



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 Fellow AWIS-SD Members and Friends,

Happy New Year 2012 everyone! The 2011 AWIS San Diego year ended with a blast – our annual board election, a well-attended and educational Day for Undergraduate Women, a fun Strategy Session about handling stress, and a fabulous Holiday Social at Wine Steals (see articles within for more details). I am consistently proud and amazed by the outstanding effort that our volunteers put forth for our Chapter programming – thank you! Congratulations and welcome to our newly elected board members – Tamera Weisser and Corine Lau, both members-at-large. In addition, congratulations also to Diane Retallack, who was re-elected as member-at-large, and Aparna Aiyer, who was re-elected as treasurer. I have been re-elected as president and look forward to serving our Chapter for another two-year term. Thank you to all who participated in voting for our leadership! We look forward to working with you all as we pursue another great year of AWIS San Diego activities in 2012. I would also like to express my gratitude to our out-going board members Jenny Chaplin, past-president, and Rachel Soloff, out-going member-at-large. Their service to and impact on our chapter has been tremendous.

The upcoming AWIS San Diego events for this year include our biennial Scholarship Gala, Strategy Sessions, Coffee Clubs, Outreach activities, and other events to further our mission to support women and girls interested in STEM careers. Watch your AWIS-SD emails for announcements about these exciting activities. If you are a female student actively engaged in a degree program, scholarship applications are now available! See our chapter website (www.awissd.org) for application and eligibility details. Applications are due by February 17, 2012. Awardees will be presented at the Scholarship Gala. Members and non-members, I hope you will attend this terrific event – details are forthcoming!

If you are not an AWIS San Diego member, please consider joining us in 2012 so that you can enjoy members-only benefits such as monthly Coffee Clubs, six Strategy Sessions and one Focus Session per year, admission to our LinkedIn group, free admission to most events, and discounted rates for the Scholarship Gala and Holiday Social. When you sign up at the AWIS National website

(www.awis.org), remember to sign up for membership in the San Diego Chapter.

Please contact me at president@awissd.org if you have any questions, comments or suggestions about/for our chapter. I hope you had a wonderful holiday season – Happy New Year 2012!

Most sincerely,
Dody
 Dorothy (Dody) Sears

Inside this Issue	Page
Letter from the President	1
AWIS-SD Holiday Party	1-2
Strategy Session: Handling Stress	3
Member Profile: Priya Narasingarao	3
Upcoming Events	3
Newsletter information	4
AWIS-SD Sponsors	4
AWIS-SD Contacts	5

Holiday Cheer with Friends So Dear AWIS Holiday Party, 2011 By Pat Rarus

On Thursday, December 8, AWIS members and guests sipped, nibbled or drank excellent wine and feasted on appetizing hors d’oeuvres at AWIS-SD’s annual holiday party held in the casual European-like atmosphere of Wine Steals at Liberty Station. Around 75 persons attended over the course of the evening.

“I thought the party was fantastic!” said Dilara Ally, Ph.D., a postdoctoral scientist and plant geneticist at San Diego State University’s Department of Biology. “I am new to California. I’ve only been here a year from Canada, so meeting interesting new women was really important to me,” said Dilara. “I made some new connections, and that was great.”

Interesting men also attended the event, both as guests and members. Among them was Ray Seraydarian, Ph.D., a proud AWIS member, who serves as a development engineer at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). “The Christmas party was fun,” said Ray. “I enjoy the company of interesting, intelligent, articulate women. I’m a graduate of Cornell University, an Ivy League institution that was co-ed since its very beginning, so this is something I’ve been used to for a long time.”



Non-member Dan McKirnan, Ph.D., a principal at CVC Services, a preclinical research and development firm in Pacific Beach, remarked that he “liked the food and wine.” In addition to these delicious offerings, Wine Steals also provided wonderful service by its helpful staff. Several attendees were especially impressed with our bartender, Nate, who remained cheerful and on top of things throughout the evening despite being kept on his toes by the big turnout.

The food, wine, and reasonable cost were main factors in selecting Wine Steals for the third year in a row, according to Barbara Davids, Ph.D., a member of the AWIS Events Committee since 2009. “We selected Wine Steals for the holiday venue for two reasons. Firstly, our party room had the right combination of holiday warmth, décor and atmosphere along with providing a wonderful selection of food and wine. Secondly, Wine Steals offered us a contract that fit our budget.”

Also involved in planning the holiday party were AWIS Event Committee co-chairs Monica Brown and Marianna Tcherpakov, past chair Kristine Briedis, and current President of the AWIS San Diego chapter, Dody Sears. AWIS member Barbara Preston designed and sent out the announcement this year to members and non-members.

The Events Committee meets once a month, and typically new members trickle in throughout the year. The co-chairs prepare an agenda for each meeting, and members of the committee

volunteer to assist with the various events – including floating new ideas for future events, deciding venue site selection, coordinating needed materials or food choices for events, and writing summaries of events for newsletters. “We also coordinate with other committees, such as the Website and PR Committees, to advertise events and hopefully to attract a new pool of AWIS members and grin, “I hope all the participants of the holiday social enjoyed our soirée!”

Yes, Barbara, we certainly did!



AWIS-SD Holiday Party
(Photos by Molly Moloney)

December Strategy Session: Develop Techniques for Handling Stress

By Merrie Mosedale

The December Strategy Session was presented by committee member Linda Manza and hosted by Jones Day, a law firm whose focus includes serving the local pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. The Southern California Biotechnology Center at Miramar College sponsored the event. The evening’s audience was abundant and included many new faces who had learned about Strategy Sessions at the recent Open House.

Manza started the presentation on handling stress with a group exercise to discuss common stressors, such as work, finances, and family. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these were shared by all members of the audience. Manza then discussed the different kinds of stress, which include acute, chronic, internal, and external. She pointed out that not all stress is bad, and acute stress such as that felt before a job interview or work deadline can actually be beneficial. According to a recent article in Time magazine, the positive or negative impacts of stress depend on how you respond to it. However, chronic stress is likely to have more negative physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral impacts.

Transitioning from the types of stress and their effects, Manza introduced techniques for managing the impacts of stress, which included healthy eating, exercise, relaxation, and rewarding yourself. The audience then enjoyed demonstrations on chair exercises and relaxation techniques that could be done anywhere, including the workplace. The evening closed with a group discussion of individual methods for stress relief where members shared ideas that ranged from yoga to kickboxing. These techniques

would surely come in handy as the much-discussed and shared stress of the holiday season came into full effect.

Member Profile: Priya Narasingarao

By Christine Shulse

AWIS member Priya Narasingarao's scientific interest and aptitude have always been apparent, if unexpected. Coming from a family of mathematicians and economists, her gift for science made her a bit of an outlier. As a child growing up in the southern Indian city of Chennai, Priya was always one of the top three rank holders in her science classes. After graduating high school in 1996, the typical B.Sc. in botany or zoology seemed like bleak future, so Priya chose the new, "sexy," course of study – microbiology!

Priya's passion for research blossomed after her second year of college, when she was awarded a fellowship from the government of India to do research. It is very rare for the Indian government to give money to undergraduates, and Priya was one of only about 20 students in the country chosen for this prestigious fellowship. Her two-month research project centered on the hepatitis C virus, which leads to inflammation of the liver upon infection. At the time, the kits on the market to detect the hepatitis C virus were designed based on strains prevalent in Europe and the United States. India was in need of a kit to test for indigenous strains of hepatitis C. Priya took on the validation of an indigenous Indian kit, collecting samples from hospitals and testing the kit's efficiency.

For her M.Sc., Priya moved from clinical research to the world of environmental microbiology. Through her research on halophiles ("salt-loving" microorganisms), she was exposed to a broad overview of environmental issues. Priya realized she could make her mark in this relatively new field.

Priya had known she wanted to do a Ph.D. since her undergraduate work in microbiology, and she realized that she needed to move abroad to get the kind of experience she was interested in. Ph.D.s in India take significantly longer than they do in the U.S., and the structure is very hierarchical. Furthermore, there was not much environmental research in India in the early 2000s. Therefore, Priya applied to universities across the United States and ultimately chose Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey, for her doctoral work. There she completed her doctoral work on bioremediation (i.e., the use of microorganism metabolism to remove pollutants) under Dr. Max Haggblom. This research involved quite a bit of analytical chemistry, including high-pressure liquid chromatography and gas chromatography. Her advisor encouraged her to be incredibly hands-on, and she learned how to take the instruments used in these assays apart and put them back together. "I broke a column once," Priya remembers, "but Max didn't mind!"

After obtaining her degree, Priya moved to San Diego to join her husband, who works at Qualcomm. The only place she really wanted to work in San Diego was Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO), one of the largest and most important centers for marine and earth science research in the world. Luckily, she quickly found a postdoctoral position working on a National Science Foundation-funded project on halophilic microorganisms. Although the general subject area was the same as her M.Sc. work, the bioinformatic approaches Priya employed were new to her. "At first it [the bioinformatics] was like walking in a dark alley, but it turned out well in the end," Priya reflects. And indeed it did. Her work culminated in the discovery and genomic characterization of a novel major lineage of Archaea (a group of single-celled microorganisms constituting the third domain of life).

When Priya is not thinking about science, she enjoys spending time with her husband and their three-year-old daughter, Sarngini. As a family, they enjoy exploring national parks, most recently visiting Mount Rainer in Washington State. A relatively new AWIS member, Priya is also looking forward to getting more involved and potentially joining a committee.

Since finishing her postdoctoral work at SIO, Priya has explored teaching, both at Point Loma Nazarene University and at the University of California San Diego. Ultimately, she found that she misses bench work and research in general, and is currently "in transition," seeking a job in the up-and-coming biofuels industry. With her unique combination of skills in classic microbiology, analytical chemistry, and bioinformatics, she will be a natural fit at any alternative energy company.

Upcoming Events

Mid-Career Coffee Club

January 19, 2012, 07:45am - 09:00am, food court at northwest corner of Scranton Rd. and Mira Mesa Blvd. Informal forum for AWIS-SD members in leadership and/or management positions to openly discuss issues faced on a daily basis. For more information contact rsoloff@awissd.org

Coffee Club – Working Moms

January 27, 2012, 07:45am - 08:45am, Nobel Park - 8810 Judicial Drive, San Diego, CA 92121

If you are a working mom, please join us for our morning walk. We will make our way to a local cafe while sharing our experiences with juggling a career and being a mom. After you register, we will forward additional details regarding our meeting location.

Contact: Jennifer Cho and Corine Lau

Strategy Session – Get Connected: Networking and Social Media

February 06, 2012, 06:00pm - 08:00pm, JONES DAY, 12265 El Camino Real, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92130

Get Connected: Networking and social media. Additional Details TBD. Remember to bring your business cards! Contact: strategysessions@awissd.org

Local Events of Interest

Next Generation Bio-Based Chemicals Summit

January 23-26, 2012

Rancho Bernardo Inn, 17550 Bernardo Oaks Drive, San Diego, CA 92128

For more information see:

<http://www.infocastinc.com/index.php/conference/596>

Future of Genomic Medicine Conference

March 1-2, 2012

Robert Paine Scripps Forum for Science, Society and the Environment

Scripps Seaside Forum, 8610 Kennel Way, La Jolla, CA 92037

For more information see:

<http://www.scripps.org/events/future-of-genomic-medicine-v>

About the AWIS Newsletter

The AWIS-SD 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 for January/February issue:

Nurith Amitai, Kerri Hebard-Massey, Tiffany Hernandez, Alka Malhotra, Denise McKee, Molly Moloney, Janice Payne, Pat Rarus, Shweta Sharma, and Geetha Srinivasan

Janice Payne and Kerri Massey are stepping down from the newsletter committee. We sincerely appreciate their contributions as committee members.

Contribute to the Newsletter

If you are an AWIS-SD member, we encourage you to contribute to the newsletter. Please send articles, photographs, and member news as MS Word attachments to newsletter@awissd.org. News articles should not exceed 250 words, event summaries should not exceed 500 words, and feature articles (special-interest stories and profiles) should not exceed 1000 words. The submission deadline for the next issue is **February 10, 2012**.

AWIS-San Diego Sponsors

AWIS-SD 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.

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IMPORTANT CONTACTS**AWIS Board**

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To contact the Board, visit the following website:

<http://sdawis.org/about-awis-san-diego/board-members-awis>

Committee

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