

March Meeting News

We had good attendance at today's meeting despite so many families being out of town for Spring Break. I find it more than a little fascinating that members will drive from Headland (near Dothan), Alex City, Gadsden, Montgomery, St. Clair County & Tuscaloosa to attend but only 6 DSG members could come from the Birmingham metro area. Please give us some feedback on why our Birmingham members aren't able to attend.

We were treated to a great update on the medical research on-going at the Univ of AL in Tuscaloosa in what we fondly call THE WORM SHACK by Dr's Guy & Kim Caldwell of the Caldwell Research Lab in Tuscaloosa. The use of readily available and easy to produce quantities of "glow worms" in research is fascinating due to the many genetic similarities these worms have to the nerve functions in humans; plus the fact they are transparent makes watching the research trials actually taking place "within" the specimen.

Both Dr. Guy Caldwell and Dr. Kim Caldwell's Dystonia Research has narrowed down 240 existing drugs to from 2 to 5 w/potential. Further trials are now being conducted using "mammals", specifically mice, by Yuqng Li at the UAB lab here in Birmingham using the model's discovered in The Worm Shack.

The research findings have already been licensed to an Australian Pharmaceutical Company who has already spent some \$300,000 on att'y fee's just getting patents documented, etc. before human trials are begun. It will take Millions to bring these initial WORM SHACK findings to product development, but the fact that this involves already FDA approved drugs formulated in combination would speed up the approval process by 8-12 years.

Dr.'s Guy & Kim Caldwell have received so many awards and honors for their research work that it's too length to name them all, but some of the most interesting are:

Guy A. Caldwell, Ph.D. is currently a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of AL in Tuscaloosa and also holds an appointment at UAB as an Adjunct Associate Research Professor of Neurology and Neurobiology. Following receipt of his doctorate from University of TN, he moved to Columbia University where in the lab of 2008 Nobel Laureate, Dr. Martin Chalfie, he was twice named the recipient of fellowships from NINDS. Dr. Caldwell was named he 2005 Carnegie Science Foundation and CASE Professor of the Year for the State of Alabama. He serves on the Scientific Advisory Boards of the Bachmann-Strauss Dystonia & Parkinson Foundation and QRXPharma.

Kim A. Caldwell, Ph.D. is currently an Associate Professor in the Dep't of Biological Sciences at the University of AL in Tuscaloosa and also holds an Assistant Professorship in the Dep't of Neurology and Neurobiology at the University of AL School of Medicine in Birmingham. She, too, received her doctorate from the University of TN and then held post-doctoral research appointments at The Rockefeller University and Columbia University in NY. Among many other awards, she was selected as a recipient of a Young Investigator's Award at the 2006 International Congress of The Movement Disorders Society in Kyoto, Japan.

Jointly, in 2008, the Caldwell's shared the inaugural HudsonAlpha Prize for Outstanding

Innovation in the Life Sciences and are the current recipients of the Blackmon-Moody Outstanding Professor Award at the University of AL.

ALABAMA DYSTONIA SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Joining the Dr.'s Caldwell's on the podium was John Ricketts of Birmingham, an honors graduate from Altamont who could have gone anyplace to college but choose the University of Alabama largely because of the opportunity to serve as an undergraduate researcher in The Worm Shack. John, who's now a Junior at Alabama, is one of the recipients of our very own scholarship under the Alabama Dystonia Scholars Program which is funded entirely by donations from a handful of DSG members. This program funds the summer salaries and lab expenses for undergraduate HONORS students to work in the Caldwell Research Lab during summer months. John made an excellent presentation of his Dystonia lab work, for which he was honored by giving a paper at a major science meeting in Seattle last December. Research papers by college "junior's" are a rarity, which gives you some idea of the capabilities of this young man who plans to attend Medical School and be a doctor who knows something about DYSTONIA --- WHICH BODES WELL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF DYSTONIA PATIENTS.

NOTE: We have funded summer scholarships for 2 persons at the Worm Shack for 2008 and 2009, but are just now kicking off our funding raising for the summer of 2010.

Those wishing to make a donation of \$500, \$1,000 or more should make their checks payable to the University of Alabama Biology Dep't - Tax ID #63-6001138 - and mail to:

Ken L. Williams
216 Oakmont Circle
Birmingham, AL 35244

PS: I already have my \$2,000 check written so we're only \$8,000 short.

If you have a connection with any company offering "matching grants", please obtain forms and I will process same to match your personal donation. This project is a legacy we can leave to future generations of Dystonia patients so they don't have to endure what most of us did when we were first struck with this mysterious malady called DYSTONIA.

MEMBER NEWS & UPDATES:

Evelyn of Cullman who fell while alone in her home last December and layed there for 24 hours before being found had recovered from her hospital stay and resulting rehab....but she fell again last week suffering broken ribs so could not attend this meeting. The members attending the February meeting all signed a card which Evelyn appreciated very much and we hope she'll be back with us regularly beginning with the April '09 meeting.

Teri of Montgomery who went thru the terrible ordeal of a Botox injection that caused her to be on a feeding tube for many months spent last week back in the hospital, but recovered sufficiently to drive to Birmingham to attend this months meeting. Teri is out of her wheel chair, using a walker and in my opinion WAS "DRESSED TO THE NINE'S" at today's meeting. You're looking GREAT, Teri, and we all appreciate how

much you do for Dystonia Research with your own foundation plus your support of the Alabama Dystonia Scholars these last 2 years and other support for DSG's activities.

DICK, our new Treasurer had a budget report to give at today's meeting but we didn't have a business meeting. He's invoiced all who have not paid their 2009 dues and including an envelope to mail your dues directly to him for the account of DSG.

PAT announced she will again meet with Gov. Riley to proclaim June 7 - 14, 2009, as Alabama Dystonia Awareness Week. In connection with this, we've already set into motion ordering 50,000 more bookmarks and 350 counter-top lit holders. I'm responsible for distribution, so if any of you will agree to personally deliver the holders & a supply of bookmarks to your local libraries, please email me as to which libraries you will handle so they don't get double-contacted by me. Also, if you know of any Book Stores, please contact them and deliver a lit holder & supply of bookmarks for display.