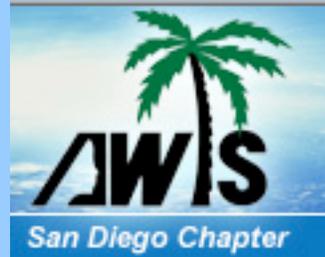


Volume 16, Issue 5

September-October 2008



Newsletter

President's Letter

By Jenny Chaplin

Dear AWIS members,
It has been quite busy for summer months at AWIS. Our events committee organized a kayaking outing, which proved to be extremely popular. To my disappointment, I had to miss the Dress for Success event organized by Huong Huynh with Macy's. Our garage door broke just before the event, leaving us prisoners until well into the next morning. As we settled with the repairman, I wondered if dressing was what I needed for success, or perhaps a career change. Garage door repairs appear to be far more lucrative than science. However, having decided that my physique is not quite fitting for that particular career, I decided to gather some tips for presentations at the Strategy Session. As usual, our Strategy Sessions committee put on a great event and had researched their topic well.

September will be a busy month, with planning for Women in Bioscience kicking in. Rachel Soloff and I will be co-chairing the committee and are looking forward to planning another successful event. The committees are forming, but there is still space on some committees if anyone missed the signup. We are also heading for our annual Open House on October 16 and of course are hoping that this year's event will not be impacted by any natural disasters.

We'd like to ask that you start spreading the word and get people to come to the event. More information can be found on the website at www.awissd.org.

As always, if anyone has any ideas, feedback or anything else to discuss, please don't hesitate to contact me at president@awissd.org.
Jenny

La Jolla Shores Kayak and Potluck Adventure

By Toni Cordero

The kayak tour of the seven caves and the potluck picnic held on Saturday July 26 were a great success! Close to 40 AWIS members and non-members met at La Jolla Shores and walked over to San Diego Bike and Kayak Tours for a two-hour double-kayak adventure. The weather was excellent and the waves were low, making kayaking a lot of fun!

Some kayakers spotted a sting ray, leopard sharks and dark orange garibaldi fish. The sea lions were amazing to watch up close. I found entering a cave in a kayak was exhilarating. It was exciting to hear from several attendees that this was, in fact, the first time they'd ever gone kayaking! Everyone showed great spirit and enthusiasm.

After two hours of kayaking, everyone was famished. The potluck picnic that followed was enjoyed by all. There were drinks, eats and sweets for everyone. Most participants brought a dish and they were delicious! Thank you to everyone who contributed.

People stayed for nearly two hours after the event to talk and socialize. It was encouraging to hear that some who were not members were interested in joining AWIS, as they wanted to be part of “these fun events”.

We are very appreciative of the consideration that the San Diego Bike and Kayak Tours personnel showed our group and how well they accommodated our requests. They also expressed that they were looking forward to our next year's event.

We want to express special thanks to fellow members of AWIS who helped make this event a wonderful success!

Dress for Success

By Siobhan Malany

Consider the following: You have an upcoming interview and are wondering how to dress. Before the interview day, you drive to the company, sit in the parking lot and take note of what employees are wearing. Good strategy?

If you are thinking yes, then read on. Chances are you are in need of a few fashion tips.

AWIS-SD held a “Dressing for Success” wine & cheese reception at the Burnham Institute last month to provide attendees with fashion tips for dressing for interviews and for everyday success. A consultant for Macy’s By Appointment facilitated the

evening, beginning with a short fashion show.

Three volunteers modeled different professional looks. The first sported a light gray suit set with pleated turquoise silk top and matching inner coat lining. The second modeled a flowing skirt with a cream v-neck blouse and a light black sweater that tied at the waist. The third wore a chic, earth-toned, button-down dress with tailored waist-length jacket. Each look was outfitted with a removable layer allowing for versatility during the day and finished with solid-colored classic short or medium-heeled shoes.

Was the turquoise shirt too shiny? Was the v-neck blouse too low? When it comes to dressing for an interview, be yourself, be comfortable, and be confident. Dress for the job that you want. For example, if you are interviewing for a company and want to emphasize you have something different to offer, then the suit set with turquoise blouse may give you a bold look and confident feel. If you are interviewing for an academic professorship, the v-neck blouse skirt set may make you feel relaxed but professional.

Here are three shopping tips: (1) Take advantage of services like Macy’s By Appointment. Let them help you stay within your budget. (2) Visit a store that hires experienced, professional staff that can complete a tailored look that fits your body shape. Places like Cache, Black & White and Ann Taylor are examples. Be willing to try things you would otherwise never take off a hanger because you might be pleasantly surprised at a new and stunning look for yourself. Keep your budget in mind but remember stylish, high quality clothes cost more but generally last many seasons, saving you money and closet space in the end. (3) Take a trusted friend shopping and listen to their critiques.

When my husband and I were dating, I was a postdoc and he was a photographer. He was photographing me and said, "You dress like a scientist." As I looked down at my sweatshirt that, in fact, I had had since college, I got the message. He helped me purge my closet of the drabness, then took me shopping and helped me create a modern and chic (and photogenic) new look. Now, as a scientist in industry, I dress business casual everyday. Whether I am giving a seminar, meeting with senior management or chatting with colleagues in the lab, I feel comfortable and confident and it makes a difference.

Macy's By Appointment is a free personal-shopping service. Whether you need a new professional look or are short on shopping time, Macy's By Appointment provides the fashion consultants and personal-shopping staff. For more information call 877-937-4647.

Writing Workshop

By Kerri Hebard-Massey

On August 19, 2008, AWIS-SD newsletter and public relations committee members attended the 4th annual AWIS-SD writing workshop. The workshop was led by Lynne Friedman, a free-lance science writer and editor. "My expertise is a mile wide and an inch deep," she joked. Over the three hour workshop, Friedman used examples of good and bad writing to illustrate the principles behind good press releases, online content, interviews.

Press Releases

Friedman stressed that "a press release is not a news article." They are simply an announcement of an event. To be published, press releases must be of local interest, be written well, and be in by the deadline.

Deadlines can be weeks or even a month ahead of time, thus familiarity with local publications is essential.

Online Content

Readers scan webpages in an F-shaped pattern, picking out the most relevant information as they go. Clear titles should be used so that readers get all necessary information as they scan across the top of the page. Readers then skip to the middle of the page so subheadings should be meaningful. "Cute and clever don't work," Friedman explained. Finally, readers scan down the left hand side of the page, so keep subheadings and lists active.

Interview Techniques

Friedman suggested the following tips in getting good interviews:

- Be organized and prepared.
- Find a novel approach.
- Be up front about who you are and who you're writing for.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Record the interview (ask permission first).
- Take notice of good quotes that are "brief, brilliant bursts of life."

Individual Critiques

Friedman ended the evening by going over writing samples submitted by workshop attendees. In each case, she made clear and pointed suggestions on how to improve content.

Dependent Allowance for Postdocs

By Paula Campos Soto

At a recent conference in North Carolina, having drinks with fellow postdocs, I was

posed the following question: “Do you think a postdoc should ask her boss to pay for childcare, if she decides to bring her children to a conference?”

Being a mother of two young children, and being a new postdoc, my first instinct was to say yes, of course. But then I thought, and said: “Having two children, I would certainly say she should definitely ask for it. But I can see how someone would think that is unfair.”

Immediately after saying it, I was already regretting the statement. Why would someone find it unfair to receive help when the cost of childcare is so high, and the postdoc pay so low? But before I could take it back, or at least correct it, someone else jumped into the conversation.

“I agree,” a fellow postdoc said, “I don’t think my boss should be paying for the expenses of someone else’s children.”

I wasn’t sure what to say at this point. How do you defend the choice of having children, and how do you explain the different hurdles and dilemmas that you come across once you have children and decide to pursue a career in science?

The conversation continued, and more fellows joined in. Each person presenting their opinions based on their own experiences and beliefs. And at the end, we were not able to come to an agreement. Some people still thought if parents were given any type of stipend increase or dependent allowance, non-parents were being punished for not having children. Others highlighted the more transcendent aspect of this issue, the fact that if there are no children today, there will be no one to benefit from the discoveries and advances

we accomplish in the future. Therefore, parents deserve all the help they can get.

Ideally, salaries of all postdocs should be increased. I was shocked to find out that, according to a recent survey by the Scientific Research Society Sigma Xi, the median salary for a worker with a bachelor's degree was \$45,000. If you have a master's, the figure jumps to \$56,000 (an increase of ~24%). If you have a doctoral degree or professional degree, the median is about \$71,500 (a 59% increase over a bachelor's degree). Now, where do postdocs rank? The median salary for postdocs was \$38,000 (a decrease of ~16% over a bachelor's degree holder!).

The bottom-line is we should all work together to improve the salaries of postdocs, and not waste time fighting over the crumbs of dependent allowance. The scientific force of the future needs be able to do science without worrying about being able to afford rent, childcare, or both.