



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.



AWIS Hosts Nature Hike

By Cynthia Shuman

On the misty morning of June 2, AWIS members, family and friends started the day by enjoying the Mission Trails Regional Park. This large park is located just 8 miles northwest of San Diego and is full of hills, valleys, recreational areas and a great diversity of plant and animal life. The event started with a guided nature hike, which was followed by a potluck picnic overlooking Mission Gorge. Thanks to the Events Committee for organizing the hike.

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Upcoming Events

Compiled by Janice Payne

September 15: Workshop Presentation Skills. Have you considered volunteering at an outreach event, but you aren't sure what's involved or what to present? Would you like to share your experiences in presenting workshops? Agenda: Presenting a Workshop – Overview Roundtable. Location: UCSD Scripps Institute of Oceanography – Vaughn 100. Time: 8am. RSVP: http://awis.npaci.edu/calendar/eventdetails.php?event_id=339.

October 1: Strategy session. Investment Smarts. Be as smart with your money as you are with your career! Members only event. The Salk Institute. 6-8pm.

October 13: Sally Ride Science Festival. The Sally Ride Science Festivals (www.sallyridefestivals.com) occur in a variety of locations throughout the country. The Science Festivals are for 5-8th grade girls and include hands-on activities at booths and focused activities for girls in break out sessions. There is also a question and answer session with Sally Ride. In the past, AWIS has sponsored a booth with activities. Location: UCLA. Time: 8am. RSVP: http://awis.npaci.edu/calendar/eventdetails.php?event_id=340.

October 24: Free Lecture Series on Climate Change. Wildlife Responses to Climate Change. Speaker: Terry Root, PhD. Location: San Diego Natural History Museum. 6:30-8:00 pm.

October 25: AWIS Open House. This annual event highlights what AWIS is all about. Bring a friend and learn about AWIS committees and activities. Location: Biogen IDEC. Time: 5:30pm. RSVP: http://awis.npaci.edu/calendar/eventdetails.php?event_id=334

Science Writing Course UCSD Extension

9 meetings (Sept. 27 - Dec. 6, 2007)
(No meetings Nov. 15 and 22)

Lynne Friedmann, AWIS Fellow, once again offers her popular science-writing course through UCSD Extension. If you're interested in exploring this field, this course is an introduction to science journalism with a focus on writing techniques and strategies to help an audience of general readers understand scientific information. Also covered are opportunities for science writing, constraints that shape science coverage, ethical issues that govern the reporting of scientific information, and the cultural place of science in our society. Several of Lynne's students have gone on to successful careers as newspaper journalists, freelance writers, book editors, and science public relations. Visit <http://www.extension.ucsd.edu/studyarea/index.cfm?vAction=singleCourse&yCourse=WCWP-40105&vStudyAreaId=13> or call (858) 534-3400 to enroll. You can also contact Lynne at lfriedmann@nasw.org with questions about the course.

SPECIAL REPORTS

A Mother's Mission: Establishing the Nicholas Connor Institute

By Siobhan Malany



THE NICHOLAS CONNOR INSTITUTE
for Pediatric Cancer Research

Nicholas Connor is not a philanthropist, nor is he a renowned oncologist. "He is my son," shares Beth Barber, Executive VP and COO of The Nicholas Connor Institute (TNCI). Barber, co-founder of TNCI, spoke about the institute at the La Jolla Biotech Day Spotlight on Science: A Public Affair, held last month at the Marriott Hotel, La Jolla. The Institute's mission is to individualize treatment for children with cancer.

Nicholas Connor Boddy was diagnosed with stage-three neuroblastoma (NB) at the age of 15 months. "As for any parent, being told your child has NB was beyond shocking," states Barber. She and her husband are both basic cancer research scientists who study DNA damage and repair mechanisms. "I immediately went to the nurses' station and began researching NB on the web."

Connor is currently in remission after undergoing intensive combinatorial chemotherapy, surgery and retinoic acid therapy. Throughout her son's treatment regime, Barber came to realize what little progress has been made in developing innovative treatments specifically tailored for children with neuroblastoma and other rare cancers. "The very same agents we use in the lab for our experiments, we were pumping them into our child knowing how they work on the molecular level."

In the field of oncology, much progress has been made in delivering novel medicines and experimental treatment to adults living with cancer. But when these cancer-fighting agents and radiation therapies are applied to children, there is the potential to leave the surviving child with long-term side effects including: abnormal bone growth and development, learning difficulties, hearing loss, secondary cancers, infertility and a marked decrease in function of the heart, lungs, and kidneys. "I realized that technology to deliver better cancer therapies to children does exist. It just isn't being applied," says Barber.

During Connor's last rounds of retinoic acid therapy, Barber, a postdoctoral fellow at the Salk Institute, began to seriously question her desire to continue working at the bench. "I felt extremely frustrated that I wasn't contributing scientifically to the immediate need to better cancer therapies for children like Connor and all those children I have seen in Rady Children's oncology clinic."

A year ago, Barber met Martin Latterich for breakfast. Latterich is an expert in personalized medicine in Canada and a previous colleague at the Salk Institute. He was in town promoting partnerships between his institute in Montreal and San Diego labs. She told him of her dream to start a foundation to raise funds for the development of new therapies for rare childhood cancers. Latterich was on board. TNCI was born.

With Latterich as president and CEO and Barber as VP and COO of TNCI, the co-founders developed a business plan and sought the advice from San Diego life science experts. As momentum for the institute "snowballed," Barber realized that she needed to become more familiar with business practices related to the life sciences and technology and began to investigate various MBA programs. Recently, she was awarded the DLA-Piper Athena scholarship for the Rady School FlexMBA. The education she will receive through the program will be invaluable in helping her make smart business decisions as TNCI develops.

Latterich joined Barber at the La Jolla Biotech Day forum and outlined the research objectives of the institute. The TNCI will provide an integrated research and clinical infrastructure with the mission to rapidly translate discoveries made in the laboratory into personalized therapies for children with cancer. Using genomic and proteomic approaches, TNCI's research will focus on developing diagnostic panels based on a child's genetics, environment and tumor biopsy. These personalized panels will enable oncologists to customize cancer therapies specific to that child. In addition, research efforts will be directed toward establishing biomarkers predictive of clinical efficacy and toxicity. Initially, the institute will rely on available treatment regimes. Matching a child's diagnostic evaluation to a specific treatment, and monitoring the efficacy and toxicity of the treatment using biomarkers, means the child will have reduced exposure to toxic drugs, thereby increasing the child's survival rate and minimizing long-term adverse side effects. As the institute develops, the research aim is to discover novel biomarkers to aid in the development of improved therapeutic treatments to rare pediatric cancers, an unmet medical need.

TNCI will serve as a link to universities, hospitals and epidemiology centers. Barber and Latterich plan to set up operations in San Diego and seek start-up funds from entrepreneurs, foundations and corporations to build the foundation, recruit an executive team and establish laboratory platforms. Once the infrastructure is established, the institute will seek funding from federal, state, and local government agencies.

Every two months, Connor undergoes molecular resonance imaging (MRI) scans. Barber and her husband are aware that their lives could change dramatically after each scan. "We basically live in two month blocks and plan our lives accordingly." Within those two-month blocks, Barber is co-founding an institute dedicated to personalizing cancer therapies for pediatrics, a first of its kind in the U.S.

Remembering Marguerite Vogt (1913-2007)

Contributed by Lynne Friedmann

On July 6, 2007, Marguerite Vogt, a remarkable woman of science, died at the age of 94.

Born in Germany, she published her first research paper at the age of 14, describing a series of fruit fly mutations. She did research as a university and medical school student, skipping classes to putter around in the lab and making up for missed lectures by memorizing her textbooks. She did her bench work right through the Nazi era, when, for political reasons, her scientist-parents were forced to leave the Kaiser Wilhelm/Max Planck Institute in Berlin, where her father

had been director. They then opened their own research center in the Black Forest.

Vogt did her work through the ruins of postwar Germany and, after immigrating to the United States, she continued her research wherever bench space could be had, first at Caltech, and then at the Salk Institute. Over the decades, Dr. Vogt won the respect of legions of her peers and protégés.

She made significant contributions as a scientist in multiple areas: as a *Drosophila* developmental geneticist, as a virologist working with Renato Dulbecco (later a Nobel laureate), and as an investigator into viral transformation and cellular immortalization. Moreover, she was an influential mentor and colleague to many junior scientists, among them several future Nobel laureates. Her work was never recognized by a major prize. In a 2001 New York Times interview, she told a reporter, "I'm happy not to have been bothered. When you get too famous, you stop being able to work."

Dr. Vogt published her last paper in 1998. She was busy in her Salk Institute lab even into her 90s.

Much more on the remarkable life and scientific contributions of Marguerite Vogt can be found at <http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~forsburg/vogt.html>. This web page was created by AWIS Fellow Susan Forsburg, who was fortunate to be a colleague of Dr. Vogt at the Salk Institute. Susan developed this web site to remember Marguerite's contributions as a scientist and to honor her role as a mentor.

(Source: Remembering Marguerite Vogt web page and New York Times articles)

EVENTS

Break Out of Your Routine

By Valerie Uzzell
Strategy Session Committee

The August Strategy Session highlighted how and why it is so important for us to escape from routine. The Session forced the career-oriented to think about how we live the rest of our (non-work) lives.

Strategy Session organizer Laura Fernau discussed why it is so important to escape from our routines. Reasons included:

- Reduce stress
- Avoid conflicts through stress and boredom
- Meet new people
- Gain a new perspective on life.

In case these reasons are not compelling enough to take a break, studies show that escaping daily stress can also reduce our chances of getting Alzheimer's disease

Methods to break routine can be classified into four categories:

- Travel,
- Exercise
- New activities
- Small daily changes.

In small groups, we described a range of solutions to being in a rut, like taking a day off mid-doctoral thesis, engaging in ceramics classes, mountain biking, or more drastic changes like quitting our job and roaming around India for six months.

Everyone had good ideas on how to overcome the common obstacles to breaking out of our routine, such as finances, inertia, and guilt over missing work. For example, one group suggested a number of excellent ways to vacation without leaving San Diego. Several suggested putting recreational activities, like going to the beach, hiking in Anza-Borrego, horse-back riding on Fiesta Island or watching polo matches in Del Mar, on the monthly calendar so that they are set activities.

If these suggestions are not strong enough medicine, there's always touring India.

Resume Writing and Interviewing Skills

July Focus Session at GenProbe.

A workshop on resume writing and interviewing skills was held at GenProbe, an AWIS San Diego Corporate Sponsor. Nina Osmon, of GenProbe's Human Resource Department, facilitated the workshop and provided an educational and lively presentation.

"There were so many audience questions that the workshop ran into overtime. Osmon's practical advice for resume writing and interviewing reinforced how important it is to present your abilities effectively both in the resume and in the interview. A great skill set will ensure success while on the job, but you'll never have that chance to shine if your resume and interview don't convey that you're the right candidate for that job." -Fran Putkey.

FEATURES/OPINIONS

Seeing Bodies

By Jennifer Lynn Sterling

If you haven't had the chance to visit University Town Center (UTC) to check out "Bodies...The Exhibition," you should definitely set aside a couple of hours to experience the human body like never before. The exhibit features real human bodies preserved and presented in a way suitable for adults of all ages.

Admittedly, the idea of walking through an exhibit with real human bodies made me a bit squeamish, but after walking through the door my thoughts switched to fascination. It was truly something I had never seen before and, like the advertisement said, the exhibit was tastefully presented. I was both educated and captivated by what lies under the skin, or under the stomach for that matter. A human model, which reminds me of a life size Mr. Potato Head to which a lung can be detached and set in place of a kidney, does not do the living human body justice. Plastic models, for example, do not depict variation of tissues and organs, such as the look and feel of a smoker's lung.

Each section of the exhibit specializes in a particular system of the body, such as the digestive, circulatory or reproductive system.

Each section was captivating in its own respect, but there were two sections that stood out to me. One specimen in particular was dissected to showcase the nervous system. Laid out in a glass case, resembling that of Snow White's, were the remains of a body stripped of everything but the inner parts of the nervous system, including the spinal cord and the nerves extending out to the hands and feet. At first glance, I was not sure what I was walking up to. As I approached I imagined the shape of a human form. So that's what it looks like!

The second on my "must see" list was the section on the circulatory system. This time, the glass "Snow White" case was an upright rectangle sheltering the human network of veins and arteries. The detail was astounding. I could clearly see the shape of individual toes and the rounding of the fingertips where ink might be left after giving a fingerprint. How is a dissection of veins and arteries possible? This specimen, I came to find out, no longer contained elements of the original remains, but instead, was a polymer cast. Much like the way Jell-O takes the shape of its container, the mechanically pumped polymer flowed through the same tubes as the blood would have and then hardened, leaving the cast. Looking at the abundance of these blood-carrying tubes, I was reminded of how my teachers in elementary school tried to explain the scope of such things. After seeing this exhibit, I remember trying to imagine my intestines stretching out before me at the suggestion of my first grade teacher.

The exhibit runs through September 10, and is located at the UTC Westfield. More information about the exhibit and others around the country can be found at <http://www.bodiestheexhibition.com>

"The Omnivore's Dilemma" The Man. The Book. The Beer.

By Sharon Dana

When I was helping my daughter move in to start her freshman year, I noticed flyers posted all over the UC, Davis campus advertising the 2006 Campus Community Book Project. The University and the City of Davis had chosen "The Omnivore's Dilemma: A History of Four Meals" by Michael Pollan. Then, I received a mailing announcing that the author would be appearing on June 16 for the final installment of UCSD's Revelle Forum for the 2006/2007 academic year. The clincher? A Union-Tribune story told me that Stone Brewing Company was starting a Beer and Book Club and that Pollan's book would be the first selection.

Yes. I bought the book. I read the book. And I met the author.

The Man. Michael Pollan is a lanky, funny and engaging speaker. He is a journalist by training and came to nature writing through his passion for backyard gardening. He is Knight Professor of Science and Environmental Journalism at UC, Berkeley and has won numerous journalistic awards. He shared some new "kernels" to digest. First, in recognition of the venue - The Neurosciences Institute - he told us that our digestive systems contain as many neurons as our brains. He shared his optimism for the future of sustainable agriculture in the U.S. and said that we could find local farms that fit his model on websites such as www.eatwild.com and www.eatwellguide.com.

The Book. The omnivore's dilemma is simply 'what to eat.' The choices are traditionally guided by cultural, ethical, safety, sensory, and health considerations. In the 21st century, economical, political and ecological implications may be even more important. The book is organized into three sections and describes meals shared by Michael Pollan and family or friends. The first section follows the history of a typical McDonald's meal from the corn field to the table. Not only are the cows and chickens supplied to McDonald's fed corn, but the by-products of corn serve as binders, stabilizers, and sweeteners in almost all McDonald's items. In the next section, Pollan prepares an "organic industrial" meal from items purchased from Whole Foods Market. This is followed by a chicken dinner from a broiler he helped slaughter and sweet corn he harvested at Polyface Farm, a family farm in Virginia. Finally, Pollan tries his best to be a hunter-gatherer and prepares a meal of northern California wild pig, wild mushrooms, and home-grown vegetables.

Chapters nine and ten detail how farms have strayed from biodiverse, self-sustaining ecosystems to become monocultures supported by petroleum in the form of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. In contrast, Polyface Farm in Virginia is presented as a model of a self-sustaining family farm that cycles cows, pigs, and chickens on 100 acres of grassland. It's a marvel of mathematics, engineering, and common sense that relies on careful timing, observation of life cycles, electrical fencing and custom contraptions such as "The Eggmobile" and "The Gobbledy-Go." Polyface Farms manages to funnel solar energy through grassland to produce beef, pork, broilers, turkeys, rabbits, and eggs while *enhancing* the fertility of the soil, all without industrial sources of antibiotics, fertilizers, herbicides, or insecticides. Products from Polyface Farm are sold only locally.

The Beer. I enjoyed the Nut Brown Ale. The book club was like no other book club I have attended. First, beer drinking was encouraged. Second, it was less of a book discussion and more of a grass-roots rally for "Know Your Farmer" and "Eat Local" movements. I was encouraged to learn that, although farmlands along the coast are being replaced by housing developments, in the inland San Diego County there are still individuals committed to sustainable agriculture. To know your farmer, you can visit local farmers' markets and ask the vendors about their farming methods.

For me, who has driven cross-country on I-70 and marveled at what seemed like non-stop corn from Kansas to Ohio, the book was an eye-opener. What I had perceived as bounty and "amber waves of grain" was actually the mammoth, 80 million acre-sized base of a pyramid that supports our industrialized food chain. Animals that have evolved as grass grazers (cows) and grub gourmands (chickens) are now fed a diet of predominantly corn.

In Michael Pollan's opinion, "The stupidest thing we do with corn, by far, is turning it into ethanol." Distilling ethanol from corn takes nearly as much energy from fossil fuels as energy is produced from ethanol combustion. He urged the audience to educate themselves about the Farm Bill, contact their legislators, and "vote with your fork."

Part I of the next article appeared in the May/June AWIS newsletter. Read *Climate Change and San Diego's Nature, Science and Speculation* at http://awis.npaci.edu/members/newsletter_issues.htm

Climate Change and San Diego's Nature, Part II Learning and Leadership

By Anne S. Fege

The global effects of pollutants were buffered for many decades by the ocean, atmosphere, and natural ecosystems. They absorbed energy and chemicals without changing their external properties, until pollutants reached a certain level and contributed to warmer temperatures and changes in ocean chemistry. These global effects were also overlooked due to the economic and political interests of the energy, automobile, manufacturing, housing, tourism, and other industries.

For centuries, we've disposed of our wastes and industrial byproducts in the air, water, oceans and soil—at low cost or for free. We used to think these “deals” would last forever. We used to think it was Economy versus Environment. And we didn't think human activities had the power to radically change the entire earth. But now, we know better.

What Can We Do to Deal with Climate Change in San Diego?

The Union of Concerned Scientists (http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science/confronting-climate-change-in-california.html) outlined a number of “next steps” in 2005 for local actions:

“The steps that will provide the greatest protection for California's ecosystems from avoidable damage during climate change will also yield positive benefits for public safety, recreation, agriculture, fisheries, and our unique natural heritage -- even without significant changes to the climate. One key step involves limiting the footprint of development on the landscape, particularly in vulnerable habitats such as wetlands and areas subject to fires, floods, and landslides. Another prudent step is designing nature reserves on land and in coastal waters that will provide California's unique plant and animal communities with room to adapt to the changing conditions created by a shifting climate.”

“Although Californians cannot act alone to stabilize the state's climate, they have the opportunity to make a large contribution to worldwide efforts to minimize the pace and intensity of greenhouse warming. For one thing, since Californians are substantial contributors of global greenhouse gases -- emitting, for example, over 400 million tons of CO₂ a year -- their individual actions as consumers and producers can be globally important. Another opportunity arises from California's stature as a bellwether for new attitudes and innovative practices, including many that help reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Today's Californians can continue to be models for the nation and the world by encouraging and embracing the development of novel energy, transportation, and land use solutions to the problem of global climate change. Taking the lead in effective action to slow climate change and protecting California's natural and human resources can help secure our economic and ecological future for many generations.”

When we are faced with a new problem, our successful behaviors as scientists include learning as much as we can about global climate change science and policy; gathering scientifically-based information about trends, causes and effects; making changes to our individual lives, businesses and communities to minimize the undesirable effects; and adapting to those changes that we can't affect. So what can we do, as scientists, to deal with climate change in San Diego?

Learn about global climate change science and policy.

- Read what scientists are saying about global trends (www.ipcc.ch) and changes likely to occur in California (http://meteora.ucsd.edu/cap/pdf/CA_climate_Scenarios.pdf).
- Visit the exhibition at the Birch Aquarium that opened in May 2007, “Feeling the Heat: The Global Climate Challenge” (www.aquarium.ucsd.edu).
- See the film, “Inconvenient Truth,” as it was a catalyst for changing political and public opinion about global climate change (www.sdnhm.org/exhibits). Or see it a second time.

Gather science-based information about trends, causes and effects.

- Serve as a science advisor to “citizen scientist” programs and help document past and present conditions before our climate changes further.
 - Collect plants for the San Diego County Plant Atlas (www.sdplantatlas.org).
 - Participate in the bird counts with the San Diego Audubon Society (www.sandiegoaudubon.org).
 - Join a San Diego Wildlife Tracking Team (www.sdt.org).
 - Collect water quality data for the San Diego Citizens' Water Monitoring team. (www.sdcwmc.org).
- Consult with and learn from the San Diego-based scientists that are world-renowned for their research on global climate, ocean, and atmospheric processes (www.meteora.ucsd.edu).
- Participate in local committees that are established to assess and identify actions relative to future climate change—and advocate for science-based discussions and decisions.

Make changes in our individual lives, businesses, and communities.

- Start with personal actions, those listed on the “Climate Smart” Web page hosted by the San Diego Foundation, http://www.sdfoundation.org/communityimpact/environment/cs_action.html.
- Take time to enjoy our forests with our families and friends. Introduce children to the joy and wonder of nature, counteracting and complementing the messages of global environmental crises they hear so often (www.cnaturenet.org).
- Reduce landscape **water** requirements, in preparation of less imported water and higher water use rates (www.bewaterwise.com).
- Participate in the Center for Sustainable Energy in California (formerly San Diego Regional Energy Office) programs to “create a sustainable **energy** future” with businesses, homeowners, and governments (www.sdreo.org and www.fypower.org).
- Make your next home, remodeling project, or office space a high-performance, sustainable “**green building**.” Build according to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) specifications (www.usgbc.org/LEED).

- Develop and market **technologies** that are more energy-efficient, substitute for fossil fuels, and reduce pollutants. Follow the March 2007 Harvard Business Review suggestions that businesses measure the levels of their own greenhouse gas emissions; identify how their business could be affected by regulations, new products, droughts and storms; and adapt to the “new” future—by doing it better than the competitors. Other business strategies are offered by a Pew Center article (http://www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/PEW_CorpStrategies.pdf).

Adapt to changes that we can't turn around.

- Accept that pine trees will not return to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park in our lifetimes. Janet Franklin, Professor of Biology at SDSU, surveyed areas after the Cedar Fire, and found mortality of conifers; lack of re-establishment of pine seedlings; resprouting of most oaks; and chaparral regrowth in areas where pines once stood.
- Adjust local Multiple Species Conservation Program preserve designs to account for changing climates, wildfire regimes, and development pressures.
- Prepare for a lifestyle that uses less gasoline for commuting, aviation fuel for vacations, electricity for air conditioning, and energy for manufacturing and transporting consumer goods, as they are producing the carbon dioxide that is changing our climate.

Anne S. Fege, Ph.D., M.B.A. is a Botany Research Associate, San Diego Natural History Museum, retired Forest Supervisor, Cleveland National Forest, and member of AWIS since 1978. References are available from the author; send email to afege@sdnhm.org.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT



San Diego Chapter

Website: <http://www.AWISsd.org>
 E-mail: awissd@awissd.org
 Mail: AWIS, San Diego Chapter
 PO Box 178096
 San Diego, CA 92177-8096

National Chapter

Telephone: (202) 326-8940
 Website: <http://awis.org>
 E-mail: awis@awis.org
 Mail:
 AWIS National
 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 650
 Washington, DC 20005

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.

September/October Newsletter staff:

Siobhan Malany	Janice Payne	Sama Tamrakar
Paula C. Soto	Sharon Dana	Jennifer Sterling
Jennifer Samore	Wendy Hancock	Marutzzella Castro
Roshni Mitra Chintalapati		Norma Velazquez

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. 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 1000 words. The submission deadline for the next issue is October 5, 2007.

Not getting AWIS-SD member e-mails?

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

<https://www.sgmeet.com/awis/memberlogin.asp>

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).

AWIS-San Diego Sponsors

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 Perry Scientific

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	<u>Name</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
President	Karin Zeh	President@awissd.org
Past President	Janet White	PastPresident@awissd.org
Treasurer	Kathy Ogilvie	Treasurer@awissd.org
Secretary	Jenny Chaplin	Secretary@awissd.org
Member at Large	Elizabeth Yoder	Eyoder@awissd.org

To contact the Board, visit the following website:

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

Committee

	<u>Chair(s)</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
Book Club	Namrita Chawla Jennifer Henke	Bookclub@awissd.org
Corporate Sponsorship	Robin Rosenfeld Sandra Rickert Betty Tam	CorporateSponsorship@awissd.org
Events	Cindy Atwell Jane Meyer	Events@awissd.org
Focus Sessions	Amy Anzelon Mills	
Newsletter	Janice Payne Siobhan Malany	Newsletter@awissd.org
Outreach	Milka Kostic Diane Retallack Jeannine Stutzka	Outreach@awissd.org
Public Relations	Kathryn Nguyen Paola Lanza	PublicRelations@awissd.org
Scholarship	Buran Haidar	Scholarship@awissd.org
Strategy Sessions	Frances Putkey	StrategySessions@awissd.org
Website	Barbara Armstrong	Website@awissd.org