

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Happy Spring AWIS-SD!

Although the rain was much needed, it is nice to finally see the sun again. We have been busy these first few months of 2023. Our New Year party was a major success. We had over 60 registrants and I had the pleasure of meeting a lot of new members who were all excited to get involved. I would like to thank J Labs for hosting us and our Events Committee for putting it all together.

Our Outreach Committee has been involved in several events so far this Spring. Both the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering (GSDSEF) Fair and Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) events were in-person again after COVID-19. We were able to award several middle and high school student researchers cash prizes for their work as presented at GSDSEF. At the EYH event, volunteers held a CSI themed workshop that taught students about DNA analysis via gel electrophoresis and chromatography. This past weekend, Black San Diego held its first Spring STEAM for Pre-K through 12th grade students. We discussed the life cycle of plants and how light is an important aspect of it, while the kids planted their very own flowers in a pot that they painted themselves.

The next few months are all about scholarships. Every spring, our Scholarship Committee gives out five \$1000.00 scholarships to women at the undergraduate and graduate levels from schools in San Diego. If you would like to be involved in the selection process, please reach out to the Scholarship Committee chair, Bharti Garg, at scholarship@awissd.org or bxg409@gmail.com for more information.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in our chapter's activities, check out the description of all our committees [here](#). All committees are actively recruiting new members and we would love to get more people involved. Meetings and any upcoming events can be found on our [website calendar](#).

Best,

Rose

Rose Presby, PhD
President, AWIS-SD
president@awissd.org

AWIS-SD Spring Happy Hour

By Suzana Hossain

On Wednesday, April 19, 2023, AWIS-SD hosted our Spring Happy Hour at Hera Hub, La Jolla. I was one of the first members to arrive which meant that I could take a peek at the process of setting up events like this happy hour event. I came across Agnes Antwan, the co-chair of the Events Committee, who was busy arranging the carefully thought-out selection of appetizers and drinks and placing vines of faux flowers in various locations around the venue to commemorate our spring-themed event. I offered my help out of courtesy, but I knew that Agnes already had a vision in mind.

Our happy hours are meant to offer women of all stages in their scientific careers a social space to casually mingle, network, give and/or take advice, vent about graduate school coursework, talk about transitioning from postdoc to early career, and in this case, express how fitting the spring-themed decorations are (which was mostly my personal conversation starter).

This evening, I was able to catch up with some members of the Communications Committee, where I am the Chair of Public Relations (PR). I saw Sarah Narehood and Shannon Chan (PR Committee) and Jennifer Swindlehurst Chan (Chair of Website). Unless planned to be in-person, most of our Communications Committee work is done virtually (meetings on Zoom, chatting through Slack, etc.). So, events like our happy hour really bring us together in-person a very refreshing and much-needed change of setting. This happy hour will likely be the last AWIS-SD event that I attend as I am moving out of California to start my next chapter of getting my Ph.D. If there is one thing I carry with me, it is that I made so many supportive connections at AWIS-SD and could celebrate these connections at our event.



Attending an AWIS-SD happy hour means that you can build new relationships or catch up with a colleague you worked with for months or even years. You can transition from being a member of AWIS to joining a committee. You can offer job opportunities or seek advice for graduate school applications. You can talk about the carefully thought-out selection of appetizers and drinks and vines of faux flowers. From Agnes' perspective, you can sit back and enjoy what once were ideas of a spring-themed event, but can now be an evening some people never forget.



AWIS-SD Spring Outreach Events

1) Spring STEAM Resource & Career Fair

By Rose Presby

The first annual Spring STEAM Resource & Career Fair sponsored by Black San Diego Empowering our Community was held on April 8, 2023, at the Fleet Science Center in Balboa Park. Black San Diego Empowering our Community is a group dedicated to “empower our community by providing a platform for Black businesses, entrepreneurs, and professionals to engage in best business practices that increase economic growth and equity.” This event was a free Pre-K through 12th grade event with interactive activities and resources for the entire family.

AWIS-SD hosted a table dedicated to teaching individuals about phosphorescence and the role light plays in plant growth. Table attendees painted a small plant pot with acrylic and phosphorescent paint, and then planted in a seed of their choice. Volunteers discussed the light’s role within the plant life cycle along with the properties of phosphorescence as attendees worked on their pots. We had a total of 10 volunteers who helped approximately 100 kids paint and plant their own pot. The overall event was a success with several different activities for everyone to take part in. Kids were given a sticker passport that encouraged them to go to a variety of different booths that encompassed either Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, or Math. The more stickers they had, the better prize they received at the end of the event. We look forward to taking part again next year!



2) Crime Scene Investigation

By Jamillah Murtadha

AWIS Outreach Committee joined Expanding Your Horizon's (EYH) to present an event on March 18, 2023. The Expanding Your Horizons conference registers 300 young girl participants from all over San Diego County to participate in STEM workshop activities. The participants were split up by age into groups of 15. The workshops were approximately 1-hour sessions. Ultimately, they were given time to reflect on their experience before rotating to the next workshop.

Pictured below: The Crime Scene setup with the victim, Anita Clue.



The workshop that AWIS-SD Outreach Committee orchestrated was a Crime Scene Investigation that included several stations. The girls had hands-on experience with DNA analysis/gel electrophoresis, ink chromatography, liquid identification, and microscopic hair analysis. For each session, we prepared the stations and gave the girls the background information for the crime scene they were investigating.

The background story of the investigation entailed a victim named Anita Clue, a poisoned student researcher. The participants had to utilize every station to collect more evidence to investigate which suspect committed the crime. For the DNA analysis station, it was the first time for many participants to work with a pipette. The participants enjoyed using ink chromatography to identify the pen used for the note at the crime scene. Additionally, they applied scientific method to identify the three clear liquid samples at the crime scene. For the hair analysis, the participants practiced using a microscope and compared the hair at the crime scene with the suspect's hair. If the girls had extra time, they would use a black light to see if they could find additional evidence.



Pictured left: EYH participants using scientific deductions to identify unknown liquids.

The participants had a lot of fun investigating the crime scene and had many impressive questions. Amusingly enough, some girls even became suspicious of the Outreach presenters as a suspect. Some participants said that AWIS Outreach's workshop was their favorite of the whole EYH event. Overall, this event would not have succeeded without the point leads, Christine Stephen and Jamillah Murtadha, and the volunteers: Emily

Chen, Helen Wedegaertner, Aiyana Adams, Valeria Guglielmi, and Ervey Del Rosario. A special thanks goes to the hard-working participants at this event.



From Left, Helen Wedegaertner, Christine Stephen, Aiyana Adams, Valeria Guglielmi, Jamillah Murtadha. (not pictured) Ervey Del Rosario and Emily Chen



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3) AWIS-SD Award Winners in 2023 Greater San Diego Science & Engineering Fair (GSDSEF)

By Kristen Brañes-Guerrero

It was going to take a lot more than rain and a gloomy day to stop our AWIS-SD group from being involved in supporting our young scientists at the GSDSEF! On March 15th, 2023, we gathered 18 AWIS-SD members and volunteers from science and non-science backgrounds to help judge the first GSDSEF since the pandemic. The entire event was filled with excitement! Hundreds of anxious young scientists were ready to share their knowledge. Our judges were fascinated by all the posters presented and quickly realized how difficult judging can be. Innovations, scientific processes, and the ability to critically think and respond to questions asked were challenging but valuable experiences for the students. As a result, 14 total prizes were awarded to 7 middle and 7 high school female students (see below). We were all so happy to be a part of this event and are excited for how things will evolve next year.

Junior Category

Anabia Ehsan

- Impact of Vitamins on Planaria Regeneration: A Model for Regenerative Medicine

Lily Long

- Exploring Academic Setting Applications of a Turing Test Derivative

Aminah Siddiqui

- Vitamins Against Free Radicals

Kayley Xu

- Respiratory Sound Classification Using AI

McKayla Matkov

- The Effect of Particle Size on the Rate of Erosion through Wave Action

Zoey Chen

- Circling around Earth or the Sun? Using a Cell Phone APP to Reconstruct Orbits of the Moon and Planets in the Sky

Charlotte Birch

- The Effect of pH on Growing Cress in Lunar Soil Simulant

Senior Category

Tanya Mandyam

- Circadian Rhythm Disturbance Affects Running Activity and Gut Microbiome in Rats

Daanya Hussain

- Sugars vs Sweeteners: Detrimental Effects on Bodily Functions

Shivani Ramesh

- Predicting Right and Left Hemisphere Damage in Aphasia Patients Using NLP and Machine Learning

Sophia Guan

- A Machine Learning Approach to Understanding the Determining Factors of the Gender Wage Gap

Sanjana Kumar

- Utilizing 3D-Printed Engineered Living Materials to Break Down Environmental Pollutants

Nicolette Luna

- How Does Water Quality Differ in San Diego Lakes in Densely Populated Areas as Opposed to Less Populated Areas?

Cherise Magtoto

- The Effects of Ibuprofen on the Growth and Germination of *Lactuca sativa*.





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February A2I Coffee Club Featuring Dr. Lori Yang

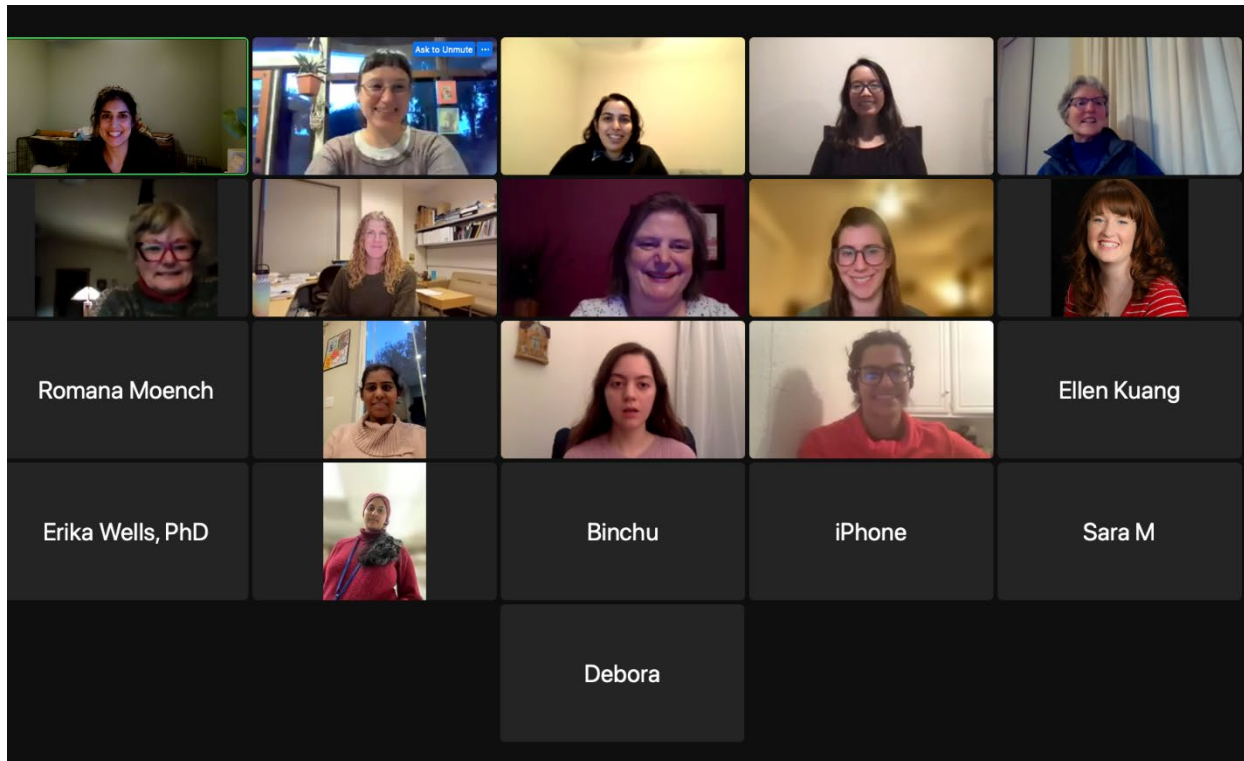
By Shanna Newton Lavalle

For the February Academia to Industry (A2I) coffee chat, AWIS-SD hosted Dr. Lori Yang, CEO and CSO at Lectenz Bio, a biotech company providing reagents and tools for glycoscience research. It was a highly attended and engaging event!

Dr. Yang was born in Virginia Beach, earned her BS in Chemistry from the University of Virginia and received her PhD in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry from Yale University. She has been a member of AWIS-SD since 2012. She served on the AWIS-SD Board as the Treasurer from 2016 to 2017, was co-chair of the Women in Science and Technology (WIST) conference in 2017, and has been the co-chair of the AWIS-SD Leadership Network since 2018.

With a wealth of knowledge, she shared her journey from graduate school all the way to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) of Lectenz Bio. After moving to California to attend graduate school, she quickly realized that she wanted to go into industry but

found that most companies expected postdoctoral experience. For that reason, she took a position as a postdoctoral researcher at the La Jolla Bioengineering Institute. When Dr. Yang finally landed a job, her Principal Investigator proposed a counteroffer for her to stay on as a research scientist. This opportunity eventually led to a collaboration that spun out into a company.



Despite having no prior experience running a start-up company, Dr. Yang stepped in as the CSO. She discussed the challenges, mistakes, and how she had to learn most things on the fly. When the former CEO left the company several years ago, she stepped up as the CEO and took on the “bull’s eye.”

When asked about imposter syndrome, Dr. Yang admitted she still experiences it but emphasized the importance of being brave and breaking down large endeavors into small, manageable steps. She also highlighted the importance of work-life balance, acknowledging that nobody can sustainably work all day all of the time.

Overall, Dr. Yang’s talk was inspiring, informative, and highlighted the challenges and rewards of transitioning from academia to industry.

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Ring in the New Year with AWIS-SD!

By Rose Presby

The New Year event that took place on February 1st at JLABS @ San Diego in La Jolla was the first event organized by our re-established Events Committee. A big shoutout to Taylor Kredel and Agnes Antwan, with generous help from Lori Yang, for spearheading the organization of this fantastic event. Recognition must also be made to Juliane Morris, an Innovation Activation Specialist with JLABS @ San Diego, for helping with all the behind-the-scenes activity during the event.

The food was a buffet-style nosh station with crispy egg rolls and delicious desserts, all thanks to JLABS onsite catering service, The Fresh Fork. An open bar was hosted by Barworks and provided a great selection of wine, beer, and non-alcoholic drinks. There were 65 registrants and 40 attendees. Attendees were a mix of established AWIS-SD members along with new and prospective members. Goodie bags were provided to all attendees, which included an AWIS-SD bag and T-shirt along with a science themed Nalgene water bottle.



Prior to the New Year awards ceremony, Nick Mourlas, the Head of JLABS @ San Diego, gave a short speech about JLABS and their goal in helping individuals within the scientific community develop their own start-ups.

Acknowledgement was also given to AWIS-SD members who have been with the organization for five or more years, and those who make AWIS-SD successful:

5 Years: Angela Macia and Courtney Benson

10 Years: Castle Funatake, Lori Yang, and Lori Payne

15 Years: Kellie Church and Linda Manza

25 Years: Christina Niemeyer

30 Years: Donna Perdue

35 Years: Barbara Armstrong

Achievement in Innovation Award: Suzana Hossain

Rookie of the Year Award: Jennifer Swindlehurst-Chan, Sarah Narehood, Taylor Kredel, Agnes Antwan, and Eulalia Coutinho

Achievement in Outreach or Community Service Award: Bharti Garg

Outstanding Volunteer Award: Kayal Madhivanan

Leadership Service Award: Lori Yang and Satarupa Bhaduri

Board Special Award: Cheyenne Camp

President's Award: Varykina Thackray and Jill Slaboda

Congratulations to all our AWIS-SD chapter awardees!



A2I: Industry Bioinformatics Senior Scientist Dr. Sabah UI-Hasan

By Rose Presby

January's Academia to Industry (A2I) Coffee Club featured Dr. Sabah UI-Hasan discussing her transition from academic research to industry as a bioinformatics senior scientist. We had a total of 24 participants, including Dr. UI-Hasan, who was extremely enthusiastic about her transition and generated a lot of excitement about industry scientist positions. Dr. UI-Hasan is a first-generation college graduate who received her master's in Biochemistry in 2014 from the University of New Hampshire and her PhD in Quantitative and Systems Biology from the University of California, Merced. Her decision to transition into bioinformatics for her PhD was due to her understanding of how important this field was becoming. She completed an internship within the bioinformatics field prior to her PhD program that really helped with her transition. Dr. UI-Hasan did not limit herself with regards to future career paths by only focusing on academic or industry positions upon completion of her graduate training and completed a 3-year postdoc at Scripps Research before her transition to industry.

At the time of her talk, Dr. UI-Hasan was 5 months into her senior scientist position within Hologic's Bioinformatics team of Research and Development. Dr. UI-Hasan is currently working on Hologic's mutational surveillance program, which determines mutation rates of certain diseases and infectious organisms, e.g., Covid/Flu, certain types of cancers and sexually transmitted infections. When asked about how she found her current position, Dr. UI-Hasan said it was hard to find and took about 6 months. One difficulty she stated in finding industry positions related to her field was the lack of cohesive job titles across companies. Her suggested resources for finding positions were talking to different people about available opportunities, and searching for positions on Twitter (although postings tended to be more academic) and LinkedIn. LinkedIn was her

number one resource and where she primarily did her job search. Through LinkedIn, she learned how to write an industry-related resume, asked questions from people within her network, and followed up on any referrals she was given. She was adamant about not being afraid to apply for positions you may feel unqualified for. She said to play up your strengths, admit when you do not know how to do something, but that you are open to learning.

Financial stability was a major factor in Dr. Ul-Hasan's decision to transition to industry. She was open to discussing her salary, which at the time of the meeting was \$130,000.00 with a bonus of 10-15% and stock options. Although her new position was stressful, due to her still getting used to the company and her new colleagues, she does not regret leaving academia. She loves the normal 8 am to 5 pm working hours with no weekends, the structure in her day-to-day workload, and the feeling of a much better work-life balance.

Dr. Ul-Hasan was extremely excited to share her experience and was a joy to learn from. She was open to sharing her contact information and willing to discuss transitioning from academia to industry in more detail with anyone interested.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sabahulhasan/>

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Happy Hour Recap: A Night of Good Company and Great Drinks

By Sameera Bilgrami

Organizers: The A2I and Corporate Sponsorship committee at AWIS-SD

Venue: The Hera Hub, located at 11011 N. Torrey Pines Rd.

Date: Thursday, November 10, 2022

Last November, the AWIS-SD A2I and the Corporate Sponsorship Committees hosted a happy hour celebration at Hera Hub, and it was a great success! Attendees enjoyed a wide selection of drinks and appetizers, while catching up with coworkers and meeting new people in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.



The Hera Hub, located at 11011 N. Torrey Pines Road, proved to be the perfect venue for the event. The Hera Hub host was friendly and attentive. She provided water, ice, and candy for all guests. We also had access to the kitchen where attendees could wash/sanitize their hands and access to a refrigerator and shelves to store fruits, drinks, and

snacks. The internal space was decorated with soft comfortable chairs and colorful paintings of peacocks with the picturesque backdrop of the Pacific Ocean seen from the huge plate-glass windows. The space was perfect, and the vibe was just right for a casual after-work gathering.



We had a great turnout, with many of our team members in attendance. We had 34 registrants and about 20 attendees. The attendees were postdocs, research scholars, and graduate students from the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), The Scripps Research Institute (TSRI), and Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute. There were also

professionals from Industry. The guests signed in when they initially arrived, and after washing their hands, they were offered pizza and drinks. There were discussions around the differences between academia and industry work culture, personal and professional journeys, and ways to transition from academia to industry careers. Some guests even tried their luck at Jenga!! It was

a wonderful opportunity to unwind and network after a long week, and we are already looking forward to hosting more events like this in the future.

The night was filled with good company, great drinks, and a lot of fun. The team would like to thank everyone who came out to celebrate with us.

If you missed this event, don't worry, we will definitely be hosting more of these in the future. Stay tune for our next Happy Hour announcement.

Member News

We would like to congratulate Elizabeth Munguia Trujillo on the birth of her son, Ezra Levi Trujillo. Ezra was born on December 9, 2022. Elizabeth is a 5th year PhD candidate in the Cell and Molecular Biology joint-doctoral program at San Diego State University and the University of California San Diego.



Announcements

1) AWIS-SD Scholarship deadline has now passed, thank you to all the STEM students who applied. Scholarship recipients will be honored at an award luncheon later in 2023.

AWIS-SD Scholarship Program now in its 23rd year, annually supports community college, undergraduate, and graduate student women in San Diego County pursuing degrees in STEM fields where women are underrepresented. Scholarship funds help support their research projects and/or assist with additional educational expenses. The fields of study of previous AWIS-SD Scholars include biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, engineering, mathematics, and experimental psychology. Each AWIS-SD Scholar receives a \$1000 Scholarship Award.

2) Postdoctoral fellowships for careers in industry

Dorothy (Dody) Sears, a former AWIS-SD president, invited students who are completing their graduate school studies to apply for a position with Invent at Seattle Children's Postdoctoral Scholars Program. The program is seeking to recruit minorities and underrepresented individuals who wish to be trained for a career in the biotech industry but is open to all qualified individuals. Information can be obtained at:

<https://www.seattlechildrens.org/research/research-institute/careers/invent-at-seattle-childrens/>

Here is a summary of the program from the website.

- \$45 million committed to educating postdoctoral scholars, with a pledge by Seattle Children's to raise an additional \$10 million
 - Approximately 50 postdoctoral scholarships will be offered during the first five years
 - More than 80% of recruiting efforts focused on building a diverse community of scholars
 - \$70,000/year starting salary plus benefits
 - Relocation support within policy guidelines
 - \$10,000 professional development fund for each scholar
 - Formal entrepreneurship classes through the University of Washington, University of California San Diego and Invent at Seattle Children's programming
 - Each scholar has a laboratory, clinical and biotech mentor
 - \$5 million available for technology commercialization grants
 - Initial appointment is for three years
 - Funding opportunities in years four and five to bridge to company formation or faculty positions
 - Support for patenting, licensing and biotech company formation
-

Upcoming Events

Newsletter Committee open meeting

Date: Sunday, May 21, 2023 01:00 PM - 02:30 PM

Venue: Cote D'Azur Cafe & Bistro

8935 Towne Centre Drive, San Diego, CA, 92122

All AWIS-SD members interested in the Newsletter Committee are welcome to join this in-person meeting. We will discuss our process of publishing our quarterly newsletter, and how you can gain technical writing and editing experience while serving on the committee.

[RSVP](#)

A2I Coffee Club with Kathryn Zavala

Join us Tuesday, May 23rd, 2023 at 5 pm PT and come with questions for Kathryn Zavala, PhD, the Chief Operating Officer of MedTech Innovator. Join us, as she discusses her career and transition from academia to industry!

[RSVP](#)

Authors



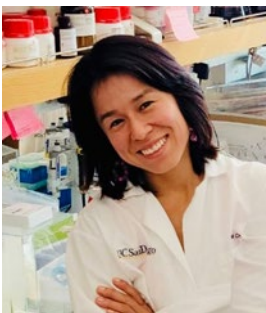
Suzana Hossain received her B.S. and M.S. from the University of California San Diego. Under the mentorship of Dr. Manuela Raffatellu, she investigated the efficacy of siderophore-based immunization in a genetic mouse model of Inflammatory Bowel Disease. She joined Association for Women in Science (AWIS) in 2021 and became the Chair of Public Relations where she continues to promote AWIS resources for career development and act as a voice for women in STEM to the broader community. Suzana will be starting her Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in Fall 2023 and she plans on joining the AWIS Philadelphia chapter there.



Rose Presby, current President of AWIS-SD, is a recent transplant to sunny San Diego from the snowy Northeast. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Maine in Biology with a minor in Psychology. She went on to work for a few years as an animal care technician turned lab technician at the Jackson Laboratory. In the fall of 2016, she started her graduate school career in the lab of Dr. John Salamone at the University of Connecticut where she received both her master's and PhD studying the motivational aspects and pharmacological manipulation of a rodent model of binge like eating. She, her husband and their two cats Salem (guess what color he is...) and George, moved to San Diego in August for her postdoc position at the Scintillon Institute in the lab of Dr. Albert Chen studying neural circuits of food intake. She has been a member of the Outreach, Corporate Sponsorship, and A2I committees, along with one of the new Co-chairs of the Scholarship committee. She is an avid sewist, hiker and chocolate lover. Feel free to reach her at rpresby@scintillon.org or on her LinkedIn profile <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rose-presby-07021088/>.



Jamillah Murtadha grew up in a small town in West Virginia. She transferred to UC San Diego as an undergraduate from Southwestern College. Now, she works in the Moores Cancer Center in a Prostate Cancer Laboratory. As the AWIS Outreach Co-chair, she enjoys inspiring future generations toward STEM careers/activities, and she is always striving to seek knowledge outside her field to become a well-rounded scientist. It is the duty of scientists to communicate the importance of their research for our society. Her small-town upbringing has instilled in her the affinity for being an active part of the community.



Kristen Brañes-Guerrero has been working as both a research assistant and lab manager for Subhojit Roy's lab for nearly 4 years. She began her studies at UCI then transitioned to UCSD in pursuit of neuro-related research opportunities. After joining AWIS-SD, she quickly became a corporate committee member and outreach co-leader. When not in the lab, Kristen will probably be found climbing a rock or in the ocean... or just getting into something totally random.



Shanna Newton Lavallo is a Ph.D. candidate in the Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program at the University of California San Diego. She joined the laboratory of Dr. Pamela Mellon in July 2015, where she is currently using a combination of cell culture and genetic mouse models to study the roles of several homeodomain transcription factors within kisspeptin neurons. In 2018, she completed the Rady's School of Management MicroMBA program and was accepted into the Future Leaders Advancing Research in Endocrinology (FLARE) program. She was an active member of the Endocrine Society's Trainee and Career Development Core Committee from 2018 to 2020 and served as Chair of the society's Summer Research Fellowship program in 2019. In 2020, she became a Co-Chair for the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) San Diego Academia to Industry committee, where she connects industry professionals to early career individuals.



Sameera Bilgrami, Ph.D., is a senior scientist at Aethlon Medical, a company that captures pathological disease targets using medical devices as adjuncts to traditional drug therapies. Her career as a researcher started in India at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, TIFR Bangalore, where she studied protein-lipid interactions in live cell membranes. She was a postdoctoral fellow in the late Dr. Gary Bokoch's lab at Scripps Research before moving to UCSD. Her research focused on organelle movement, angiogenesis, and cancer cell movement. Sameera has a strong background in cell biology and expertise in imaging techniques, image analysis and programming. She likes to spend time with kids, hike, and volunteer at AWIS-SD.

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 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 Mar 15, 2023.

AWIS San Diego Communications Committee - Newsletter

Co-chairs: Jean Spence and Corine Lau
Member: Pat Rarus and Juliati Rahajeng

Newsletter@awissd.org

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