

## Events to Know

### December

**25-26 Medical School closed for Holidays**

**27-29 Skeleton Days**

### January

**1 Medical School closed for New Year Holiday**

**12 Scoop resumes** (no issue Dec. 29 or Jan. 5)

## UTMost Interest

The Division of Cardiology was well represented at the World Congress in Cardiology in Barcelona, Spain, by **Drs. Catalin Loghin** and **Stefano Sdringola**.



**Dr. Adelaide Hebert**, professor and director of pediatric dermatology, was elected president of the Society of Pediatric Dermatology, the only national organization dedicated to the field. She will hold the office for one year.



**Dr. Kevin Pereira**, professor and vice chair of otolaryngology, received the American Academy of Otolaryngology's Honor Award.



The Tulane Owl Club recently held its annual awards banquet to honor faculty and residents for outstanding teaching. Several UT Medical School faculty and residents were honored, including **Dr. Eugene Toy**, Obstetrics; **Dr. Pam Promecene**, Obstetrics; **Dr. Camille Boon**, Obstetrics resident; **Dr. Steve Whipp**, Obstetrics resident; **Dr. Octavio Pinell**, Psychiatry.



**Dr. John Byrne**, chair of the Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy, was elected president elect of the Association of Medical School Neuroscience Department Chairpersons.

## Dean increases employee recognition rewards

**Interim Dean Jerry Wolinsky** is announcing new employee recognition rewards beginning this month to show increased appreciation of the outstanding classified employees of the Medical School.

"We know there is wonderful work going on at this school every day. Now this program will allow us to say thank you not only with words, but with a check," Wolinsky said. "It is important to recognize our most valuable employees, and I encourage everyone who knows one of those employees to nominate him or her."

The program works like the previous quarterly employee recognition program – soliciting nominations for outstanding work and requiring a form detailing service above and beyond the normal job duties, explained **Dawn Alvarado**, program coordinator.

"What's new in the program is that now we have a monetary gift for all winners," she said.

Quarterly employees will win \$250, in addition to an administrative day off and a plaque, and the employee of the year will receive \$500, an administrative day off, and a crystal engraved plaque. In years past, the employee of the year received a \$100 gift card, an administrative day off, and a clock.

The new rewards will debut with the 2006 employee of the fourth quarter and 2006 employee of the year.

"This will allow us to better recognize our top achievers, and we hope it will increase nominations," Alvarado said.

Nomination forms may be found online under the Staff and Faculty link (<http://med.uth.tmc.edu/staff-fac.htm>) and must be turned in to Alvarado, MSB G300. Eligible employees must have been employed at the Medical School, Mental Sciences Institute, or LBJ for at least one year, and must be classified employees.

Nominated employees are evaluated by committee, which is not aware of the nominee's identity.

For more information, contact Alvarado, 713.500.5103, [Dawn.Alvarado@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Dawn.Alvarado@uth.tmc.edu).

## Researcher publishes on solved protein structure

In a first for Houston-area scientists, a Medical School researcher has published on the first three-dimensional structure of a protein to be solved in the region using nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy.

In the Nov. 14, 2006 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, **Dr. Sudha Veeraraghavan**, assistant professor of biochemistry, published "Insights into transcription enhancer factor 1 (TEF-1) activity from the solution structure of the TEA domain." This work describes the first three-dimensional structure for this unique family of proteins, transcription enhancer factors (TEFs), which are essential for normal eukaryotic cell development.

"Transcription enhancer factors are essential for normal development of eukaryotes. The TEF-1 isoform regulates the development of heart in mammals," Veeraraghavan explained. "For about 20 years, the structure and structural mechanism of their functions have remained a mystery."

"My group has solved the first structure of the DNA-binding TEA domain of TEFs and fruit-fly Scalloped. We also established a microarray chip experiment (D-LIA) and determined the DNA-sequences recognized by the TEA domain and the consensus for strong binding."

"This is the first study to elucidate the structure of the DNA-binding domain of TEA domain (TEAD) transcription factors," **Alexandre Stewart, Ph.D.** assistant professor of medicine at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. "What makes this an exciting discovery is that through



**Dr. Sudha Veeraraghavan**

(Cont'd. on back)



## Dickey, women mentors honored

Honoring women's achievements and those who mentor women were the goals of the annual Committee on the Status of Women Annual Awards Banquet held Dec. 13, which honored **Nancy W. Dickey, M.D.**, as the distinguished professional woman award winner.



**Dr. Dickey, center, is honored by Dr. Carlos Moreno and Stephanie Tamborello, CSW chair.**

Dickey, a '76 graduate of the Medical School and president of the Texas A&M Health Science Center and vice chancellor for Health Affairs for the Texas A&M University System, was nominated for the award by Dr. Carlos Moreno, chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine.

"To be recognized by my alma mater is wonderful," she said. "Mentors are important. They give you that nudge, tell you to give it a try, put your name in the hat."

Dickey said that the banquet honoring mentors was an "idea we need to borrow at A&M."

The President's Awards for Mentoring Women were bestowed upon three employees of the health science center.

**Virginia Wall**, social work supervisor in the Department of Pediatrics, received the mentoring award for classified staff and was nominated by **Theresa Leftely**.

"Her nomination letter brought tears to my eyes," Wall said. "I do not do what I do to win awards – I believe it is a gift to share, and my mom, **Lucey Alvarez**, has been my mentor and taught me everything."

**Dr. Paula O'Neill**, associate dean for educational research and professional development at the Dental Branch, was the recipient of the administrative and professional mentoring award for women and was nominated by **Rebecca Lopez**, among others.

"I do what I do because I love to do it – if it's beneficial to someone else, that's great," O'Neill said, adding that her avocation and vocation – mentoring – were one, which was fortunate.

**Dr. Ruth Heidelberger** spoke on behalf of herself and the other nominators of **Dr. John Byrne**, winner of the faculty award for mentoring women. "He has a long tradition of supporting women fairly and providing them the tools for advancement," she said.

"I can't think of another award I would be more proud of," Byrne said, adding that mentoring is a collaborative effort involving those mentored, the department, and the Medical School.

The Committee on the Status of Women granted special honors to **Dr. Camille Lloyd**, who was recognized for her 29 years of service to the health science center and for establishing the CSW banquet.

*-D. Brown*

## Construction to close half of Ross Sterling Dec. 18-22

Beginning at 7 a.m. Monday, Dec. 18, half of Ross Sterling Avenue between Fannin and E. Cullen Street and the adjacent sidewalks will be closed for construction of an asphalt overlay of the existing street. The work will continue through 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 22.

One side of Ross Sterling Avenue and the adjacent sidewalk will be closed first, and as the construction progresses, that half of Ross Sterling Avenue will be re-opened, and then the other half of Ross Sterling Avenue and adjacent sidewalk will be closed through the duration of the construction.

For further information or assistance, please contact: Texas Medical Center Security, 713.795.0000; Barry Harwell, PaveCon, 281.802.5144; Rachel Ray, Texas Medical Center, 713.591.0167.

## CCTS offers K12 training program

The Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CCTS) is accepting applications for its K12 training program to support the training and career development of young medical and health professionals conducting clinical or translational research.

The program provides salary support for up to 75 percent protected time for up to 3 years for instructors and assistant professors and up to 2 years for fellows. Research funds (\$25,000 for faculty and \$15,000 for fellows) also will be provided. One to two medical fellows, one to three medical or clinical instructors or assistant professors (with MD, DO, DDS, or DSN degrees), and one health professional instructor or assistant professor (with a PhD, DPH or PharmD degree) with a strong interest in clinical or translational research are expected to be selected. All applicants must be engaged in or preparing to conduct clinical or translational research and able to complete the entire funding period at UT Houston or M. D. Anderson Cancer Center.

The application deadline is Jan. 15. For more info, contact: **Dr. Jon Tyson**, 713.500.5651 or **Dr. Robert Lasky**, 713.500.5770.

### *Researcher, cont'd.*

structure we can better understand function. This will permit the further characterization of the TEAD transcription factors that control gene expression in cardiac, skeletal and vascular smooth muscle, that control gene expression in vascular endothelium in response to hypoxia, that regulate fibrosis in the lungs, that control gene expression in the placenta and that are required for the onset of zygotic development. Clearly, this discovery has far-reaching implications."

In addition to being essential for normal development, there appears to be a connection with this family of proteins to muscular dystrophy through one of its protein co-factors, the Vestigial-like2 protein.

"Findings on TEFs and their co-factors have potentially important implications to stem cell studies," Veeraraghavan added. "When we have learned even more about the interplay between different transcription factors and TEFs, we could have suitable interventions for certain developmental disorders."

Veeeraraghavan and her lab faced a couple of challenges during this research.

"One of the hardest things about this project was not only finding conditions to make large amounts of this protein (milligrams) but have them be produced in 'semi-starving' bacteria – in minimal media for NMR studies and identifying conditions under which protein would stay soluble at high concentrations without degrading or falling apart. These are some common problems to surmount for structural studies of most proteins," she said.

Another problem the group had to overcome was finding the equipment for their studies – the Medical School did not have a functioning NMR spectrometer for about three years following Tropical Storm Allison.

"As you can imagine, we went through many very expensive isotopically enriched samples and purchased NMR time from neighboring institutions to get this structure done. Looking back, I am glad we persisted. Now, we look forward to funding from appropriate private and public funding agencies to continue this exciting and important work," she said.

The results reported in the PNAS paper are predominantly the work of postdoctoral fellow, **Dr. Asokan Anbanandam** and research assistant, **Diana Albarado**. Collaborators included **Drs. Xiaolian Gao**, of University of Houston, and **Dr. George Halder**, of M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, who provided technical advice for the microarray and shift assays.

*-D. Brown*