

# nih record



ABOVE • As a 'Rock Star of Science,' Dr. Francis Collins recently performed on stage. See p. 16.

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'Scientist-in-Chief' Welcomed

## President Obama Visits NIH to Tout ARRA Benefits

By Rich McManus



President Barack Obama at NIH

President Barack Obama spent about an hour at NIH on Sept. 30, touring a Clinical Research Center laboratory with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and getting updates on scientific research before delivering a 15-minute address to a packed Masur Auditorium. He congratulated NIH for getting the first \$5 billion of a \$10.4 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act appropriation out the door by the end of fiscal 2009.

"I'm here to talk about our nation's commitment to research," Obama said. "The work you do is not easy. It takes a great deal of patience and persistence. But it holds incredible promise for the health of our people and the future of our nation and our world... Today we're announcing that we've awarded \$5 bil-

lion—that's with a 'b'—in grants through the Recovery Act to conduct cutting-edge research all across America, to unlock treatments to diseases that have long plagued

SEE OBAMA VISIT, PAGE 6

## Pioneers, Innovators Celebrated at Ceremony

By Rich McManus

As FY 2009 wore to a close with NIH disbursing some \$5 billion in ARRA money, the 115 grantees who won Pioneer Awards, New Innovator awards and Transformative R01's—representing an investment totaling \$348 million over 5 years (some of which is ARRA money)—might seem a relative drop in the bucket. But in that bucket lie high hopes for scientific breakthroughs, said NIH director Dr. Francis Collins, who presided over the fifth annual NIH Director's Pioneer Award Symposium Sept. 24-25 in Masur Auditorium.

"This could be called a celebration of innovation," said Collins, who explained that all three award components "are intended to be out-of-the-box." The grants are paid for out of the Common Fund, part of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, and represent 30 percent of that fund's value. "We hope to maintain that percentage, or grow it, in years to come," Collins said.

SEE PIONEERS, PAGE 4

Competition Across Time Zones

## 26th Annual Institute Challenge Relay Draws 105 Teams

By Valerie Lambros

For the better part of an hour prior to the 26th annual Institute Challenge Relay on Sept. 17, it looked as though the race might not happen. The skies had opened up, drenching race organizers and forcing arriving teams and supporters to take cover under trees and on the front porch of Bldg 1.



NIAID's John Thomas smiles amid the raindrops.

Runners paced along the porch glancing skyward, but nothing could dampen the mood or derail the determination of the 105 teams that signed up for the event on campus.

SEE RELAY RACE, PAGE 8



## briefs

### APAO Solicits Award Nominations

The NIH Asian and Pacific Islander American Organization (APAO) will continue its tradition of honoring NIH employees with significant contributions in the following two categories: an employee in the field of management who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of Asian and Pacific Americans (APA); an APA researcher/scientist who has realized significant accomplishments in biomedical research.

The awardees will be honored with a plaque of recognition from APAO at its annual holiday awards luncheon on Dec. 16 in Wilson Hall, Bldg. 1.

A review committee composed of APAO members from several ICs will evaluate nominations. All nominations must be received electronically by Friday, Nov. 20 for consideration. To make a nomination, send a 1-page statement and, if applicable, a CV to Phyllis Chui, [chuiph@mail.nlm.nih.gov](mailto:chuiph@mail.nlm.nih.gov), (301) 435-7027.

Questions about the awards or APAO's mission may be directed to Rashmi Gopal-Srivastava, APAO president, at [gopalr@mail.nih.gov](mailto:gopalr@mail.nih.gov), (301) 402-4336.

### American Indian, Alaska Native Heritage Month

The ninth annual NIH American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month program will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 4 from 11 a.m. to noon at Natcher Conference Center, with a poster session to follow. This year's program will feature a scientific speaker and cultural performance.

Dr. Patricia Nez Henderson will speak on the topic "Indian Country Tobacco-free & Smoke-free Policy: The Navajo Experience." She is vice president of the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health, a nonprofit health organization in Rapid City, S. Dak., and is a member of the Diné (Navajo) tribe.

The cultural performance will feature the dance troupe Red Crooked Sky, a collaborative mix of American Indians cultivating and promoting positive cultural awareness through traditional and contemporary dance. A reception will follow.

A poster session co-sponsored by the Fogarty International Center and NHLBI will be open from 1 to 3 p.m. The posters will feature research of projects from the Native American Research Centers for Health program, funded by the Indian Health Service in collaboration with NIH. This event is co-sponsored by the NIH American

Indian/Alaska Native Employee Council, the NIH Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management and FIC.

Sign language interpreters will be provided. Individuals who need reasonable accommodation to participate should contact Carlton Coleman at (301) 496-2906 (v) or by Federal Relay Service 1-800-443-3701 (TTY). For program information, contact Dr. James Herrington at (301) 496-4784 or [herringtonj@mail.nih.gov](mailto:herringtonj@mail.nih.gov).

### Health and Wellness Fair at Exec. Blvd.

The Office of Acquisition and Logistics Management is hosting a Health and Wellness Fair on Tuesday, Oct. 20 in the parking lot of 6011 Executive Blvd. It begins at 9 a.m. with remarks by Diane Frasier, OALM director. There will be exhibition booths from an array of vendors, NIH institutes, Suburban Hospital, Washington Adventist Hospital and area restaurants. There will also be blood pressure/cholesterol/blood sugar, eye/ear, dental, vision and diabetes screenings. A fitness instructor will demonstrate exercises and speakers will discuss stress management, managing work and life and other topics; handouts will be included.

### NIH Library Open House, Oct. 22

Join your colleagues at the NIH Library Open House on Thursday, Oct. 22 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Bldg. 10. Vendor and staff demonstrations will include genetics, bioinformatics, writing center and information retrieval and management products and services. Get answers to your specific questions. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, call (301) 496-1080. See scheduled events at <http://nihlibrary.nih.gov>.

### Annual Leave: Use It or Lose It

Annual leave in excess of the maximum carryover balance (in most cases 240 hours) is normally forfeited if not used by the end of the current leave year. If you have not already planned to take those excess hours of annual leave, you should discuss your leave with your supervisor now while there is still time to schedule it. Your bi-weekly Leave and Earnings Statement tells you how much annual leave you must use so that you will not lose it when the leave year ends on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010.

In spite of planning, circumstances sometimes arise that prevent you from taking leave that has been scheduled and approved earlier during the leave year. In such cases, you and your supervisor are jointly responsible for ensuring that any "use or lose" leave is officially rescheduled. This year, your "use or lose" leave must be scheduled not later than Saturday, Nov. 21.

If you or your supervisor have questions about "use or lose" leave, contact your administrative officer.



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nih record



Molecular biologist Dr. Bonnie Bassler

## Bacterial Conversations Are Topic of Stetten Lecture

Bacteria aren't usually considered sociable creatures. But despite the prevailing vision of them as solitary, walled-off entities, bacteria have chemical languages that allow them to communicate with their own kind and even with bacteria outside their own species. Quorum sensing, a form of census taking, is essential when bacteria need to synchronize their behavior, as marine bacteria do when populations in the ocean glow and as certain pathogens do before they acquire virulence in human hosts.

Dr. Bonnie Bassler, a molecular biologist at Princeton University, describes her research as "eavesdropping on bacterial conversations" in order to translate their multiple chemical languages. She will discuss her research in this year's DeWitt Stetten, Jr. Lecture, titled, "Intra- and Inter-Species Cell-to-Cell Communication in Bacteria." The talk, which is part of the NIH Director's Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series and is sponsored by NIGMS, will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 21 at 3 p.m. in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10.

Bassler and her research team have dissected the molecular processes involved in bacterial signaling. They have discovered that the luminous marine bacterium *Vibrio harveyi* and the pathogen *Vibrio cholerae* secrete chemicals called autoinducers that are detected by specific sensor proteins and they have traced the ensuing cascades of cell responses. Bassler believes that learning about the mechanisms of bacterial communication will ultimately shed light on how cells communicate in multicellular organisms, including human beings.

In addition, understanding quorum sensing could lead to drugs that are superior to current ones that kill bacteria. Medicines that disrupt

quorum sensing would be less likely to lead to resistance. Without the bacterial communication that allows for the collective secretion of virulence factors that overpower the human immune system, bacteria would not be able to cause diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, pneumonia and food poisoning.

Bassler is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator and Squibb professor of molecular biology at Princeton, where she has been a faculty member since 1994. She received a B.S. in biochemistry from the University of California, Davis, in 1984 and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Johns Hopkins University in 1990. Bassler was a postdoctoral fellow at the Agouron Institute in La Jolla, Calif.

Her many honors include a MacArthur Foundation fellowship in 2002 and election to the National Academy of Sciences in 2006. She heads Princeton's Council on Science and Technology and serves as an editor for a number of journals, including *Molecular Microbiology*, *Annual Reviews of Genetics* and *Cell*. Bassler has been selected to serve as president of the American Society for Microbiology in 2010.

NIGMS has supported her research since 2002.

For more information or for reasonable accommodation at the lecture, contact Sarah Freeman at [sarah.freeman@nih.gov](mailto:sarah.freeman@nih.gov) or (301) 594-6747.—Karin Jegalian

## NIH Hosts 'Engaging the Public in Research Week'

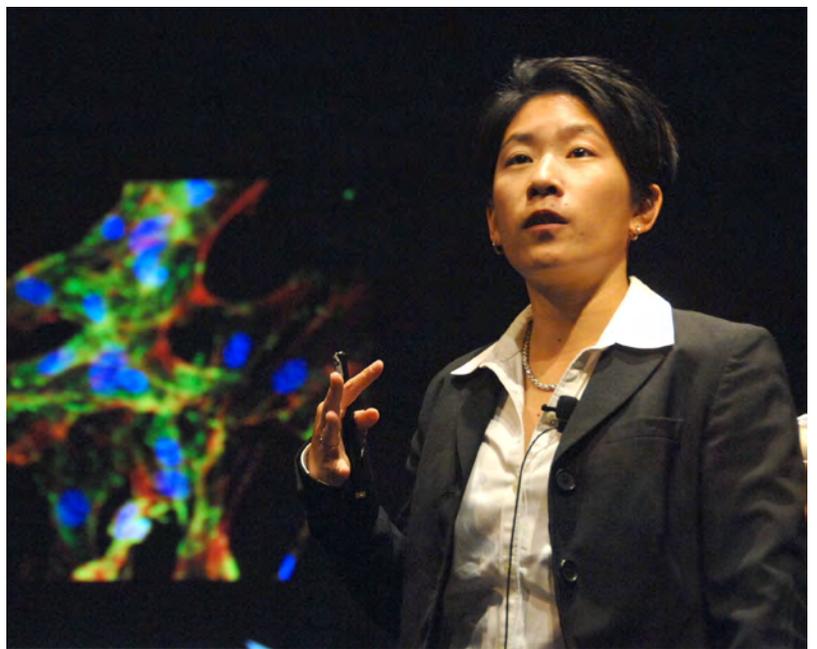
NIH is hosting the first Engaging the Public in Research Week Oct. 26-30 in recognition of the significance of public involvement in biomedical and behavioral research. The special week also celebrates the 10-year anniversary of the NIH Director's Council of Public Representatives (COPR), a federal advisory council composed of public members representing a variety of cultural, professional and patient-centered communities across the nation.

All are invited to celebrate and learn more about the value of public involvement in research by participating in these events:

The Partners in Research (PIR) Investigator Workshop will be held Oct. 26-27. This workshop is sponsored by the NIH Public Trust Initiative and is geared toward PIR grantees to look at progress, best practices and next steps. Registration is at capacity; however there will be an evening poster session and reception open to interested public members from 4-6 p.m. on Oct. 26. For more information, visit [http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/conferences/dert/partners\\_in\\_research/partners\\_conference\\_agenda.cfm](http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/conferences/dert/partners_in_research/partners_conference_agenda.cfm).

Staff Training in Extramural Programs (STEP) Forum: Nuts-and-Bolts of Community Engagement in Research will take place Wednesday, Oct. 28. The forum is inspired by COPR recommendations on community-engaged research and geared toward NIH extramural and intramural research, program and outreach staff. Dr. Raynard Kington, NIH principal deputy director, will give opening remarks. The agenda also includes an overview of community-engaged research, presentation of COPR recommendations, case studies of best practices and practical application of principles and an open panel discussion. For more information, visit [www.copr.nih.gov/STEP](http://www.copr.nih.gov/STEP).

The fall 2009 COPR meeting will take place Friday, Oct. 30. This will be COPR's first formal meeting with new NIH director Dr. Francis Collins. Agenda topics include comparative effectiveness research, complementary and alternative medicine and international biomedical research initiatives. The meeting is open to the public. For more information, visit <http://copr.nih.gov/meetings.asp>.



## PIONEERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Top, l:**  
 NIH director Dr. Francis Collins presents the first of 18 2009 Pioneer Awards to Dr. Ivor Benjamin, professor of medicine and biochemistry at the University of Utah School of Medicine.

**Top, r:**  
 Dr. Teri Odom, a 2008 Pioneer awardee from Northwestern University, talks about imaging and the life sciences.

PHOTOS: BILL BRANSON

The longest-standing of the three mechanisms is the Pioneer Award, which began in 2004 with only nine recipients; this year the honor went to 18 scientists. Members of the inaugural class of 2004 presented updates on their NIH-funded work at an all-day symposium Sept. 25.

New Innovator Awards went to 55 researchers, 10 of whom are supported by ARRA. Like the Pioneer Awards, these focus primarily on the promise of an especially creative investigator, not on a specific scientific proposal.

New this year, the Transformative R01's, on the other hand, are project-focused rather than person-focused, and typically involve multiple principal investigators. Forty-two of these awards were made. "This is a very competitive program," Collins said. To orient himself, as relatively new NIH director, to the breadth of NIH science, Collins explained that he has been reading grant summary statements. "I've read hundreds of them so far, including most of [the TR01 applications]," he said.

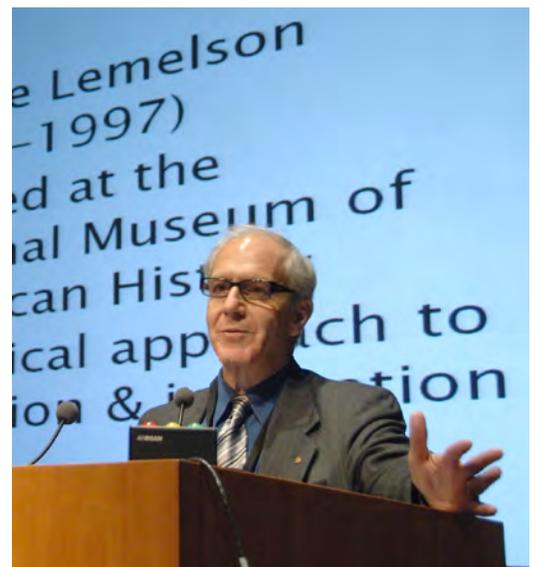
Giving the symposium's keynote address was Dr. Arthur Molella, director of the Smithsonian Institution's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, who ran the risk of preaching to the choir, given such an accomplished audience. Speaking on "The Habits and Habitats of Inventive People," he discussed the contributions of environment (the pastoral remove of HHMI's Janelia Farm, for example, or the Salk Institute's ocean-side setting) and personality in nurturing creativity. Efforts at engineering creativity go but so far, he suggested.

Whether they do their work in barns, basements or abandoned air traffic control towers, creative people tend to like the proximity of

tools, diversions and a variety of stimuli—anything, it would seem, but the standard office cubicle. Molella's recipe for an inventive atmosphere included flexibility, leadership (but not too much), communication, a balance of solitude and interaction and tempered doses of chaos and structure.

"In the end, it's still all about people," he said.

The Pioneer and New Innovator Awards are administered by NIGMS and the TR01 program is run by the Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiative's Office of Strategic Coordination. A complete list of 2009 grantees is available at <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/>.



Keynote speaker Dr. Arthur Molella discusses habits and habitats of inventive people.



NIH director Dr. Francis Collins and his wife Diane Baker encouraged NIH staff to donate to the CFC.

### Off to Strong Start

## For CFC Donors, Mission, Personal Connection Are Key

By Valerie Lambros

NIH's annual Combined Federal Campaign kicked off on a windy Oct. 1 with a jazz band, food, guest speakers and dozens of charities eager to share their stories with NIH givers.

"I probably don't need to tell you just how great the need is this year," said emcee Doreen Gentzler, NBC News-4's anchor and science reporter. "Charities are struggling every day."

Gentzler's only struggle during the kickoff was attempting to keep all the government alphabetical references straight. While introducing Dr. Jack Jones, the campaign's spokesman, Gentzler identified him as the head of CIT, the CIO of NIH and vice chair of CFC.

"This is a lot of letters," she told the audience. "I know you all are following this, but if I were reading this on the news, I would go back to rewrite."

Minutes later at the podium, NIH director Dr. Francis Collins reminded the crowd filling the plaza between Bldgs. 31 and 33 that NIH, alphabet soup and all, is an inspiring and fortunate place.

"We are very lucky we get to work in a place where we have a goal we can believe in," he said. "These days, there are many people who don't have a job at all. Thank you for using your generosity in this way."

This year's goal is \$2.2 million, 10 percent more than last year. That figure may sound steep, but NIH contributed nearly \$2.5 million last year, giving almost half of the total \$5 million donated to the CFC by the entire Department of Health and Human Services.

That's welcome news for charities such as the Surfrider Foundation that works to clean up



On hand at the CFC kickoff Oct. 1 were (from l) CIT's Kathryn Wimsatt, NBC-TV anchor Doreen Gentzler, CIT director Jack F. Jones and Jennifer Czajkowski, also of CIT, which is the lead IC in this year's effort.

Collins and Gentzler pause for a photo at the Oct. 1 kickoff.

PHOTOS: SUSAN CHAFFEE



waterways; the Black Student Fund, whose efforts promote quality learning environments and support education services; A Wider Circle, which strives to furnish homes for impoverished families; and the Washington Animal Rescue League, whose treasurer Susie Brown was accompanied to the kickoff by Grace, a German shepherd-border collie mix who was once a shelter dog. Other nonprofits familiar to NIH'ers such as the Children's Inn, Camp Fantastic, Friends of the Clinical Center and the Foundation for NIH also handed out information and reminded visitors that help is always needed.

One charity didn't have to sell its cause to Florine Coleman of NLM. She already knew the group well.

"You saved my niece's life," she told Angel Flight transportation coordinator Marita Eddy. Coleman recounted the scary moment 2 years ago when her family's local medical care couldn't stabilize the deteriorating condition of her niece Alicia, and the child had to be rushed to the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville.

"We couldn't drive her there in her condition. Without Angel Flight, she wouldn't have made it there. She would have lost her life."

Coleman's niece has returned to school full-time and is getting her life back to normal.

"It's that personal connection that means so much to me," Coleman said. "That's where my pledge is going this year, 100 percent." 🗳️



## OBAMA VISIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Above, l:**  
HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius (l) accompanies Collins and the President on a short tour of the CRC.

**Above, r:**  
Collins briefs Obama on current NIH science in the lab of NCI's Dr. Marston Linehan (rear) as Sebelius looks on.

**Below:**  
Special guests on hand at the visit included (from l) Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA); Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Dr. John Holdren, the President's chief science advisor.

PHOTOS: ERNIE BRANSON, JANET STEPHENS

humanity, to save and enrich the lives of people all over the world. This represents the single largest boost to biomedical research in history.”

Obama had been welcomed by NIH director Dr. Francis Collins, who noted, “We’re very grateful to have a President who values science, respects its independence and understands its huge potential for improving Americans’ lives.”

More than 12,000 Recovery Act grants were funded by the \$5 billion, Collins said, adding, “more than 1,800 of the awardees have never previously held a major NIH grant. These grants will fund trailblazing research into treating and preventing many of our most harmful diseases, from cancer to heart disease to HIV/AIDS...this unprecedented NIH Recovery and Discovery program is not just doubling the recipe. We’re investigating new problems with powerful new tools and looking at old problems from entirely new perspectives...I am confident that millions of Americans alive today and millions more in future generations will live longer, healthier, more rewarding lives because of the grants we are announcing today.”

Collins acknowledged the extraordinary effort NIH’ers put forth to use ARRA funds wisely.

“None of this would have been possible without the hard work of thousands of dedicated NIH employees,” he said. “They identified areas of special scientific opportunity. They designed entirely new grant programs like the Challenge Grants and Grand Opportunity

Grants. They wrote RFAs in record time. And the response was overwhelming. As just one example, we expected to receive about 5,000 Challenge Grant applications—we received more than 20,000. But the NIH scientific staff was exhilarated, not dismayed. They recruited 15,000 reviewers and instructed them to aim high in identifying the most innovative proposals. They counseled anxious applicants. And once the rigorous reviews were completed, NIH staff processed the awards in record time. I want to give a big shout out to all of you who contributed to this unprecedented success. You worked 24/7, giving up your weekends, postponing vacations, all in the cause of great science. Give yourselves a round of applause!”

Collins said the NIH workforce is “ready and anxious to help our Scientist-in-Chief, President Barack Obama.”

Obama acknowledged a number of special guests, including Sebelius, whom he said “always has a sense of fun and energy, and is just good to be around,” Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), in whose district NIH falls, and Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA), whose efforts were key to NIH securing the ARRA appropriation and who received a tumultuous standing ovation when he was introduced. Also on hand were Dr. John Holdren, the President’s chief science advisor, former Rep. John Porter, a long-time advocate for NIH, and Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett.

Obama noted that “through the Recovery Act, the NIH is expanding the Cancer Genome Atlas, collecting more than 20,000 tissue samples to sequence the DNA of more than 20 types of cancer. And this has extraordinary potential to help us better understand and treat this disease. Cancer has touched the lives of all Ameri-





Secretary Sebelius (l) stayed on at NIH for a meeting with IC directors, including NIDA's Dr. Nora Volkow (r) and NCI's Dr. John Niederhuber (second from r). Seated next to Sebelius is Dr. Dora Hughes, her public health and science counselor.

cans, including my own family.”

He also said ARRA would “provide the largest-ever infusion of funding into autism research... And as I was taking a tour with Dr. Collins and [NIAID director] Dr. [Anthony] Fauci and others, just listening to the possibility of an HIV/AIDS vaccine, or hearing the latest treatments of cancer that allow people who previously only had to resort to the most violent types of radiation or chemotherapy, now being able to take pills and seeing extraordinary progress, it is something that is entirely inspiring.”

Obama also made a pitch for his health care reform effort, quoting President Franklin D. Roosevelt from an address FDR gave at the dedication of Bldg. 1 70 years ago: “Neither the American people, nor their government, intends to socialize medical practice any more than they plan to socialize industry’...FDR was being accused of a government takeover of health care. But he thought NIH was a pretty good idea.”

He concluded, “Here at the National Institutes of Health, and at universities and research institutions across this country, you are demonstrating our capacity not just as a nation but as human beings to harness our creativity and our ingenuity to save lives, to spare suffering—to build a better world for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. That is our great promise...thank you for your extraordinary work.”

The President then greeted the entire front row of guests. Just before he left the room, a last blast of whooping applause ushered him out.

Secretary Sebelius and members of her staff remained at NIH for a meeting with institute and center directors who offered updates on such topics as HIV/AIDS, autism, obesity and comparative effective research. 📍

## Sapolsky Lectures on Stress and Health, Oct. 28 in Masur Auditorium

What motivates a young student from Brooklyn to study baboons in East Africa? What keeps him returning there for three decades and more? For Dr. Robert Sapolsky, the answer is his interest in studying stress-related disease. Sapolsky’s laboratory work on neurons dovetailed nicely with his observations about how stress affects individuals and societies. Writing in his insightful, humorous and compassionate book *A Primate’s Memoir: A Neuroscientist’s Unconventional Life Among the Baboons*, Sapolsky notes that he observed that baboons were the perfect subject because they live in big, complex social groups and have enough sunlight each day “to devote to being rotten to each other.”



He will present his research on “Stress and Health: From Molecules to Societies,” from 3 to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 28, in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10. His lecture is sponsored by the National Institute on Aging as part of the Florence Mahoney Lectures on Aging, under the auspices of the NIH Director’s Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series.

The John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn professor of biology, neurology and neurosurgery at Stanford University, Sapolsky is also a research associate at the Institute of Primate Research at the National Museums of Kenya. Over the last 30 years, he has divided his time between neurobiology research in the laboratory and the study of wild baboons in the African savannah. His work at Stanford focuses on the effects of stress and stress hormones on the brain while his field work examines what social rank, personality and patterns of social affiliation have to do with patterns of stress-related disease in a baboon model.

Sapolsky earned an undergraduate degree in biological anthropology from Harvard University, *summa cum laude*, in 1978 and a Ph.D. in neuroendocrinology from Rockefeller University in 1984. He has received numerous honors and awards, including the Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, the Klingenstein Fellowship in Neuroscience and the MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant. In 2007, he received the John P. McGovern Award for Behavioral Science from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In addition to numerous articles and book chapters, Sapolsky’s books include *Stress, the Aging Brain, and the Mechanisms of Neuron Death*; *Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers: A Guide to Stress, Stress-Related Disease and Coping*; *The Trouble With Testosterone’ and Other Essays on the Biology of the Human Predicament*; and *‘Monkeyluv’ and Other Essays on Our Lives as Animals*.

A reception will follow the presentation.—Anne Decker



## RELAY RACE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### Above, l:

The CIT telecommunications cheering squad included (from l) Charles Colbert, Donald de Castro, Matthew Ashburn, Tiyonna Mathis and Koren Waters.

### Above, r:

Shortly before the first heat of NIH's annual Institute Challenge Relay was slated to begin, the rain cleared, the umbrellas closed and the competition was on.

### Below:

An NICHD team's shirts featured photos of PI Dr. Gisela Storz. Shown are (from l) Dr. Chase Beisel, Maureen Kiley, Dr. Errett Hobbs, Storz, Dr. Sylvain Durand and Dr. Laurie Waters.

PHOTOS: ERNIE BRANSON, BELLE WARING



"The goal is to compete and have fun," said an excited Martin Gutierrez, the self-described "slug" of "Four Runners and A Slug," a team fielded by NIAID. "Well...at least have fun."

He and his teammates, John Brooks, Mary Parker, Michelle Scala and Rob Palmer had toyed with the idea of entering the relay, but it was only when Brooks said he'd seen it written up in the R&W newsletter that they got serious about getting the team together. They're already looking to make it an office tradition.

"If the race goes well, we'll definitely do it next year," Brooks said.

Not far away, the "Catch Me If You Can(cer)" team was finishing up some stretching and strategizing.

"There's more than one team from NCI for sure," said the team's Frank Perna. "And we're not talking smack, but we're gonna beat 'em."

Joining Perna on the team were Audie Atienza, Catherine Alfano and Michael Sanchez, as well as Becky Ferrer, a postdoc.

"I want to be clear that there was no coercion to get her to run," said Perna with a smile. Mid-stretch, Alfano added, "We promote health and we practice what we preach."

Not 5 minutes before the first heat was slated to begin, the rain cleared, the umbrellas closed and the competition was on.

R&W President Randy Schools broadcast instructions on a bullhorn, the call to the races was played by trumpeter Dr. Harold Seifried of NCI and a whistle

blown by NIH deputy director for intramural research Dr. Michael Gottesman started the competition. The stampede of sneakers was drowned out only by the cheering of spectators.

Twenty-three hundred miles away, another heat was kicking off as well. "Team Arizona," the NIDDK diabetes epidemiology and clinical research section's relay team, was running a synchronous heat all its own.

Timed to coincide with the main event on the Bethesda campus, the Phoenix run—at 8:30 a.m. local time—was hot. At race time, the temperature had long cleared 80 degrees and was still climbing in what would wind up being a 100-degree day.

Jennifer Weil, who planned the race, said she wasn't sure at first how the Phoenix runners could pull off a coordinated event.

"I thought, [the relay race] is in Bethesda, and it's not like they're going to fly us out," she said.

But some pleading by her assistant, ardent runner Charlene Gishie, forced her to find a way. So she got creative and worked with race organizers on the Bethesda campus to ensure the course specifications in Phoenix were up to standards.

"We're in downtown Phoenix, but we happen to have a tree-lined path and all these canals right behind our office," Weil said.

Much to Gishie's delight, race organizers in Bethesda gave the green light to the Arizona effort and she set about recruiting a team. Donovan Berry, Jeff Curtis, Jeremy Pomeroy and Johanna Javier joined her for the race.

"I'm kind of surprised we actually did it," said Gishie, who embraces the historic running tradition of the Navajo Nation. "It was so hot, we were just standing in the sunlight and you could feel the sun scorching your skin. I thought nobody's going to do it, but everybody got into it."



The team finished in 19 minutes, 20 seconds, placing 68th for the day.

Back on campus, the “Proud Snail Hunters,” a team fielded by NCBI/NLM that has traditionally had relay success, took the early lead with a time of 13:50 and kept it through the second heat, winning this year’s relay and the Al Lewis Memorial Trophy. Team members Abby Elbow, Patricia Zerfas, Marc Gwadz, Mark Hoon and Christiam Camacho paced around and caught their breath as the second heat was run.

“Catch Me If You Can(cer)” was in second place after the first heat, but then fell to fourth once the second heat’s times were posted, finishing behind “Insert Name Here” (14:54) and “The Brain Storm” (14:55).

Having the most fun after the race was likely the group of four teams fielded by NCI’s Laboratory of Cellular and Molecular Biology. Many lab workers turned out in support of the 20 runners, collectively supporting the teams “Cell Signal Express,” “RanGo World,” “The LAT Pack” and “Gone with the Wnt.” In a nod to another element of a signaling pathway as well as the Margaret Mitchell novel from which one team drew its name, supporters held up signs proclaiming, “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a Daam.”

However, it appeared that at least Steve Kales was giving a hoot about one thing.

“We beat the other teams,” Kales said of his “Cell Signal Express” runners, though he was quick to follow up his comment. “Not that there’s any rivalry or anything.”

*Clockwise from left above:*  
NCI’s Mohammed Khan

*Running the relay in Phoenix- were (from l) Charlene Gishie, Jeremy Pomeroy and Donovan Berry.*

*First place Proud Snail Hunters: (from l) Mark Hoon, Christiam Camacho, Patricia Zerfas, Marc Gwadz and Abby Elbow.*

*Second place Insert Name Here: (from l) Dimitre Simeonov, Kasey Jividen, Joseph Newland, Michelle Zook and Jim Curry.*

*Third place The Brain Storm: (from l) Daniel Austin, Grace Ha, Florence Roulet, Josh Hunsberger. Not shown is Anahita Hamidi.*

*Official race starter Dr. Michael Gottesman, NIH deputy director for intramural research*



**Top Ten 2009 Relay Finishers**

Team	Time
1. Proud Snail Hunters	13:50
2. Insert Name Here	14:54
3. The Brain Storm	14:55
4. Catch Me If You Can(cer)	15:00
5. The Motley Crew	15:14
6. TB or not TB	15:16
7. Kickin’ Some Axons!	15:33
8. Pulse Chasers	15:38
9. The Figgdom	15:41
10. Pushing Our Gluteus to the Maximus	15:42

**Notable Team Names**

- National Institutes of Haste
- Smells Like Gene Spirit
- ARRAmatic
- Half-Fast Hassenpfeffer
- Office of Human Rebellion

## NIH Hosts the 4th Annual American Indian/Alaska Native Workshop

The trans-NIH American Indian/Alaska Native health communications and information work group recently hosted a half-day workshop for NIH communications staff on “Creating Collaborations: Partnering with Tribal Community Health Representatives for Health Research and Education.”

Community health representatives (CHRs) are a cadre of 1,600 tribal employees nationwide who serve as lay health educators and patient liaisons. Launched in 1968 by the Indian Health Service, the CHR program is based on the concept that indigenous tribal health workers

familiar with Native languages, customs and traditions are especially well adapted to serve the tribal community.

Bridging the gap between community members and health care providers, CHRs provide a range of health and social ser-

vices. Tribes contract with the federal government to provide CHR services that best meet their communities’ needs, resulting in great diversity in services.

Emphasizing CHRs’ adaptability and resourcefulness in the rural, remote communities they serve, Cathy Stueckemann, national director of the CHR program at IHS, said, “Give CHRs duct tape, and they can do anything.”

Dr. Anselm G. Davis, Jr. (Navajo/Choctaw), former executive director of the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities, opened the meeting with a blessing. Singing a Pueblo sunrise song to the steady beat of a drum, he encouraged participants to bring open minds, creativity, energy and enthusiasm to the workshop and to continue to work together to build bridges between cultures.

The workshop was aimed at increasing understanding of the vital role CHRs play in developing and disseminating health information and education programs to Native people. Dr. Melany Cueva of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium described the development of the “Bridging the Divide” cancer education program. This curriculum uses techniques such as games, storytelling role play and reader’s theater to teach cancer prevention, screening and treatment. These techniques are “grounded in

storytelling as culturally respectful way[s] to invite people to consider possibilities to engage in dialogue and conversation.”

Jean Pino (Zia Pueblo), a CHR coordinator from the Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos in New Mexico, described her involvement in both cancer and heart disease education. She cited the lack of culturally appropriate materials and programs and transportation issues as a few of the barriers to care in Native communities, particularly in cancer screening and early detection. She also shed light on some Native cultural beliefs surrounding cancer, including the belief that cancer is contagious and that “if I talk about [cancer] I will bring it on myself.”

Another issue that proved to be a constant challenge was to convey an abstract concept like cancer—which did not exist as a word in the Zia language—into concrete language that patients can comprehend.

The workshop concluded with a panel discussion that included the keynote speakers and IHS area office coordinators who provide consultation and technical assistance to CHR programs throughout the country. Questions mainly focused on how to develop tailored materials for Native people, given the diversity of traditions, cultures and sometimes languages among the more than 500 federally recognized tribes.

Panelists recommended using photos of nature and of Native people in street clothing rather than in ceremonial dress to allow tribal communities to adapt the materials to include their own identifiable symbols and graphics.

A video of the event is archived at <http://videocast.nih.gov>. 



*Workshop attendees included (from l) Dione Harjo, assistant director, Community Health Representatives program; Cathy Stueckemann, CHR national director; Mimi Lising, NIAMS multicultural communications coordinator; Jean Pino, CHR coordinator; Jeannette Yazzie, area office coordinator; Dr. Melany Cueva, program coordinator, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; Dr. Janet Austin, NIAMS communications director; and Georgia Butler, area office coordinator.*



**Hugged a Postdoc Lately?  
NIH Shows Appreciation to Postdocs**

NIH observed National Postdoc Appreciation Day on Sept. 24, both on campus and at Twinbrook, Frederick, Baltimore, Research Triangle Park, N.C., and Hamilton, Mont., home of Rocky Mountain Laboratories. Most campuses celebrated with popsicles and other treats handed out by scientific and training directors. The event is endorsed by the National Postdoctoral Association. NIH has a large cadre of postdocs and clinical fellows, numbering more than 4,000 trainees. A fair percentage of them congregated on the lawn of Bldg. 1 to enjoy free treats and the music of the Jazz Genome Project. The band includes (above, from l) Mike Gassman on guitar, Dave Gassman on bass, NIMH's Michael Brad Strader on drums and Steve Gotts, also of NIMH, on trumpet.



**Take It From the Top:** Postdocs gathered in six locations on Sept. 24. From the top they include Baltimore; Bethesda, where Drs. Francis Collins and Raynard Kington (front, c) joined the celebration; Twinbrook (middle, l); Rocky Mountain Laboratories (middle, r); Frederick; and NIEHS, where 98 fellows turned out—allegedly the most ever seen in one place on that campus.



## NIH Property Donation Program Succeeds

The NIH property donation program has proven to be a success story. NIH donates myriad items from laptop and desktop computers to TVs, Blackberries, copiers and other assorted items including scientific equipment to more than 80 schools and universities. In FY 2008, NIH gave away more than 7,500 items representing an acquisition cost of over \$13 million. Through the end of July 2009, NIH had donated some 7,072 items valued at over \$10.6 million. That is an average of over \$1 million of donated property per month.

Not everyone qualifies, however—only those organizations that meet the requirements of the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980 and Federal Executive Order 12999. The order, titled “Educational Technology: Ensuring Education for All Children in the Next Century,”

allows computers and related equipment to be transferred directly from a federal agency to the educational institution. The order stipulates that federal agencies should play a larger role in education in America by making excess resources available to students and teachers.

At NIH, the donation program is coordinated by two industrial property management specialists within the Office of Acquisition and Logistics Management—David Hubbard and Hannah Stachmus. Their duties include fielding requests for participation from schools, universities and non-profit organizations (whose primary focus is education) and reviewing and approving requests of qualified applicants. They also maintain records of all donations that are made. The NIH program operates on Mondays and Wednesdays and is based at the Gaithersburg Distribution Center, site of NIH’s excess property warehouse.

An example of the NIH donation program’s success can be seen locally at Montgomery College’s Rockville campus. Their biology department has established a new laboratory with equipment from NIH that would have cost the college between \$1 million and \$2 million. Last fall, 18 students in Biology 230, a molecular cell biology course, got hands-on experience using the technology and equipment donated by NIH. With the high concentration of biotechnolo-

gy companies in this area, this course will be an important addition to MC’s curriculum.

Want to find out more about the donation process at NIH? Give Hubbard or Stachmus a call at (301) 496-4366 or (301) 496-4180, respectively.—Richard Trott

## NIH Rises in Poll of Best Places to Work for Those Age 50+

For the second year in a row, NIH has been deemed among the top places to work for those age 50 and older by AARP. Having placed 11<sup>th</sup> last year out of the top 50, NIH rose to third in 2009. Cornell University topped the list for the second year in a row.

“The many benefits and opportunities available to employees through the NIH Recreation and Welfare Association have promoted an active workforce and an active retiree group,” said AARP in an online report. “R&W supports more than 30 clubs, including photography, bicycling and skiing and administers volunteer activities such as NIH Charities, Camp Fantastic and Children’s Inn.”

The AARP evaluation noted that 39 percent of the NIH workforce is 50 or older. It highlighted opportunities at NIH for learning and development, formal recognition of longevity of service and a commitment to safety and occupational health. Also touted were NIH’s offerings in health insurance, the Employee Assistance Program, retiree benefits and health savings accounts and flexible spending accounts.

## Conference on Electronic Health Record Data Set, Oct. 30 at Natcher

The National Center for Research Resources is holding a 1-day symposium on Friday, Oct. 30 to discuss the potential benefits of using electronic health record data for secondary research purposes. “Widening the Use of Electronic Health Record Data for Research,” will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the main auditorium of the Natcher Conference Center. Case studies in comparative effectiveness research, health disparities, drug safety and public health will allow sharing of successful roadmaps, identification of challenging areas of mutual interest and discussion of common tasks that can be addressed in the short term.

The event is free and open to the public. To register and view the agenda, visit <http://palladianpartners.com/e-health>. Registration deadline is Oct. 22. Contact Monica Barnette at (301) 650-8660 or [mbarnette@palladianpartners.com](mailto:mbarnette@palladianpartners.com) for logistical questions or registration assistance.



*Property management specialist David Hubbard (l) and acting property chief Richard Trott (looking on) assist customers at the Gaithersburg Distribution Center.*



Woodrow "Spike" Harrison, a transportation assistant in OD's Division of Logistics Services, helps load some of the nearly 5 tons of food collected at NIH for use at the Capital Area Food Bank.

## NIH'ers Respond to Call for Food

NIH'ers donated nearly 10,000 pounds of non-perishable food items to the Capital Area Food Bank throughout July and August, leading the Department of Health and Human Services in its total collection effort of 24,561 pounds of food. HHS had the fourth highest total collected among federal agencies in the Washington metropolitan area. Essie Wright, co-coordinator of the drive for HHS, said, "You make the department look good!"

In order to address the urgent need to replenish local food banks, HHS partnered with other federal agencies to support the Capital Area Food Bank with "Feds Feed Families Food Drive, Warm Up to Giving." The food bank serves more than 700 food pantries, soup kitchens and other service organizations in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland.

All contributions to the centralized repository make a tremendous difference to area families and communities. Although there were several planned donation receptacles on and off the main campus, some NIH'ers coordinated their own mini drives in their office suites, buildings, division picnics and institutes. The response was overwhelming. Blacks in Government (BIG) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse made significant contributions, along with the National Institute on Aging in Baltimore, just to name a few. Joy Gaines, NIH food drive coordinator, received daily messages from employees asking how they could help. Some shared their emotional stories of once being on the receiving end of soup kitchens and food pantries and wanting to give back; others simply wanted to say how proud they were to work at a place that was making the effort to help those in need.



## Collins Named NIMH Associate Director for Special Populations

Dr. Pamela Collins recently joined NIMH as associate director for special populations and director of the Offices for Special Populations, Rural Mental Health Research, and Global Mental Health.

As an assistant professor in the departments of epidemiology and psychiatry at Columbia University, she conducted research on the mental health aspects of the AIDS epidemic and worked to ensure access to HIV prevention and care for people with severe mental illness as well as access to mental health care services for people with HIV domestically and internationally. Under Collins, NIMH will increase its focus on disparities in mental health both inside and outside of the United States.

In this country, her studies have addressed the HIV prevention needs of women with severe mental illness and the contribution of social stigma related to mental illness and ethnicity to women's HIV risk. Internationally, she has trained health care providers in mental health, HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention and counseling in Argentina, Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda and South Africa.

Collins received her M.D. from Cornell University Medical College and an M.P.H. from Columbia University School of Public Health. She retains her faculty appointments at Columbia, where she is an assistant professor of clinical epidemiology and assistant professor of clinical psychiatry.



PHOTO: LEO SOREL

## Santangelo Joins NIGMS Genetics Division

Dr. George Santangelo recently joined NIGMS as a program director in the Division of Genetics and Developmental Biology, where he will manage research grants on DNA replication. Before joining NIGMS, he was a professor of biological sciences at the University of Southern Mississippi. His research focused on the role of nuclear substructure in transcriptional regulation. Santangelo earned a Ph.D. in genetics from Yale University and held postdoctoral appointments at the University of California, Irvine and the University of California, Santa Cruz.



## Stratakis Wins Oppenheimer Award

NICHD acting scientific director Dr. Constantine Stratakis has received the Endocrine Society's Ernst Oppenheimer Award for his contributions to the field of endocrine genetics. The award citation recognized Stratakis for identifying the gene for Carney complex, a genetic disorder resulting in tumors in the heart, and, frequently in other organs, such as the adrenal glands, the thyroid and skin. As director of NICHD's Program on Developmental Endocrinology and Genetics, he worked to classify and characterize a variety of tumors of the adrenal and pituitary glands. This work led to testing methods for Carney complex and its associated condition, primary pigmented nodular adrenocortical disease as well as Cushing's disease, a disorder of the pituitary glands. More recently, he and his coworkers determined that mutations in genes known as phosphodiesterase 11A and 8B are involved with the formation of tumors of the adrenal glands and testes. Stratakis and his colleagues recently also identified the molecular causes of other endocrine tumors (paragangliomas) associated with sarcomas of the gastrointestinal tract (GISTs).



# milestones

## NCI's Waldmann Wins 'Sammie' Award

Dr. Thomas A. Waldmann, chief of NCI's Metabolism Branch and a 52-year NIH veteran, was awarded a Service to America Medal (Sammie)

by the Partnership for Public Service on Sept. 23. He received the organization's Career Achievement Medal, which recognizes a federal employee for significant accomplishments throughout a lifetime of achievement in public service. The medal is accompanied by a \$10,000 award.

Waldmann has made discoveries that have led to effective treatments for previously fatal forms of T-cell leukemia, Hodgkin's lymphoma and multiple sclerosis.

Described by his peers as a "renaissance scientist," Waldmann's work extends from the study of the immune system to innovative clinical trials of immunotherapeutic agents.

"Tom is an icon—he's dedicated to making science discoveries and moving them to the clinic where they can benefit people," said Waldmann's NIH colleague, Dr. Robert Wiltrott, who directs NCI's Center for Cancer Research. "People like Tom are extremely rare. He has contributed to actually curing people. Some of his discoveries have implications way beyond cancer. There are many things that come out of the science of what he does."

Waldmann has also been a pioneer in the field of cytokines—the molecules that control human immune responses—and developed the groundbreaking treatment Zenapax, which has been associated with complete remission in over 60 percent of patients with Hodgkin's lymphoma who otherwise did not respond to treatment.

Zenapax has also contributed to reducing the body's rejection of renal transplants, a discovery that benefits the survival rate of patients. He also found Zenapax therapy useful against autoimmune diseases, including multiple sclerosis, where he and his coworkers achieved a 78 percent reduction in new brain lesions.

Over the past decade, Waldmann also co-dis-

covered the cytokine IL-15, which represents a major advance in the prevention and treatment of cancer and AIDS.

"Carrying out clinical studies is a real challenge and it has become more so in the past years," said Dr. Stephen Katz, director of NIAMS. "The challenge to get the product to meet quality control standards is extremely hard, but Tom has been unwavering in his commitment to doing so. He did it all himself, he went to all the meetings himself and made sure it got done. He paved the way for others."

In 1955, Waldmann came to NIH after graduating from Harvard Medical School. "I thought I was going to be here for 2 years, but I became so excited with the opportunities to do research and the ability to develop our own drugs and produce these in a way that can be administered to people and be able to do my own clinical trials to treat patients," he said. "It was not matched, not in industry, not in academia."

His colleagues agree. "NIH is an extraordinarily exciting place," said Dr. Robert Nussenblatt, acting scientific director at NCCAM. "Tom is so creative and he needed an environment where ideas, enthusiasm, idealism, interaction are the currency—that's NIH."

"He has chosen to stay in public service because he is a man who is committed to taking science to the betterment of humanity and there is no better place to do that than NIH," said Katz.

Waldmann adds, "One could be a successful scientist on the outside, but it would be very difficult to do what we do outside of government."

## Klein Named Associate Director Of NCI Division

Dr. William Klein has been named an associate director in the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, NCI. He will direct the Behavioral Research Program, which includes the Office of the Associate Director and five branches (Applied Cancer Screening Research, Basic and Biobehavioral Research, Health Communication and Informatics Research, Health Promotion Research and Tobacco Control Research).

Klein completed his B.A. in psychology and mathematical methods in the social sciences at



NCI's Dr. Thomas Waldmann (c) is flanked at the ceremony by HHS Deputy Secretary Bill Corr (r) and Dr. Jerry Ice, president and CEO, the Graduate School.

PHOTO: SAM KITTNER/KITTNER.COM



Northwestern University (1987) and his M.A. and Ph.D. in social psychology at Princeton University (1991). Since 2002, he has been a member of the graduate faculty at the University of Pittsburgh in the social psychology and biological and health psychology programs. Most recently, he was director of undergraduate studies, an elected member of the department's executive committee and a 2008 recipient of the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award for his undergraduate and graduate teaching in the areas of social psychology, health psychology and decision-making. Prior to 2002, Klein was on the faculty at Colby College.

His research interests fall largely under the areas of self-judgment, risk perception and risk communication. He has been interested in how risk perception biases are related to the processing of health communications, to health decision-making and to health behavior.

### NHLBI's Geller Honored for Statistical Sciences

Dr. Nancy Geller, director of NHLBI's Office of Biostatistics Research since 1990, was recently honored with the eighth annual Janet L. Norwood Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Woman in the Statistical Sciences. The award recognizes Geller's national and international contributions to statistical sciences and acknowledges her many accomplishments during her ongoing tenure at NIH.

As part of the award, she received an honorarium and participated in a distinguished lecture at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health, in addition to meeting with students and young faculty.



"This recognition brings to the forefront the continued need for women's participation in the sciences, on a national and international level," said NHLBI director Dr. Elizabeth Nabel. "Dr. Geller's perseverance and dedication in the field of statistical sciences is a testament to the many scientific endeavors she has seen through to fruition. We are fortunate to have her in the NIH community as well as the global scientific community."

Geller's office has expanded its expertise from clinical trials to include basic science and genetic studies. Her research interests include clinical trial methodology, especially issues of trial design, monitoring and multiplicity (i.e., endpoints and treatment comparisons). She is a fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA) as well as the organization's 2010 president-elect and is a former president of the International Society for Clinical Biostatistics. Geller is also a recipient of the American Cancer Society Scholar Award and a long-standing associate editor of *Biometrics* and an editorial board member of *Clinical Trials*.

The award's namesake, Dr. Janet L. Norwood, was first woman commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and a past president of the ASA. 📍

## volunteers

The phone numbers for more information about the studies below are 1-866-444-2214 (TTY 1-866-411-1010) unless otherwise noted.

### Januvia Study

Volunteers are needed for a study examining the immune function in healthy volunteers given short-term treatment of sitagliptin. Investigators wish to determine if and how sitagliptin alters immune function. If you are 18 or older and healthy, consider participating in this study. All study-related tests are provided at no cost. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 09-DK-0055.

### Sleep Deprivation and Obesity

NIH is conducting a Sleep and Weight Study for obese adults ages 18 to 50 who sleep less than 6 hours at night. This study will examine the relation of sleep to body weight, the amount of body fat and the level of hormones that control appetite. Medical history and physical examination are provided at no cost. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 06-DK-0036.

### Liver Disease

Individuals with liver disease are needed for NIH study. NIDDK is conducting studies on liver diseases including hepatitis B, C, and D, primary biliary cirrhosis, nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), fatty liver disease, autoimmune hepatitis, portal hypertension not due to cirrhosis, acute hepatitis from any cause and rare or unexplained liver disorders. Studies are conducted at the Clinical Center. No cost for study-related medications, tests or treatments. Must be 18 years of age or older. Refer to study 91-DK-0214.

### Green Tea Study

What are the health benefits of green tea? Would you like to find out? The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine is conducting a study that will examine whether EGCG, a major component of green tea, affects how the body responds to insulin in healthy and obese people, people with high blood pressure and people with type 2 diabetes. Healthy volunteers ages 21-65 who are in general good health may be eligible to participate. Compensation is provided to participants. Refer to study 07-AT-0089.

## Collins Shares Stage with Rock Star Perry

By Cynthia Delgado

NIH'ers can now say, "My boss is a rock star." That's because NIH director Dr. Francis Collins jammed with Aerosmith's Joe Perry for the Rock Stars of Science Briefing and Tribute at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center on Sept. 24. The event was part of a national campaign to honor scientists, encourage science as a career choice and call for further research funding.

Politicians, scientists and rock stars gathered for a day of panel discussions, videos and live musical performances. A common mission among the groups is to accelerate scientific research so that cures can be found for life-threatening diseases like HIV/AIDS, cancer and Alzheimer's.

While many people can name a living rock star, few can name a living scientist, said ABC News anchor Terry Moran, who emceed the event. This is a fact event sponsors and participants hope to change. The Rock Stars of Science campaign publicizes photographs and videos of rock stars sharing the spotlight with scientists, including Collins and NIAID director Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Musicians and scientists have a lot in common, including passion and creativity. Guitarist Perry and scientists Dale Schenk (Elan Corp.) and Dr. Rudy Tanzi (Harvard University) agreed. Perry said he always wanted to be a marine biologist but, owing to an unaddressed learning disability, he didn't do well in school. Music became his outlet for creativity, but he never gave up on his dream. He and his family are now active scuba divers and coral-reef-cleanup volunteers. Schenk compared Western music's 12 half steps with science's tools. The tools help get the work done, but it's creativity that allows for improvisation in music and breakthroughs in science, he said.

Several panel discussions focused on Alzheimer's disease. In 2009, about 5.3 million people in the United States are living with the disease. By 2050, if a cure isn't found, there will be nearly a million new cases annually, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

Panelists called for a national goal to stop Alzheimer's by the year 2020. They stressed the need for early diagnosis and intervention and sustained funding for research and patient care. Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA) spoke about the "health care tsunami" that will hit baby boomers in the years to come. "Health care reform needs CPR: coverage, prevention and



NIH director Dr. Francis Collins (above, l) performed recently to raise science's profile. He shared the stage with (above, r) Dr. Rudy Tanzi of Harvard (l) and Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry.

research," he said. Discussions touched on the 2009 Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act, which funds research, helps caregivers and enhances public education about prevention.

Collins told a moving story about a cancer survivor who participated in a clinical trial and eventually stopped writing in her "death journal." The drug under trial was perfectly targeted to her cancer cells and her disease had gone into remission. The story underlines the need for speeding up translational science that can lead to successful therapeutics. Collins also addressed the need for sustained funding over time.



NIAID director Dr. Anthony Fauci, also a Rock Star of Science, speaks in front of artwork featuring Perry (c) and Collins (r).

PHOTOS: BRUCE FUCHS

Fauci spoke about the search for an effective HIV/AIDS vaccine and the announcement earlier that morning of some promising results from a trial in Thailand. Although we don't yet have an effective vaccine, the Thai study brought us one step closer, he said.

At one point, the audience was asked who had been personally touched by cancer—themselves, friends or family members. Most hands went up. A panel discussion about cancer research and the Stand Up to Cancer (SU2C) initiative followed. Panelists included Australian pop star, actress and cancer survivor Delta Goodrem, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Amy Marcus, scientist Laura Shawver and filmmaker Laura Ziskin. SU2C began in 2007 to accelerate research, find cures for all cancer types and, ultimately, save lives. The initiative encourages the best scientists to work together and collaborates with the entertainment industry to build public awareness and support.

During a highly anticipated portion of the program, Collins shared the stage with Perry and Tanzi, who plays harmonica. The trio received a standing ovation when Collins led the vocals on a Bob Dylan tune, *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Goodrem sang a song a *cappella* to close the program.

Geoffrey Beene Gives Back, Research!America, Wyeth, Elan and the Alzheimer's Association hosted the event, in cooperation with the congressional biomedical research caucus and the congressional task force on Alzheimer's disease.

The Rock Stars of Science campaign was launched in the June 2009 issue of *GQ Magazine*. For a complete lineup of stars and scientists, photographs, videos and interviews, visit <http://www.rockstarsofscience.org/>. 🎸