

#### **Gulf Coast Hurricanes**

#### **Response Team**

Samuel Wilson

Stella Sieber

Allen Dearry

William Stokes

Richard Freed

Brenda Weis

Angie Sanders

Mary Wolfe

Samuel Arbes

Claudia Thompson

Joseph Hughes

Beth Anderson

Gwen Collman

William Suk

Diane Forsythe

Mary Grant



*Michelle Mayo gave the Director a big hug before he presents her with a DERT Individual Award. Photos by Steve McCaw, Image Associates.*

**DIVISION OF EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING  
Individual Awards**

Michelle Mayo  
Claudia Thompson

**Scientific Review, Evaluation, and Award Working Group**

Lisa Archer  
Michelle Mayo  
Elizabeth McMillan

**Environmental Epigenomic Research Initiative**

Fred Tyson  
Jerrold Heindel

**Extramural Research Programs Evaluation Team**

David Balshaw  
Martha Barnes  
Allan Benton  
Gwen Collman  
Dorothy Duke  
Ethel Jackson  
Dennis Lang

Cindy Lawler  
Pat Mastin  
Pamela Moore  
Liam O’Fallon  
Ted Outwater  
Jerry Phelps  
Leslie Reinlib

Shobha Srinivasan  
Anne Thompson  
Claudia Thompson  
Patricia Thompson  
Sally Tinkle  
Ben Van Houten



*Janet Guthrie received an Individual Award from DRCPT.*

**WETB Recompetition Team**

Sharon Beard  
Joseph Hughes  
Carolyn Mason  
Pamela Clark

Ted Outwater  
Sally Eckert-Tillota  
Patricia Thompson

**DIVISION OF INTRAMURAL RESEARCH  
Individual Awards**

June Dunnick  
Vickie Englebright  
Diane Forsythe  
Mary Wolfe

**DIVISION OF RESEARCH COORDINATION, PLANNING AND TRAINING**

**Individual Awards**

Ellen Leadem  
Janet Guthrie

**Office of Communications and Public Liaison News Team**

Christine Bruske Flowers  
Robin Mackar  
John Peterson

**Strategic Planning Workgroup**

Samuel Wilson  
Sheila Newton  
Trevor Archer  
Gwen Collman  
Traci Hall  
Michelle Hooth  
Thomas Kunkel

Cindy Lawler  
Stephanie London  
Frederick Miller  
William Suk  
Jack Taylor  
Clarice Weinberg  
Allen Wilcox

Darryl Zeldin  
Janet Guthrie  
Mary Gant  
Raymond Grissom  
Thomas Hawkins  
William Jirles

**OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT**

**Individual Awards**

Dona McNeill



*Colin Chignell received a certificate for 40 years of Federal service.*

NIH Director’s award recipients Perry Blackshear, Cindy Lawler, Kathy Odenwald and Thorsten Fjellstedt were recognized. The awards were formally presented in Bethesda at NIH on July 18.

In recognition of completing 30 years of service to NIEHS and 40 years of federal service in 2005, the following employees received certificates:

**Federal Service 40 year employee**

Colin Chignell

**NIEHS 30 year employees**

Gary Boorman  
James Clark  
Diane Crawford  
Beverly Hall

John Horton  
Teenette Jones  
Jo Ann Lewis  
Bob Maronpot

Fred Mitchell  
Sharyn Rigsbee

FARE awards were presented to 22 NIEHS postdoctoral fellows for outstanding scientific research. These winners in the 12th annual NIH-wide FARE competition received a \$1,000 stipend to attend a scientific meeting and present their abstract as a poster or seminar.

### **FARE awards**

Michelle Block, Ph.D.  
Aimin Chen, MD, Ph.D.  
Hye-Youn Cho, Ph.D.  
Kuicheon Choi, Ph.D.  
Kyung-Soo Chun, Ph.D.  
Melissa Garcia, Ph.D.  
Miguel Garcia-Diaz, Ph.D.  
Damian Gawel, Ph.D.

Elaine Gay, Ph.D.  
Christopher Halweg, Ph.D.  
Kenichi Imahashi, Ph.D.  
Kaoru Inoue, Ph.D.  
Jennifer Jordan, B.S.  
Yong-Sik Kim, Ph.D.  
Nick Lu, Ph.D.  
Daniel Menendez, Ph.D.

Ruby Hong-Ngoc B. Nguyen,  
Ph.D.  
Nobuaki Nishioka, MD, Ph.D.  
Dario Ramirez, M.Sc., Ph.D.  
Arno Siraki, Ph.D.  
Xuting Wang, Ph.D.  
Ling Yang, Ph.D.



*Alicia Moore received a Peer award.*

Four Peer Awards were presented. Established in 1999, the Peer Award is a unique mechanism for NIEHS employees to recognize coworkers who have consistently provided extraordinary assistance to fellow workers. It includes a monetary award and an engraved jade crystal.

Alicia Moore received a peer award for her dedication and leading role in establishing the NIEHS Disability Advocacy Committee and her personal commitment to increasing disability awareness at NIEHS.

For her strong charismatic leadership, cheerful personality and her “tell me what you need and I will make it happen” attitude, Margarita Roake was recognized with a peer award.

Debra Swope received a Peer award for attaining national recognition for the NIEHS fellows training programs through her dedicated contributions to both leading and befriending fellows.

For continuously going above and beyond the call of duty and ensuring that every aspect of her work is carried out effectively and efficiently, Gail Kestner received a Peer award.



Two NIEHS employees received the Unsung Hero Award. This award is an avenue for supervisors to recognize employees who make valuable contributions that have a significant impact on the programs of the Institute. These contributions are sometimes behind the scenes and might otherwise go unrecognized.

Janice Allen received an Unsung Hero award for exemplary management in her reviews of grant applications including Superfund, metabolomics, MD Anderson P30, Iannaccone PO1 and TIP-all with great skill and perseverance.

Leroy Worth received an Unsung Hero award for remaining a valuable team member of the scientific review branch while completing grant application review work including obesity, Costa's P3, ARCH and EJ.

*Margarita Roake received a Peer Award.*



*Leroy Worth received an Unsung Hero award for his work in reviewing grant applications.*



*Janice Allen received an Unsung Hero Award for her work reviewing grant applications.*

In addition to the awards presented during the ceremony, many other awards NIEHS employees received other awards throughout the year, which were listed in a separate program.

After closing remarks by Schwartz, NIEHS employees departed to the cafeteria for the annual International Day Celebration.

# International Day Celebration

By Blondell Peterson

After the conclusion of the annual Honor Awards ceremony, Director David Schwartz invited everyone to adjourn to the cafeteria for the International Day celebration.



*The NIEHS brass band played Christmas songs while employees sang along.*



*Phil Hanson was the emcee for the program. Photos by Steve McCaw, Image Associates.*



*Xiaolin Zheng, Hui Gong, Lingfang Huang and Ling Yang set up the display table for the Chinese New Year's celebration.*

With more than 30 countries represented by NIEHS scientists, Schwartz said the theme for the event, "Holiday Traditions Around the World," was very fitting. He thanked the Diversity Council, Equal Employment Opportunity committee and the Office of Management for reminding everyone that diversity is a part of each employee's life and work day.

Phil Hanson, an NIEHS human resource specialist, was the emcee for the holiday program that included Christmas songs played by the NIEHS brass band, Chinese and Polish dance troupe performances and Puerto Rican music.

Tables stretched along the center of the cafeteria overflowed with international food samplings including Chinese, Korean, German, Japanese, Italian, American and Indian cuisine.

The walls of the cafeteria were lined with tables displaying holiday traditions from countries around the world. Some also had food samples such as German cookies, Korean rice cake, Chinese sugar candy and Japanese tuna rolls made from tuna, rice and vegetables wrapped in seaweed.

NIEHS employees who helped with the set up for the event included:

Jeff Card, Debra Greer, James Voltz, Gino Limmon, Alexandra Heinloth, Mehrnaz Fatemi, Juanita Roman, Ewa Marczak, Darryl Zeldin, Jessica Sherman, Hui Hu, Soojung Park, Noriko Nakamura, Jinsmaa Hi, Sudha Prasad, Beby Jayarm, Lysandra Castor, Karina Rodriguez, David Goulding, Bill Quattlebaum, Xiaolin Zheng, Ling Yang, Xiaoping Yang, Rita Ray, Alyson Scoltock, Rodrigo Franco, Cynthia Radford, Andrea Lynn, Jinsmaa Yunden, Mehmaz Fatemi, Kiki Ton, Damian Gawel and Kasia Bebenek.



*A Polish dance troupe performed a lively routine for the audience.*



# Comments on Strategic Plan Reflect Wide Range of Interests: Draft Plan Now on Web

*By Colleen Chandler*

The request for input on the NIEHS Strategic Plan drew nearly 400 responses representing a spectrum of interests from academia, advocacy groups and the general public.

NIEHS Director David Schwartz solicited public comments to assist in the creation of a strategic plan for the Institute. A draft of that plan is now available at: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/external/plan2006/home.htm>.

An electronic questionnaire to gather feedback was posted on the NIEHS web site from June 22 through Aug. 5, but comments were also accepted via mail, fax and e-mail. The electronic questionnaire posed five questions:

- What are the disease processes and public health concerns that are relevant to environmental health sciences?
- How can environmental health sciences be used to understand how biological systems work, why some individuals are more susceptible to disease, or why individuals with the same disease may have very different clinical outcomes?
- What are the major opportunities and challenges in global environmental health?
- What are the environmental exposures that need further consideration?
- What are the critical needs for training the next generation of scientists in environmental health?

The web site generated 379 responses, of which 121 were from universities and research institutions, 26 from within NIEHS. Twenty additional responses came through the mail, by fax or e-mail.

According to an analysis of all survey results conducted by the Office of Science, Policy, and Planning, the survey responses indicate many respondents are concerned about the importance of understanding the mechanisms by which environmental chemicals cause or contribute to the disease process. Other major concerns cited were disease prevention, early intervention in asymptomatic patients, and public education about environmental exposures.

Among the disease processes specifically suggested for NIEHS focus: cancer – particularly breast and lung, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, neurological dysfunction – specifically Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, senility and cognition, immune system diseases like autoimmune disorders, allergies and immunosuppression, developmental abnormalities including birth defects, autism and learning disabilities, obesity, endocrine disruptors, reproductive dysfunction, diabetes, infectious diseases, and emerging technology such as nanotechnology and genetically modified organisms and food.

Respondents indicated that while they felt environmental toxicants provide a highly relevant means of studying all chronic diseases, they feel more information is needed on how research results can be extrapolated from animals to humans.

Among the challenges ahead in global environmental health, responses included these major themes:

- Coordination and collaboration across the global community;
- Infrastructure to monitor and report on global health issues;
- Public education on environmental issues, beginning in childhood; and
- Interventions related to industrialization and pollution control.

# Community Outreach: Breast Cancer and the Environment

By Colleen Chandler

NIEHS, along with NCI, sponsored the Breast Cancer and the Environment Resource Centers conference Nov. 9-11 in East Lansing, Mich. The conference is an annual event, and the 2005 conference focused on early environmental exposure.



The BCERC program is a network of collaborative research centers comprised of scientists, clinicians and advocates who focus on the interaction between chemical, physical and social factors with genetic factors on breast development. According to the BCERC web site, the \$35 million project will span 7 years.

The centers that make up the network are located at:

- The Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.
- Michigan State University in East Lansing.
- University of California, San Francisco.
- University of Cincinnati.

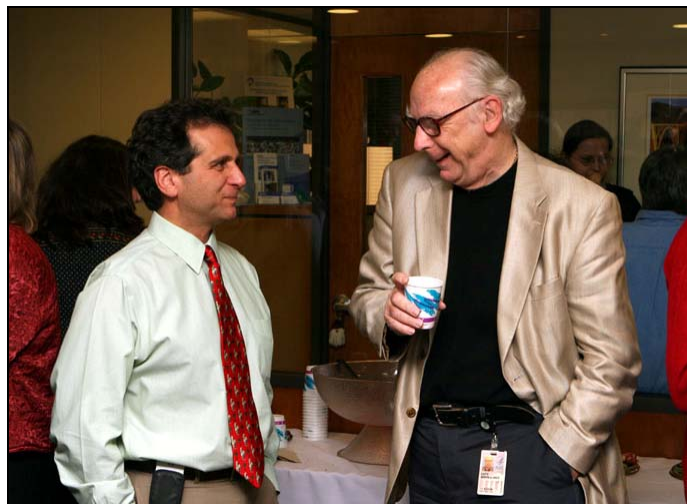
*From left: Les Reinlib is program director in DERT and serves on the program committee that advises the network on research issues. Gwen Collman, chief of the Susceptibility and Population Health Branch in DERT, provided a summary and analysis at the close of the 2005 annual conference for the Breast Cancer and the Environment Resources Centers. High school students Leah Goldman and Karen Brachot worked with a center-funded scientist looking at environmental links to breast cancer at Tufts University Medical Center. (Photo courtesy of GNBCC)*

NIEHS representatives serve on the steering committee, which governs the network. Another committee, a working group of the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council, advises the centers

network, provides information on potential areas of interest and makes recommendations on future research. It also provides progress reports and updates to the NIEHS director, according to the BCERC web site.

The program was organized by the Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition on Long Island, N.Y. to provide support for students interested in research. The girls learned techniques used to assay environmental chemicals, biological responses and structural and functional changes in mammary gland tissues. AVON, another sponsor of the annual conference, provided a travel grant for the girls to attend the conference, where they presented a poster of their work and met with scientists and advocates. Lauren Weinberg, right, is the director of the Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition.

# Director's Holiday Reception



## Cheers!

*It might be Styrofoam instead of crystal, but that didn't diminish the holiday spirit at NIEHS Director David Schwartz' holiday reception on Dec. 21. From left: Gary Bird, a visiting scientist in the Laboratory of Signal Transduction, and Becky Boyles, a biologist, also in the LST, toasted the occasion, bottom photo. Meanwhile, Schwartz chats with Scientific Director Lutz Birnbaumer, top photo. Photos by Steve McCaw, Image Associates.*



# Science Notebook

## NTP: High Throughput Screening

*By Blondell Peterson*

The National Toxicology Program continually seeks new ways to test for the toxicity of more compounds that make up potentially life-saving drugs each year. High Throughput Screening promises to alleviate the bottleneck effect in the discovery process because it allows a researcher to effectively conduct hundreds of experiments at once through a combination of modern robotics and other specialized laboratory hardware.

The NTP sponsored a HTS Assays workshop Dec. 14-15 in Crystal City, Virginia to provide information about HTS techniques and discuss using the technology for NTP toxicology screening. The workshop was

held in conjunction with the formation of a NTP HTS Faculty at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

The main purpose of the Faculty is to:

- develop and implement a strategy for the use of HTS assays by the NTP,
- serve as the focal point for the design and evaluation of proposed HTS studies carried out by the NTP, and
- serve as an interface between NTP and the NIH Molecular Libraries Initiative.

While attending the workshop, Raymond Tice, deputy director of the NTP Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods, unveiled another dimension to the Faculty which he said would expedite the development of HTS assays with the NTP. Tice said scientists outside of NIEHS will be invited to join the HTS Faculty in order to take advantage of their experience with the technology and exchange ideas. For example, pharmaceutical scientists use HTS assays to identify a compound for future development, and they typically focus on strong interactions and not toxicity. Therefore, they test at lower doses using relatively few assays. When testing for toxicity, NTP scientists must test at higher doses and use many more assays in order to not miss potential toxic effects. Tice said that pharmaceutical scientists have a wealth of experience using HTS techniques, and this knowledge can benefit NIEHS researchers in the NTP as the HTS Faculty begins to develop and apply this technology through assays.

“We are trying to identify assays that might help us predict toxicity like cancer or reproductive effects,” Tice said. “So we hope the HTS is going to help us identify chemicals we think should have priority for future comprehensive testing.”

According to Tice, the NTP began this task by sending 1,408 chemicals to the MLI at the NIH. The NTP has toxicological data for these chemicals. The chemicals will be run through several assays that may be of interest to NIEHS based on the pathway that is pertinent to the kinds of diseases scientists want to prevent. The data that is collected will be stored in a mutually-accessible database.

The NTP joined forces with the NIH MLI in August of 2005. This collaboration assisted the MLI project leaders with development of their screening program, and it provided the NTP with access to established testing laboratories.

The HTS Faculty will meet monthly. Individuals interested in joining the HTS Faculty should contact Tice at [tice@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:tice@niehs.nih.gov). According to Tice, the goal is for the Faculty to include representatives from each major program within the NIEHS. The first meeting will be held in late January 2006. Periodically, the Faculty will hold joint meetings with scientists at EPA who also are involved in the development of HTS assays for toxicological testing. Such meetings will help scientists in both organizations work toward a common goal.

## **Sigma Xi Student Research Conference**

NIEHS got a little local publicity on Elon University’s web-based campus news service, which cited NIEHS as a major sponsor of the Sigma Xi annual conference held Nov. 4-6 in Seattle.

The article, which appears at <http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=25081>, focuses on Elon junior Geoffrey Lynn, who took the first-place prize for his presentation at the 2005 Sigma Xi Student Research Conference. Two other Elon students also won awards for the presentations. Lynn is a chemistry major with no connection to NIEHS. His presentation was entitled “A Kinetic, Mechanistic and Characterization Study of Silver Nanoparticles Synthesized in the Reduction of Silver Oxide by Hydrogen Gas in the Aqueous Phase.”

The article said NIEHS was a major sponsor of the event.

NIEHS, through its postdoctoral programs, works closely with Sigma Xi to provide a variety of programs to support science and engineering training and career development. Sigma Xi is an international honor society of science researchers and engineers. Its headquarters is near NIEHS in Research Triangle Park.

## **Artificial Light Stimulates Breast Cancer**

NIH-funded research shows nighttime exposure to artificial light stimulates the growth of human breast tumors by suppressing melatonin, a key hormone that regulates sleep.

NIEHS and NCI funded the study, which was conducted by researchers at Bassett Research Institute at the Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown, N.Y., and the Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. The study appears in the Dec. 1 issue of *Cancer Research*, and links melatonin levels to the development of cancerous tumors.

As part of the study, researchers injected human breast cancer cells into lab mice. Once the cells developed into tumors, the tumors were implanted into female rats. Meanwhile, researchers collected blood samples from 12 healthy, premenopausal women during three different time frames – daytime; nighttime after two hours of darkness; and nighttime after 90 minutes of exposure to bright fluorescent light. The blood samples were then pumped directly through the developing tumors, enabling researchers to conclude that melatonin suppressed tumor development and growth.

NIH grants administrator at NIEHS, Les Reinlib, said the risk of developing breast cancer is about five times higher in industrialized nations, suggesting the increasing use of artificial lighting at night is a significant factor.

## **High-Fat Diet and Pollution Linked to Atherosclerosis**

New research shows a clear link between the combination of high-fat diet and fine particulate exposure in the development of atherosclerosis in lab mice. The study may explain why people who live in highly polluted areas have a higher risk of heart disease.

NIEHS and the EPA funded a two-year study, conducted by researchers at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and the New York University School of Medicine. Mice fed a high-fat diet and exposed to air polluted with fine particulates had 1.5 times more plaque production than mice with the same diet but exposed to clean air, the study showed.

The study appears in the Dec. 21 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and indicates the combination of fine-particulate exposure and high-fat diet work together to increase the development of atherosclerosis.

# Gene May Suppress Lung Inflammation

A gene that plays an important role in immune function may also play a critical role in suppressing chronic lung inflammation, NIEHS researchers discovered. That conclusion comes from a study published in the Dec. 7 issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Society*.

According to the study, mice prone to lung cancer and that also had an altered or removed toll-like receptor 4, known as TLR4, had about 60 percent more tumors than mice with intact receptors. The study highlights the protective role of this gene, a part of the innate immune system that acts as the body's first line of defense.

Researchers administered a preservative known to cause lung inflammation to determine TLR4's role in inflammation. They then measured tumors in mice with both functional and altered TLR4 genes.

Steve Kleeberger, lab chief in the Laboratory of Respiratory Biology, said TLR4 accounts for a significant portion of the tumors per mouse. He described the role of TLR4 as a braking mechanism in tumor development. When removed, tumor development increases, he said.

## Papers of the Month

By Jerry Phelps

1. Taylor B, Skelly D, Demarchis LK, Slade MD, Galusha D, Rabinowitz PM. Proximity to pollution sources and risk of amphibian limb malformation. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2005 Nov;113(11):1497-501.

**Implications:** Although the human health relevance of these findings remains to be determined, they are disturbing none-the-less. Future studies need to focus on determining the exact chemical or mixture of exposures that produce these effects and whether similar exposures in humans would produce adverse effects. Another key need is identifying human health effects that are analogous to frog limb deformities by establishing gene sequence homology between frogs and humans.

2. Strom SS, Gu Y, Gruschkus SK, Pierce SA, Estey EH. Risk factors of myelodysplastic syndromes: a case-control study. *Leukemia*. 2005 Nov;19(11):1912-8.

**Implications:** This study suggests a variety of factors that may influence the development of the diverse types of MDS. The environmental exposures are common and their impact on the risk of MDS in the population as a whole may be significant. Overall the results suggest the origins of the disease are complex underlying the diversity of the conditions. The authors conclude that future studies should try to link exposures with specific types of MDS.

3. Mazumder DN, Steinmaus C, Bhattacharya P, von Ehrenstein OS, Ghosh N, Gotway M, Sil A, Balmes JR, Haque R, Hira-Smith MM, Smith AH. Bronchiectasis in persons with skin lesions resulting from arsenic in drinking water. *Epidemiology*. 2005 Nov;16(6):760-5.

**Implications:** These results add to the growing evidence that arsenic causes not only lung cancer, but non-malignant lung disease as well. The authors conclude that future research on risk of arsenic-induced lung disease in susceptible populations, such as children or the elderly, may be useful in evaluating the safety of current arsenic drinking water standards.

4. Vermeulen R, Lan Q, Zhang L, Gunn L, McCarthy D, Woodbury RL, McGuire M, Podust VN, Li G, Chatterjee N, Mu R, Yin S, Rothman N, Smith MT. Decreased levels of CXC-chemokines in serum of benzene-exposed workers identified by array-based proteomics. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2005 Nov 22;102(47):17041-6. Epub 2005 Nov 14.

**Implications:** These results point out the usefulness of employing proteomics as a tool for the discovery

of early biomarkers of exposure to environmental chemicals. Theoretically, similar analyses could be performed to identify susceptible individuals or could be a diagnostic tool for discovering the cause of disease. The study also sheds light on the possible mechanisms of the immunosuppressive effects of benzene.



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# After Hours

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## Astrid Haugen: Wife, Mother, Black Belt

*By Blondell Peterson*

When Astrid Haugen graduated from eighth grade and was asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she quickly said, "I want to be a Master one day and own my own school." Since she was so impressed with martial arts and Bruce Lee, her parents thought it was a logical answer.

Now a scientist in the NIEHS DNA repair lab, Haugen has made great strides toward fulfilling the goal she set in junior high school. She is an assistant instructor at K. S. Lee Martial Arts Academy in Cary, and she will test for her second degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do in May or June of 2006. "Being a black belt is really the beginning of training, and not the end," Haugen said. "It is a milestone, and nothing more. I still have a lot of learning and improving to do, especially in my self-defense techniques and ability to focus."

Haugen says her goals are more of a one-day-at-a-time philosophy. Everyday she hopes to improve her knowledge and skills in martial arts. "My intention is to be the best martial artist I can be," Haugen said. "The only way I can do this is to look at what I can learn today. Becoming a Master is down the road at this point."

According to Haugen it takes approximately 8-10 years to become a master. Students who test for master must learn 20 forms and 140 self defense techniques, and spar with 5 people at the same time. In addition to proficiency in at least one weapon, breaking requirements are intensified. Her instructor, a 7<sup>th</sup> degree black belt, broke fourteen slabs of marble in a demonstration last summer. Those who test for Master normally go to Korea to train with other masters prior to their test. "It's hard enough being a scientist, and a good wife and mother," she laughs.



*From left, John Stranzl, Jr, Astrid Haugen and Master Kang Seok Lee gather for photos after Haugen's husband received his deputy black belt. (Photo Courtesy of Astrid Haugen.)*

Fortunately, spending time with her husband, John, and her eight-year-old son, Kent, isn't a challenge since the threesome trains together at least two nights each week. Haugen's husband has a black belt and her son has a red belt in Tae Kwon Do. Haugen said the school they attend is unique. Out of several families who attend evening classes, 5 families that Haugen is close friends with, consist of all black belts. At Haugen's school, children and adults train together and only break off into belt groups for sparring or other specific techniques. The 11 forms and 120 self-defense techniques are common for all students testing for a black belt. Adults and children training together is unusual among martial arts schools.

Learning the forms and self-defense techniques can be a challenge, especially for children. Haugen's son, who has trained since he was 5 years old, can attest to that. "When he had earned a green belt, he wanted to quit because he wasn't ready to test for three testing periods," Haugen said. "He said it was just so hard to learn the green belt form and self defense techniques. "I almost let him quit because he was so adamant, but I told him to just keep trying. He did and when he got that

orange belt, he was so proud of himself! It's been smooth sailing for him ever since. Now, he even performs with the school's demonstration team." Haugen's son will test for his deputy black belt in the spring. His next step is knowing all the forms and self-defense techniques from all the lower belts and cinder block breaking when he tests for his black belt.

Haugen said she is pleased that her son learned the valuable lesson about how to persevere to reach a goal. Another reason Haugen enjoys having her son come to class with her is the other values that are taught along with the physical training. Master Kang Seok Lee requires that each student learn, and be able to recite, the "ten commandments" --a list of instructions for conduct in and outside of class. The "commandments" are:

1. Be loyal to your country,
2. Honor your parents,
3. Be loving between husband and wife,
4. Be cooperative between brother and sister,
5. Be faithful to your friends,
6. Be respectful to your elders,
7. Establish trust between teacher and student,
8. Use good judgment before killing living things,
9. Never retreat in battle, and
10. Always finish what you start.

Haugen said her favorite "commandment" is "always finish what you start." "I'm also a writer," she said. "So, every time I start to write another book, I keep that in mind-that I've got to finish it."



Under the alias of, “Lora Kenton,” Haugen co-authors historical romance novels with her best friend, Susan Sipal. The pen name is a combination of Sipal’s daughter’s name, Lora, and Haugen’s son’s name, Kent. Both Haugen and Sipal write separately as well. Right now Haugen’s publisher is holding her newest novel, and will publish it at an opportune promotional time. “There are thousands of manuscripts out there. It’s all about timing and marketing,” Haugen said.

There are several genres of romance novels, according to Haugen. Historical novels have a story line set before World War II. She also writes contemporary novels or “Chicklits.” According to Haugen they are written about today’s woman, ranging from the twenty-something to the woman who’s gone through a divorce, or seen her children go off to college. Haugen writes more about the thirty-five and older woman starting a new phase in her life. Haugen said examples of movies that carry this type of story line are, “Something’s Gotta Give,” “Under the Tuscan Sun,” or “Waiting to Exhale.”

In a case of life imitating art, Haugen met her husband at Tae Kwon Do class. “I was conducting some training sessions, and he started coming to observe,” she laughs.

Romance bloomed, and now the couple shares the distinction of having martial arts Black Belts. The couple, now assist instructors at the school while Haugen’s son trains and performs with the school’s demonstration team. The team performs at schools and other organizations. Their demonstrations include forms, self defense techniques and breaking boards and cinder blocks.

Haugen said she plans to make the trek to Korea with Master Lee in the future. “Nothing would be better than going to Korea with Master Lee,” she said. “He knows the country. Also, I would get to practice with Tae Kwon Do martial artists in the land where the art was born.”



## Did You Know?

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### **Holiday Craft Fair 2005**

*By Colleen Chandler*

Vendors lined the mall areas from the C building through the F building for the NIEHS Holiday Craft Fair on Dec. 8. The fair, an annual event, started in 1992 as a creative project initiated by the local chapter of the Federal Women’s Program.

Sarah O'Donnell, who organizes the event each year, credits then-chapter president Brenda Deck with doing all the work to establish the craft fair. O'Donnell has been organizing the event since 2001, assigning space and ensuring vendors have the needed tables, chairs and bulletin board space for displays. "Since the Craft Fair is such a great concept and provides some type of morale for the institute, I volunteered to keep it going," O'Donnell said.

Sharon Sloane has done needlework for more than 40 years. Her beadwork includes bracelets, earrings, necklaces and watches of glass, seed beads and Australian crystal. She also offers needlework, with small framed pieces, and sometimes pillows. The indoor market, she said, is a good place to see how well different kinds of merchandise are received.



*It was the second year at the fair for Sharon Sloane, whose husband, Dick, promotes environmental responsibility as a resource recovery specialist at NIEHS. Sharon describes herself as a "hobbyist" who brings her wares, including beadwork and needlework, to the annual craft market. ( Photo by Dick Sloane)*

Initially, the craft fair began with about 25 vendors, but has more than doubled that number. It is held during the holiday season each year, and many vendors offer holiday fare. O'Donnell said the number of employees participating is increasing. Vendors keep the proceeds of their sales while offering employees a chance to get some of their holiday shopping done on their lunch breaks. The fair runs from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. to accommodate variable lunch breaks.



*The annual craft fair features home-baked and hand-crafted goodies. It spans the mall areas of the C, D, E and F buildings. The number of vendors has more than doubled since the first craft fair in 1992. 2003 file (Photo by Colleen Chandler)*

# eOPF files are Here

*By Colleen Chandler*

Personnel files are now just a click away. Well, almost.

As part of the E-Gov initiative within NIH to provide employees with easier and faster access to their Official Personnel Folder records, those cumbersome files are being converted to an electronic storage medium. NIH officials said the physical files will still exist, at least for now, but the idea is to move away from the massive storage requirements of the old paper versions. The eOPF initiative, as it is called, was officially launched late last year.

The new electronic files will be accessible 24 hours a day through an automated system. Eventually, officials said, the system will be fully Internet-based to allow access anywhere at any time. Currently, however, employees can only access their records from a recognized computer address, such as their office computers.

According to a presentation by Bob Specter, eOPF Implementation Team member, the benefits of electronic personnel records include:

- Allowing employees to view or print documents 24 hours a day instead of having to request your file and wait several days.
- Allowing employees to monitor their own personal information such as address and emergency contact information, which ensures greater accuracy.
- Less people will handle personnel files, resulting in less potential for misfiled documents.
- Employees can sign up for e-mail notification each time a document is added to their file.
- Electronic files are more secure than paper, last longer than paper files, and are easy to back up, and hence, recover.
- Government costs associated with storing, maintaining and retrieving records are reduced.
- Employees can search for specific documents.

The electronic files are secured with full encryption, and every transaction on the system is logged. It is backed up daily, with weekly backups stored off-site. The automated system requires security certification from both OPM and the Department of Health and Human Services, and access is further restricted by the DHHS firewall, another electronic security measure designed to stop unauthorized access.

The eOPF effort is expected to be fully implemented throughout DHHS by summer, and in all federal agencies by summer 2008, according to the eOPF web site.

## **New Resources in the NIEHS Work/Life Center**

There are a number of new books and CDs available for checkout in the NIEHS Work/Life Center just outside the library. A new web site for the center is expected to debut in the near future. It will provide a summary of resources available to NIEHS employees and contractors. Topics range from aging and retirement, birth and child rearing, and crisis management. The center also provides information on career enhancement, skill training and career counseling.

### New Books:

- The 16 Sixteen Personality Types – Descriptions for Self-Discovery
- The New Retirement – The Ultimate Guide to the Rest of your Life
- Stop Living Your Job & Start Living your Life
- Being Together – Working Apart
- What you can Change and What you Can't
- Happiness – The Science behind your smile
- Total Relaxation – Healing Practices for Body, Mind & Spirit
- 50 Simple Steps you can take to Improve your Personal Finances
- Understanding Your Grief
- Crossing the Bridge – A journey in Self-Esteem, Relationships and Life Balance
- Life Balance – How to Convert Professional Success into Personal Happiness
- Team Building Activities
- Authentic Happiness

### CDs:

- Child Safety
- Child Development – The First Two Years
- Laugh and Learn about Childbirth
- Baby's 1<sup>st</sup> Months – What Do We Do Now?
- Laugh and Learn about Breastfeeding
- ABC's of Newborn Baby Care
- Relaxation

Material can be checked out at the library desk.



*The NIEHS Work/Life Center is located near the library entrance in the basement of the A building. (Photo by Colleen Chandler)*

# Tom Goehl Retires

Tom Goehl, editor-in-chief of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, retired at the end of 2005. Jim Burkhardt, science editor, is now acting editor-in-chief.

Goehl came to NIEHS in 1982 as an NTP project office in the fields of chemistry, inhalation technology and toxicokinetics. His primary responsibilities revolved around monitoring labs conducting toxicology studies across the United States. He became science editor of EHP in 1994, and editor-in-chief in 2001.

In 2002, Goehl received the NIH Merit Award for leadership, creative management and effective utilization of staff in the production of EHP.



*Tom Goehl (File Photo by Colleen Chandler)*

## Blood Drive Results

A total of 51 people signed up to donate blood at the December blood drive. Of that number, 46 units of blood were collected for the American Red Cross. None of the donors were first-time donors. Blood drives are held quarterly at NIEHS.

## Up and Coming

- A refresher course for people who work with radioactive material will be offered **Jan. 18** at 2 p.m. in room D350. Refresher courses are required at least every two years for people who work with active radiation. For more information, contact Bill Fitzgerald at 541-0325.
- The nVision Travel Training Course will be held **Jan. 18** from 9 a.m. 3 p.m. in Nottingham Hall, room 204A. nVision is a modernization and update to the NIH Data Warehouse. Students will learn how to retrieve information and plan business travel for NIH employees. To register, call A'tondra Carree at 541-7883.
- A Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance will be held **Jan. 24** at 10 a.m. in the Rodbell auditorium. James Rodgers, a retired Durham public school teacher, will speak on the topic, "The Content of Their Character."
- The NIEHS Work Life Center career counselor will be available **Jan. 24** for individual, confidential career consultations. To schedule a session, contact the NIH Work Life Center at (301) 435-1619. This is a free service for all NIH employees.

The *e-Factor*, which is produced by the Office of Communications and Public Liaison, is the staff newsletter at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. It is published as a communication service to NIEHS employees. We welcome your comments and suggestions. The content is not copyrighted. It can be downloaded and reprinted without permission. If you are an editor who wishes to use our material in your publication, we ask that you send us a copy for our records.

# eFactor

Your On-Line Source for NIEHS News



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