



# NEWSLETTER

**Mission Statement:** The Association for Women in Science, Inc. (AWIS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the achievement of equity and full participation of women in all areas of science and technology.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear AWIS members,

Welcome to 2009! May it be a successful and prosperous year for all of you. I'd also like to welcome our new members, especially those who joined after Open House.

What a year 2008 was! I can hardly write this article without some mention of the economic turmoil that surrounds us. With all the layoffs occurring in San Diego at this time, I am sure there are several AWIS members who have been affected. I'd like to extend my support to you and wish you well in your efforts to find the next challenge. Remember that AWIS can provide a wonderfully supportive environment during this tough time, with opportunities for networking and mentoring, in addition to meeting up with some great people and just sharing a therapeutic laugh or two. I do hope that we can see some stabilization in 2009.

From other perspectives, 2009 promises to be an exciting year. Our biennial Women in Science and Technology (formerly Women in bioScience) conference will be held on May 9th. The committee is working hard to plan the event and develop a stimulating list of speakers and topics. Just prior to WIST, there will be an inaugural Science Festival in March and April. This is probably the most exciting event that the San Diego STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) community has seen. It is the brainchild of Larry Bock, who willingly agreed to an interview with Erin Dunn for this newsletter. The event is designed to create an interest in science in kids of all ages, and to showcase how science contributes to the general community. There will be something fun for all ages to do, from toddlers to centenarians, so check out the website, [www.sdsciencefestival.com](http://www.sdsciencefestival.com) and put some events on your calendar.

Lastly, I would like to welcome Rosemary Cesario to the AWIS-SD board. We are all looking forward to working with her on some exciting projects this year. The first is the unveiling of a strategic plan for the next 3-5 years. The board spent a great deal of time working

on this plan in 2008, led by Cindy Atwell. The details will be ironed out at the Board/Committee Chair retreat in January and announced to the chapter soon after.

Best wishes to all of you in 2009.

Inside this Issue	Page
Letter from the president	1
Larry Bock – San Diego Science Festival	1-2
Looking Back at Women in bioScience	2-3
<b>EVENTS</b>	
A Celebration of Women in Neurosciences	3
Winter Happy Hour	4
Upcoming Events	4
<b>CHAPTER INFORMATION</b>	<b>4</b>
AWIS-SD Sponsors	4
Contacts	5

### Larry Bock- San Diego Science Festival Inspiration Interview by Erin Dunn

The inaugural San Diego Science Festival begins March 2009 with events, lectures, and activities, culminating in an Expo on April 4<sup>th</sup> at Balboa Park. This effort was initiated by Larry Bock, a successful serial entrepreneur who has founded, co-founded, or financed the early stage of growth for 40 companies in the life and physical sciences. AWIS-SD had the pleasure of interviewing Larry Bock.

*Q: What are science festivals? Who is the target audience?*

*A:* They are a celebration of science- through art, film, theatre, comedy, hands-on activities, music, but all focused on science. Festivals at Edinburgh and Cambridge have been going on annually for 15 years and almost every company or store in the area is involved. Bookstores exhibit books by scientists; coffee shops have exhibits about the science of caffeine; etc. They have just recently come to the U.S.A.-- Harvard/MIT, New York and St. Louis. Most festivals are primarily geared to getting young people excited about science careers. Our festival is also trying to point out what is unique about San Diego.

*Q: What inspired you to initiate the San Diego Science Festival?*

*A:* The goal is to spark interest in the young local community to go into science careers. I have spent most of my career in life sciences and start-ups and it has become virtually impossible to hire

Americans into these companies with advanced degrees in physical sciences. Whenever you have innovation, the manufacturing jobs and other jobs co-localize where that innovation occurs because at early stages, manufacturing has to be close to the research, where the product or idea is still developing. We can't afford to outsource innovation.

*Q: How did you come to form an alliance with the UCSD outreach program, Biobridge?*

A: Biobridge...had a similar vision. We wanted a way to carry out what was developed for the festival into the year-round education curriculum.

*Q: What are your personal goals for SD Science Festival?*

A: Ultimately, that it becomes an event that the entire community can rally around yearly.

We have incredible science going on in San Diego and the rest of the world should know. The taxpayers decide on science funding and policy and they should understand the importance of what is going on. We also want people to be made aware of internship, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities such as those AWIS offers.

*Q: Tell us about the 'Laureate Lunches.'*

A: Each school district gets one lunch with a local Nobel laureate and each principal brings a group of students to the lunch. They aren't going to hear a Nobel lecture. It's really a Q&A for the students to ask them any question they want. The purpose of our lunches is to establish a set of role models, especially local ones. When you ask elementary school students to name a scientist, 90% of the time they will name Albert Einstein. Ask them to name a living or local scientist, and nobody has an answer.

*Q: Tell us about the 'Nifty Fifty.'*

A: The 'Nifty Fifties' are scientists or those who have made a big impact on science. They will attend assemblies at local schools and describe the area of science they're passionate about, their career path (obstacles and successes), and where they see opportunities for young people in science. We tried to pick really unique scientists. For example, Ivan Schuler is the number one most cited physicist, but he has also won 5 Emmy Awards.

*Q: Describe the opportunities for teachers and the importance of these efforts.*

A: We have a lot of programs for teacher training involving robotics and techniques in biotechnology. For example, we have a project called 'Operation Balboa' based on the game of 'Operation.' We trained teachers to make these games, sent them back to their schools with the materials and the completed games will be brought to the festival. 'Small Wonders' is a full day intensive exhibition of nanotechnology for teachers and for students at UCSD on April 1<sup>st</sup>. They'll learn about really state of the art things and walk away with really cool demonstrations for their classrooms that aren't available on the market. There are dozens of training opportunities like these listed on the website.

*Q: How is word getting out to teachers?*

A: We have a database of all interested teachers in the county and through the SD Science Alliance. Publicity has been successful. The exhibit space is filled up in Balboa Park for April 4<sup>th</sup>. Over 300 organizations are committed already and additional interest suggests the festival might have to expand next year

*Q: In addition to opportunities for K-12, which events will appeal to other age groups?*

A: There are also programs geared to adults, professionals, and the 'just curious.' For example: 'The Science of Wine put on by Alexandria Real Estate.' You will go to a local biotech, Senomyx, which focuses on the science of taste, and hear an informal talk by the CTO and a Salk scientist about the anti-aging properties of red wine. This is followed by a red wine tasting. There is also 'The Science of' - golf, sailing, chocolate, surfing- 75 total, all geared towards the general public. These all occur throughout March and you can schedule through the website at the beginning of the new year.

*Q: Do you have hopes or plans for future events?*

A: The plan is for this festival to be an annual event, and we have also teamed up with the Cambridge festival as well as UCSF and The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia to bring festivals to San Francisco and Philadelphia in 2010.

*Q: Anything else you would like to mention?*

A: The other big event is 'Science on the Mesa.' 30 companies and organizations are opening their doors for one evening for students to do hands-on activities in state-of-the-art labs. At NuVasive you might go into an operating theater and see a spinal implant, or at General Atomics you could tour their half billion dollar fusion reactor. Also we are only able to do this due to the generous support of companies like ResMed, Alexandria, Gen-Probe, Illumina, Qualcomm, Lockheed Martin, Genentech, Agilent, and Biogen Idec to name a few. If you go to only one science event in 2009, it should be our Expo Weekend in Balboa Park on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

Find out more at <http://www.sdsciencefestival.com>.

## Looking Back at Women in bioScience

By Kerri Hebard-Massey

I attended the Women in bioScience (WIB) conference for the first time last year. When I walked into the Salk Institute Auditorium, I was new to AWIS, only having attended a book club meeting, and eager to see what it was all about. I was also fast approaching a career transition and the program sounded like there would be several interesting speakers.

I spent a day meeting new friends and reconnecting with old ones, hearing talks given by the heads of industry and the workers at the bench, and participating in lively roundtables with people doing jobs I hadn't really known existed. What I came away with was the idea that people were happy. Both inside and outside of academia, women had interesting, challenging careers that they honestly enjoyed.

The enthusiasm of everyone I met at WIB gave me the courage to start to network and really pursue an alternative career goal. I wrote to three women who I'd heard of through WIB and asked to interview them. To my simple astonishment, all three agreed to sit down over coffee and talk with me personally about their career paths. For each interview, I showed up at the local Starbucks with my shoes properly shined, a list of questions, and a smile. All three women were open and friendly, sharing stories, experiences, challenges, and advice. Half an hour later, I walked away with a depth of understanding that was truly invaluable.

As I moved out of graduate school and into the job market, the success stories of all the women at WIB and my new mentors were a constant encouragement. Other people had done this and succeeded. I could too. The job search wasn't easy, but with my new network in place, a lot of hard work, and some luck, I found a job as a science writer at a local nonprofit organization. Like those women who were so inspiring at WIB, I've found a career that's interesting, challenging, and fun.

This year, WIB has changed to the Women in Science and Technology conference. In expanding its appeal, I hope that many other women in both science and technology can find that same sense of inspiration.



We are proud to announce that AWIS-SD is an official collaborator of the inaugural San Diego Science Festival, planned as the largest celebration of science on the West Coast.

During the Science Festival, AWIS-SD will be participating by hosting programs. We will also have a hands-on booth at Expo Day on April 4th in Balboa Park. You can visit the official San Diego Science Festival website at <http://www.sdsciencefestival.com>.

Discover how science affects your life through this year's theme, "The Science of You!" The Science Festival invites you to take part in free activities throughout March and April. Supported by private and corporate sponsors, local colleges and universities, leading research institutes, and hundreds of community and science organizations, the Science Festival showcases what is truly unique about science in San Diego.

## EVENTS

### **A Celebration of Women in the Neurosciences at the 2008 Society for Neuroscience Meeting: On the pursuit of happiness by Huda Akil Ph.D.**

By Norma A. Velázquez-Ulloa

The Society for Neuroscience (SfN) is the largest nonprofit organization of researchers who study the nervous system. SfN was founded in 1969, but it wasn't until 1980 that the first committee devoted to fostering the career development of women in neurosciences (WIN) was created. WIN activities included providing mentor-mentee opportunities, travel and career awards, and career development programs. In 2004, WIN joined efforts with SfN's Committee for the Advancement of Women's Careers in Neuroscience, creating the committee on Women in Neurosciences (C-WIN), which has continued and expanded WIN's activities, including hosting a reception at the yearly SfN meeting to honor women in the neuroscience community. The SfN 2008 meeting was held in Washington, D.C. from November 15 to 19. Travel, career development, and recognition awards were presented during a luncheon at the Renaissance Hotel. This year's program included a talk by Huda Akil (past SfN president) and round table discussions over lunch. We talked about ways to get the most out of mentor/mentee relationships and had the opportunity to network with fellow meeting attendees.

The talk by Huda Akil was the highlight of the event. Akil gave a great talk about the pursuit of happiness that inspired us all. She started out by sharing with us the things that make her happy: her family, science, collaborations, advocacy, and nature. Then she talked about the joy, as a woman, of having the choice to work, which is not a given for women in some parts of the world, citing her mother in Damascus, as an example. With a glowing smile, she described how much she loves being a scientist, the excitement of discovering something new, the enriching experience of interacting with many people, and how she likes thinking about problems in a new way that keeps her from ever getting bored. However, she also mentioned the struggle it has been for her to find balance between life and work, and how she has reached a middle ground by pursuing happiness.

Akil approached this pursuit in a very scientific way, by looking for primary literature on happiness. She mentioned three main components that contribute to leading a happy life: 1) having a pleasant life that is enjoyable and full of positive feelings and emotions; 2) living a good life of engagement and immersion in things you like; 3) leading a meaningful life with the purpose of contributing to something larger. Her advice was to be more constructive, cooperative, and collaborative. She urged us to be ourselves and recognize that different kinds of minds can make different types of contributions. She emphasized not getting stuck thinking there is only one correct way to do good science. Huda also mentioned that the key to a happy life is not avoiding stress, but keeping it in check.

Finally, she told us to think of happiness as a habit of the mind, and the pursuit of happiness as a duty for personal growth as well as a benefit to the whole world. "Make our field happy!" she said, and encouraged us to launch the field of happiness in neuroscience. I think we should take that advice not only for neuroscience, but all other fields as well.

## Winter Happy Hour

By Mindy Davis

It was very cozy at Cozymel's. The AWIS-SD Events committee had arranged for a private back room with a nice fireplace and plenty of complimentary appetizers for the Happy Hour on November 13th. Around 40 people came by for some socializing and networking and we easily filled the 31-person capacity room. The wait staff was kept very busy making many custom orders of guacamole and keeping the margaritas flowing. There was a mix of attendees, with both veteran AWIS-SD members and brand new members who had joined AWIS after the Open House. This was a great opportunity to reconnect with friends as well as make new ones. Many business cards were exchanged. The mood wavered between festive and somber as people shared stories of job concern or job loss and as recruiters discussed the difficulties in placing candidates. The AWIS-SD Events committee hosts 2-3 happy hours a year as well as the Annual Holiday Party. We look forward to seeing you at our next event.

## Upcoming Events

### San Diego Science Olympiad

February 9, 2009, 7 am. Rancho Bernardo High School

### Expand Your Horizons Girl's Conference

February 28, 2009, 8 am. University of San Diego

### Life Sciences at the Opera

February 4, 2009, 5:30 pm. Civic Theatre, Downtown San Diego

<http://www.sdopera.com/LIVE>

### San Diego Science Festival

March 1 – April 5, 2009. Various venues across San Diego County.

[www.sdsciencefestival.com](http://www.sdsciencefestival.com)

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT



### San Diego Chapter

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## About the AWIS Newsletter

The AWIS Newsletter is published six times per year and provides AWIS members and supporters with information on Chapter activities, career development, and issues related to women in science.

### Newsletter staff:

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If you are an AWIS-SD member, we encourage you to contribute articles to the Newsletter. Please send articles as MS Word attachments to [newsletter@awissd.org](mailto:newsletter@awissd.org). News articles should not exceed 250 words, and event summaries should not exceed 500 words. Feature articles (special-interest stories and profiles) should not exceed 800 words. The submission deadline for the next issue is Feb 6, 2008.

## Not getting AWIS-SD member e-mails?

Update your contact information! Go to the member services page using the following link:

<http://www.awis.org/members/index.cfm>

You will need your member ID and password. If you need assistance, please contact AWIS Member Services by phone (866-657-AWIS) or by e-mail ([membership@awis.org](mailto:membership@awis.org)).

## AWIS-San Diego Sponsors

AWIS-San Diego thanks our corporate sponsors for their generous support. Donations from corporate sponsors help us fund scholarship awards, monthly events and Strategy Sessions, community outreach efforts, the Newsletter and the website.

For more information about how your company can support AWIS-SD, send e-mail to [fundAWISsd@gmail.com](mailto:fundAWISsd@gmail.com).

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<http://awis.npaci.edu/officers/biographies.htm>

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