



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



What a year we had in 2009. In the midst of regional economic instability, AWIS-SD remained strong and active in community activities with support from you, our members. We reached out and welcomed new members from the non-life science sector, while nurturing and strengthening existing relationships with academic and life science supporters. “Thank you” to all who renewed their memberships and “Welcome” to new colleagues who joined the San Diego chapter.

In 2009, we introduced [Coffee Clubs](#), new members-only discussion groups for Early Career, Mid-Career, and Working Moms. Coffee Clubs are another way to network with fellow members as well as to give and receive advice about career and personal issues. Continue your conversations from Coffee Clubs on the AWIS–SD LinkedIn subgroup. We also made a presence on social media forums including LinkedIn and Twitter. The [AWIS-SD LinkedIn](#) group is also a members-only group with focused discussion topics and job news. Attending a new event or just heard something interesting at a seminar? Post it on Twitter @AWISsd. I invite you to join these conversations both to learn and to impart your perspectives on various discussion topics.

Looking forward, I see an exciting year ahead. AWIS San Diego will be on hand for the [AAAS Family Science Days](#) on Feb 20th where middle- and high-school students and their families can “meet the scientists.” The highly successful [Science Festival](#) returns to San Diego for the second year with events culminating with Expo Day at Petco Park on Mar 27th. Planning for the biennial [Scholarship Gala](#) is underway for an evening reception in early May 2010. With these and other events, the chapter continues to build our presence in San Diego and support young women in science.

As if community service and activities isn’t enough fun for us, the San Diego chapter welcomes new leadership to the Board. It is my privilege to lead the chapter into 2010. Joining Jenny Chaplin (Past President) and I are Rosemary Cesario (Secretary), Aparna Aiyer (Treasurer), Diane Retallack, Dody Sears, and Rachel Soloff, each as Members at Large. We look forward to working with the committee co-chairs and all members of AWIS-SD.

With regards,

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The Nicholas Conor Institute Gains Partners to Bring New Discoveries for Childhood Cancer to the Clinic

By Adrienne Brown

In one of our previous issues, you may have read about [Beth Anne Baber, PhD](#) and MBA, conceived of [The Nicholas Conor Institute for Pediatric Cancer Research](#) after the trial of her 15-month-old son’s diagnosis and treatment for high risk neuroblastoma. During [Conor’s illness](#), Baber realized that in most cases, the standard treatments for childhood cancer are often smaller dosages of adult therapies based on the child’s body weight. However, adult therapies such as radiation, chemotherapy and surgeries are extremely harsh for a child. In addition, these kids most often have serious complications due to the treatments. Later in life, cancer survivors often experience developmental delays and abnormalities, learning difficulties, hearing losses, infertilities, secondary cancers, heart problems, and organ failures. Better understanding of the effects of cancer treatments on early development is needed because children are not small adults.

In September 2009, the Nicholas Conor Institute came into the public eye with the launch of their new website. Baber is a researcher in the field of DNA damage and repair. She saw the need for innovative and specialized medicines for children, and with Martin Latterich, PhD, co-founder and CSO, they conceived of the Institute to help bring about those treatments.

The Nicholas Conor Institute for Pediatric Cancer Research is a medical research organization dedicated to support the development of diagnostics, therapeutics and personalized programs specifically for children with cancer. The goal of the Institute is to establish efficient, mutually beneficial partnerships between industry, academia, clinicians and funding sources. These partnerships aim to develop predictive diagnostics to guide individualized therapy, to bring to the clinic new therapies that consider the unique molecular

makeup of the child, and to translate discoveries into integrated, personalized treatment programs.

In the United States, cancer is the number two killer of children, while accidental death is number one. Still, childhood cancers represent only 1% of all cancers in the US, putting them in the rare disease category. There are few financial incentives for developing therapies for rare diseases, due to the small market size. This discourages drug companies from spending substantial research and development efforts on these therapeutic areas. The goal of the Nicholas Connor Institute is to fill the need in childhood cancer.

Dr. Jennifer Willert treats children at the [Rady Children's Hospital](#). She emphasizes, "that a more personalized approach as well as long term follow-up for late effects will ultimately result in significantly improved outcomes and decreased toxicity." The Nicholas Connor Institute is dedicated to making these important steps towards our children's future.

The Institute has initiated partnerships academic labs, industry, and philanthropic partners to support funding and accelerate R&D efforts. Partnerships have been initiated with industry partners such as Prognosys Biosciences to use their expertise in genomics, CollabRx in personalized medicine arena, and AltheaDx, an innovator in theranostics.

[AltheaDx](#), is developing the first childhood cancer diagnostic panel for small round blue cell tumors. These cancers, on the surface, look very similar. However, they can emerge from distinct cancer types that respond differentially to known treatments. This new tool will avoid misdiagnosis and save lives.

A collaboration with [CollabRx](#) will use molecular information from patient biopsies to match the patient with available marketed therapeutics, as well as investigational drugs, for treatment. The goal is for researchers to continuously test and refine the models of pediatric cancer biology and therapeutics based on the resulting clinical responses.

[Prognosys Biosciences](#) is using innovative genomics applications to develop diagnostics. The company plans to analyze and compare tumor cells from children to normal children's cells in a long-term prospective study.

Existing and future partnerships at the Institute are supported by a prestigious [Board of Directors](#), composed of world-renowned scientists, thought leaders, and business executives with strengths in corporate governance, business strategy and law.

There are many opportunities to help grow the vision, see Ways to Help at the [website](#). The Institute also welcomes researchers with promising discoveries and technologies that would benefit children with cancer. For more information, contact The Nicholas Connor Institute for Pediatric Cancer through the website or directly by phone or email.

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The Power of Positive Thinking - We Are What We Think We Are

By Shweta Sharma

There is a large interaction between our thoughts and our destiny, that is, where we are able to reach in terms of our vertical career growth and success. This is aptly summarized by Frank Outlaw:

Watch your thoughts, they become words.

Watch your words, they become actions.

Watch your actions, they become habits.

Watch your habits, they become your character.

Watch your character, it becomes your destiny.

The difficult question is how to control and channel thoughts to saturate the brain with everything that is positive. It is easier said than done. Human behavior is a function of brain activity and is controlled by a suitable balance of neurotransmitters. Positive and negative thoughts are primarily a subtle balance of serotonin levels. So, our personality boils down to the chemistry of our brains.

But there is hard scientific data that show that we are what we think we are. The biggest difference between people is their attitudes and their mental approach to daily life. Abraham Lincoln rightly remarked, "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be." Therefore, our attitudes make a huge difference in our lives and in our level of happiness. For example, whether we think a cup of water is half full or half empty. Each one of us is endowed with a different genetic makeup, potential, and brain chemistry. So, the starting point for positive thinking is self realization and introspection. To speak in the language of biochemists, you must know your own brain chemistry.

The next step is honing the skills of thinking. An easy way is to follow the conventional wisdom of the ages: "Think before you speak." Our thoughts, followed by speech, form a cascade of reactions which modulate our brain chemistry. What we speak ought to be candid but phrased in such a way that it does not disturb the brain chemistry of the listener(s). This is very important, because any harsh expression or language follows Newton's third law of motion in terms of stirring the negative thought process in the speaker as well as the listener. There are lifestyles, like procrastination, which lead to work backlogs which in turn precipitate negative thoughts. So, it is germane that we manage our work efficiently to always have some free time in order to clear our brain for moving it towards positive chemistry.

In our social interactions we must always give sufficient room to the feelings, education, cultural background and moorings of the people around us. The rule of thumb is to smile and appreciate whatever good we perceive as the first response before moving to any personal or professional interaction. In every situation there are a set of positive as well as negative thoughts, responses, or feelings. By modulating and honing our thinking process, we should leverage our thoughts and primary reactions to the positive options before we get any evidence otherwise.

The power of positive thinking and, more appropriately, a positive milieu are very relevant in modern work places where teamwork, team synergy, deadlines and global competitiveness are the "in thing." This all requires positive thinking and an overall positive attitude as an integral part of success.

Social Networking as a Fundraising Tool

By Kerri Hebard-Massey

Each year, JP Morgan Chase & Co. donates millions of dollars to US charities. In the past, they selected charities based on internal review. This year, Chase tried something new. Pairing with Facebook, Chase created the Community Giving Program to empower individuals to choose the recipients of a total of \$5 million. Special Facebook pages were created for over 500,000 charity organizations including programs based on education, healthcare, housing, the environment, combating hunger, arts and culture, human services, and animal welfare. Based on user votes, 100 charities were selected to receive \$25,000 and will now compete for \$1 million.

We would like to congratulate the local charities that are part of the top 100. The [American Chinese Culture and Education Foundation](#) works to share Chinese culture with the community, promote education, and sponsor children in rural China. The [Sheckler Foundation](#) focuses on childhood illness and injury. More information and a full list of the top 100 can be found [here](#).

The strategy is unquestionably novel and will certainly generate positive press for Chase. But will the most deserving charities win? Nearly half of Facebook users are under the age of 25, demographics which could skew the ultimate results. There have also been some growing pains. During peak voting, service was occasionally interrupted. But regardless of the ultimate result, this program may result in many more than 100 winners. The Nicholas Conor Institute (featured in this newsletter) participated in the Chase Community Giving Program. Though they were not one of the Top 100, they saw a 400% increase in website viewership. They also made many new contacts with people offering to help spread word of the campaign, volunteer, or assist with business development. Though only one charity will walk away with the \$1 million prize, over 500,000 charities have been introduced to the world of social networking. The impact of this campaign for Chase, Facebook, and the charities clearly shows that social networking can be an effective fundraising and awareness tool.

AWIS Happy Hour

By Monica Brown

On Wednesday September 30, 2009, AWIS members gathered to watch the sunset and enjoy happy hour at Clay's of La Jolla. Clay's, located on the top floor of Hotel La Jolla, has comfortable seating that is conducive to conversation, friendly and courteous staff, and offers an amazing view of the ocean, along with fantastic pricing for happy hour appetizers and drinks. The favorites for snacking were the tofu won ton chips with marinated tofu, mango and Japanese cucumber on crispy cracker, the hummus plate with feta and roasted eggplant pesto, and the roasted duck spring rolls. These were all beautifully complemented by happy hour specials on Clay's home brews, other local draft beers, sangria, and Clay's house wine. Lively discussion covered a variety of topics including career choices, research projects, industry jobs, and international research.

To hear more about AWIS-SD events, including updates on networking and strategy sessions, coffee clubs, job postings, career advice, and more, join AWIS-SD on LinkedIn! http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=91118&trk=myg_ugrp_ovr

News Update on AWIS Members

Siobhan Malany had a baby boy named Lenox on September 30th.

Cynthia Shuman had a baby girl named Elsa Linnea on Dec 9th, 2009.

Debbie O'Leary has joined Dart Neuroscience as an assay development Scientist.

Sharmila Chattopadhyay accepted a junior faculty position in Memphis, TN.

Shauna McGillivray is now an Assistant Professor of Biology at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth TX. She'll be doing a combination of teaching and microbiology research.

Jo'el Roth has been selected to receive a "Change the World" Scholarship from UC San Diego Extension to pursue a post-master's degree Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling.

Dody Sears had her first press release: <http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/newsrel/science/11-09PNAS.asp>

To include you career and/or personal updates in the AWIS-SD newsletter, please email newsletter@awissd.org

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 May/June issue:

Bhawanjit Brar, Mindy Davis, Kerri Hebard-Massey, Siobhan Malany, Alka Malhotra, Janice Payne, Shweta Sharma, Rachel Schwartz, Paula Soto, Geetha Srinivasan, Sama Tamrakar, and Norma Velázquez-Ulloa

Please 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.

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.

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To contact the Board, visit the following website:

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

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