UAB honors five as its Outstanding Women

Five local women were honored as the UAB Outstanding Women for 2010 during a ceremony on campus March 4. The UAB Women Center and Women’s Studies Program present the awards annually during Women’s History Month to honor female members of the UAB and Birmingham communities who have mentored or served other women, taken a courageous stance or overcome adversity. Candidates for the award are nominated by Birmingham residents and selected by a committee of university women.

The 2010 winners are: Outstanding Woman UAB Faculty Member Diane Tucker, Ph.D., Outstanding Woman UAB Student Gisella Mancarella, Outstanding Woman UAB Staff Member Molly Moran and Outstanding Woman in the Community Kathie Hiers. Joan Davis will receive the Susan D. Marchase Outstanding Woman Administrator Award.

Tucker, a psychology professor, is being honored for her leadership as director of the UAB Science and Technology Honors Program, in which more than half of the students are women. The Science and Technology Honors Program is for outstanding undergraduate students who aspire to become researchers and innovators in their scientific and technical fields. Tucker is credited for her efforts to recruit and retain women in the program and to serve as a role model.

Mancarella is a senior biology major. She has been active with “Into the Streets,” a service learning project.

Moran works in a program that works with women on campus.

Hiers has been a professor and program director at UAB for 32 years.

Responsibility to community fuels Michael’s life’s work

G iving help to those in need is important to Max Michael, M.D., and it has been the focus of his career since he was an intern at the old Freedom House on Southside in 1972.

The Freedom House — a free clinic that treated patients for issues ranging from medical needs to crisis concerns — was a central hub of activity in the early 1970s. It was where many UAB interns, residents and students worked to provide care for those less fortunate. Those days laid a foundation for Michael that ultimately propelled him to be a leader in community service in Birmingham.

Whether it’s been in his current position as dean of the UAB School of Public Health, or other positions that have included CEO and medical director of the Jefferson Health System at Cooper Green Hospital, medical advisor for the Alabama Association of Community Health Councils or as a director for the Central Alabama Coalition for the Medically Uninsured, Michael has been fervent in his efforts to help the under-served.

Michael’s peers have recognized his years of service by nominating and selecting him as the recipient of the 2010 Odessa Woolfolk Community Service Award. This award, along with the President’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching, will be presented at the Faculty Awards Convocation Tuesday, March 9 at 3 p.m. in the Alys Stephens Center Sirote Theatre.

“I’m really, really humbled and flattered by this honor,” Michael says. “There are many other people at UAB that are more deserving and do a lot of things. If this says anything to me, it highlights the importance of the community we live in, the importance of giving back and being a part of that community and the role that UAB plays in the broader metropolitan area.”

Michael, who has been dean of the School of Public Health since 2001, is an avid believer that UAB has a responsibility to work with local organizations and agencies and share the knowledge a research university of this stature has at its disposal. But he also believes UAB has a responsibility to learn from these community partnerships — to touch base with members of the community and ask what resonates in their world.

“It’s critically important to understand the things that are important to the community,” Michael says. “It’s one thing to sit in here and have an idea. It’s another thing to sit down and work with community groups and organizations to share ideas and blend them in such a way that works for everybody.”

Michael has worked closely with the Congregations of Public Health, Glenwood, Planned Parenthood, Alabama Department of Public Health, Public Health Student Association and many other groups and their leaders for years.

Prestigious grant brings new faces to MS research

M ultiple sclerosis (MS) has baffled physicians and researchers since its symptoms were first described by Jean-Martin Charcot in the 1860s. The disease, which attacks the central nervous system, can range from relatively benign to something devastating all the way to devastating as may be a virus.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) recently awarded UAB a prestigious Collaborative Multiple Sclerosis Research Center Award to help find answers for this chronic, unpredictable disease. This grant will help develop and evaluate novel therapies that can manipulate the immune system to better treat MS, a disease that has no cure, says Etty Benveniste, principal investigator and chair of the Department of Cell Biology.
Call for facilitators for 2010 new-student discussion groups


Inspired by a series of front-page articles he researched and wrote for the New York Times, St. John moved to Georgia to follow the chronicle of Luma Mufleh, a woman from Jordan, and the Fugees, the soccer team she founded and coached as part of a youth program for the expanding refugee population in Clarkston, Ga.

This is a human story: about the hope, pain, opportunity and challenges that immigrants have experienced in America since its founding. This is a contemporary story about a Southern community and refugees from around the globe trying to come to terms with a new way of living. This is a story about real people.

St. John will speak to new students on Monday, Aug. 16, the day before fall term begins. If you can be a Discusston Group facilitator Monday, Aug. 16, from 3 to 4:30 p.m., send your name, e-mail address and campus mailing address to Juanita Niemeyer at juanita@uab.edu by March 15. Selection as a facilitator will be confirmed by email.

For five years, discussion groups have provided a friendly introduction to UAB for new students and a stimulating, enjoyable experience for UAB faculty and staff. Nominations for the 2011 book will be accepted through March 31.

Boston Brass to perform at UAB’s Alys Stephens Center

UAB’s Alys Stephens Center will present Boston Brass at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 21 in the center. Enjoy a free pre-concert Prelude discussion of the music at 2 p.m.

After 25 years Boston Brass still achieves new levels in brass performance and treats its audiences to a unique musical experience, from exciting classical arrangements and jazz standards to breathtaking vocal harmony.

Tickets are $50, $42, $32, $15 for the 30 & Under Classical Pass. A limited number of VIP tickets are available. Call 975-2787 or go to www.Alys Stephens.org.

EatRight launches new Web site

EatRight’s new Web site at www.uab.edu/eatright provides effective, customized strategies to help people change their lifestyle, achieve personal health goals and lose weight.

Learn about EatRight’s services and find links to members’ blogs that chronicle their weight-loss journey and find new recipes for delicious dinners.

You also can follow EatRight on Facebook (search for UAB EatRight Weight Management Services) and Twitter at twitter.com/eatrightuab.

McGuiness named AAN Fellow

UAB School of Nursing Professor Teena McGuiness, Ph.D., has been named a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.

McGuiness teaches psychiatric nursing to graduate and undergraduate students and leads the UAB School of Nursing Honors Program. Her research focuses on rural foster care and international adoption. McGuiness also maintains a faculty practice at UAB’s 1917 Clinic and provides mental health care to medically complex patients.

Assess your risk for disease on World Kidney Day March 11

UAB will promote awareness about kidney disease on World Kidney Day, March 11 with information and free screenings from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the second floor in The Koolin Clinic and UAB Hospital North Pavilion. Health-care personnel will be available to answer questions about the kidneys.

For more information, visit www.worldkidneyday.org.

Register now for Spring Scramble 5k Walk/Run Saturday, May 8

Register for the fourth annual Spring Scramble 5k and 1-Mile Race to be held at 8 a.m. Saturday, May 8 at Homewood High School. Money raised will be used to support the Weight Management Clinic and provides mental health care to medically complex patients.

Register for the 2011 book will be accepted through March 31.

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Tiny patients make their way to Women & Infants Center

Tntandia Bates traveled 90 miles by ambulance to UAB Hospital from Selma Feb. 5 to give birth to her baby girl Asiah in what she described as both a euphoric and traumatic event. Asiah is Bates’ first child, but she was born 16 weeks early and weighed only 1.4 pounds.

The care Bates and Miss Asiah — as mom calls her — received from the time of their arrival gave her confidence that they were where they needed to be, she said. As she sat patiently in the lobby of the new Women & Infants Center Sunday, Feb. 21, waiting for UAB personnel to bring Asiah the two blocks from her RNICU in the Old Hillman Building to the spacious new state-of-the-art women’s facility on move-in day.

When Bates walked into Asiah’s private RNICU room in the Women & Infants Center for the first time, she was excited to have time alone with her baby girl.

“The old place was really crowded, and it was hard to spend quality time with Miss Asiah,” Bates said. “This room is very inviting. There’s much more space, and I’ll be able to stay with my baby.”

Satisfied residents repeated those thoughts and words often when the Women & Infants Center officially opened.

More than 150 babies, moms and mothers-to-be were meticulously moved through the hospital elevators and hallways to their new rooms in the 43,000-square-foot building — a symbol of UAB’s commitment to improving the health and lives of the women and infants of Alabama and the Southeast.

The facility increases UAB’s capacity to care for Alabama’s women and babies. It offers Alabama’s only private NICU rooms, the most modern C-section and post-anesthesia recovery suites, state-of-the-art patient-care rooms and technologically advanced communication and security systems. But before patients could experience the latest in technology and care, they had to be moved to the facility. It was a process that took months of planning and preparation.

Tiny patients on the move

Changing locations during a hospital stay can add stress to any patient, especially those who are critical and require constant care and monitoring like Asiah. UAB staff mapped out a plan for moving each unit weeks in advance and pinpointed exactly the way they would move the most critical patients — those in the RNICU — the week of the move.

“We identified early in the week how they would be transported — either in their crib, a bed or the transport isolate, which is equipped with monitoring devices, a ventilator and nitric oxide if we needed it,” said Donna Purvis, RNICU nurse manager. “We identified the level of care they needed during the move — if they needed a physician with them, for example. We knew which babies we would be moving every 15 minutes. We had it all laid out.”

Three RNICU move teams were created, each consisting of two to three nurses, a technician and a physician as needed. A cleaning station was set up for the four transport isolates so tanks and batteries could be changed after each move.

Warming mattresses also were ordered several weeks ahead of time and placed in every isolate to keep the babies from being stressed by any change in temperature.

The move began at 7 a.m. and was expected to continue until 6:30 p.m. Instead, every critical-care infant was in his or her new room by 2:30 p.m.

“So much work was put into planning this, and it paid off,” Purvis said. “It was so smooth, and all of the patients did great.”

Madonna Nichols, nurse clinical project coordinator, was in the command center to coordinate all of the moving parts. Nurses radioed to her when they were ready to move, and when all of the teams were in place throughout the move route she gave the OK to go.

The day passed without incident, Nichols says, and a big reason for the success was the preparation the nursing staff put in to make it an easy transition.

“The nursing staff can make or break something like this, and they are the ones to thank for the successful move,” Nichols said. “They chose to jump in headfirst and plan this move down to each step so that we could receive patients easily. Patients and their families were at the forefront of everyone’s mind in all of their planning; it was obvious on moving day how truly incredible that work was.”

The nurses were eager to move to the new facility because they knew it was going to help them provide better care for their patients, said Erica Wall, RNICU nurse.

“This is going to be wonderful for us, our patients and families,” Wall said. “There’s so much more room now. Parents always felt like they were in the way in the old unit because we were all packed in tightly together. And the privacy the families now are afforded is so important. Babies and parents will be able to bond better now.”

Benefits to staff, families

Purvis said the Women & Infants Center now gives the physicians and nurses the high-tech equipment to equal the high-touch care they already provide.

“This staff is clinically excellent, and the facility now matches their expertise,” Purvis said. “These are big changes for them, and we’ve worked hard to educate and let them spend time in the facility before the move to help them with their comfort level.”

The ability of parents to stay with their children in the RNICU as long as they desire is a major benefit for the baby’s growth and development, said Elicia Daley, administrative director of Women & Infants Services.

The RNICU is never closed, and parents can include extended family — something that was impossible in the old location. A family room is located in the unit, as is a playroom for siblings, and each patient has their own room with a door that can be closed by the parents for added privacy.

“We’ve now moved all of Women’s Services into four floors of this building; it’s no longer spread out on campus. This enhances our ability to focus on health issues that affect women along the spectrum of their life continuum,” Daley said. “Our mission is to be a family/patient-centered facility. Parents are our partners in caring for their child, and we encourage parents to be involved to give them confidence in their ability to take care of their baby when they go home. It can downplay their frustrations because they know what’s going on.”

Parents also now can be present during physician rounds, which gives them an opportunity to ask questions.

“If there’s something they don’t understand, that’s their opportunity to get it clarified,” Daley says. “The increased interaction and communication with the caregivers makes us more productive.”

Families already had settled into their new environment within an hour of the move, and Bates, her mother and grandmother were among the families relaxed and at ease.

The privacy is something Bates will treasure in the long weeks ahead. Asiah is expected to be in the hospital until the end of May. Bates knows there will be times of exhaustion and admits there is a fear of the unknown. She also knows she’ll be able to share every one of those moments with her baby girl.

“I really appreciate the care UAB has given to me and Miss Asiah,” she said. “They’ve been so nice and helped us in so many ways. If she has to be in the hospital for so long, it’s great that we have a place so nice and that we can be in here together.”

Visit www.uabmedicine.org/women for more information on the center.

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President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching goes to 13

Thirteen faculty members will be honored with the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching during the annual Faculty Awards Convocation, Tuesday, March 9 at 3 p.m. in the Alys Stephens Center Shoe Theatre.

Other featured awards to be presented include the Ellen Gregg Ingalls/UAB National Alumni Society Award for Lifetime Achievement in Teaching and the Odessa Woolfolk Community Service Award.

The 2009 honorees for the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching represent each school and the Joint Health Sciences departments.

Alison Chapman
Arts & Humanities
Chapman, Ph.D., an associate professor and director of undergraduate studies in the English department, specializes in early modern literature and culture. A native of Birmingham, Chapman graduated magna cum laude from Davidson College and earned her Ph.D. in English literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on the cultural effects of the English Reformation, and she has published in the top academic journals in her field. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in Renaissance poetry and prose, Shakespeare, Milton, British literature to 1800 and composition. She is known for her vibrant and accessible teaching. One co-worker says, “Alison is able to inspire students with love for Milton and Renaissance poetry through her own expertise and infectious enthusiasm. She works with literature that even to me, a scholar in contemporary literature, hardly seems unusually exciting or even accessible, but she really manages to bring it alive for students. Students commonly talk about how much they learned in her class, and they come out of her classes with a genuine passion and enthusiasm for texts as initially daunting as Milton's prose, Shakespeare, Milton, British literature to 1800 and composition.”

Mary Warren
Health Professions
Warren, an internationally recognized expert in the field of low-vision rehabilitation and an in-demand speaker. She has presented and taught courses extensively in the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia and has given expert testimony to Congressional leaders on traumatic brain injury-related vision issues. While her expert status is unquestionable, Warren’s significant record of teaching and presenting has been recognized for the number and quality of engagements. She has received numerous national and international awards and recognition for her exceptional teaching. Warren has also presented and taught courses extensively in the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia and has given expert testimony to Congressional leaders on traumatic brain injury-related vision issues. While her expert status is unquestionable, Warren’s significant record of teaching and presenting would not exist if not for her teaching skill. Warren has received numerous national and international awards and recognition for her exceptional teaching.

Lynn Kirkland
Education
Kirkland, Ed.D., is the director of the Children’s Creative Learning Center. She develops the appropriate curriculum, supervises practicum students and oversees all budget and personnel matters. The program has expanded to include the number of sites, and children served under her direction and has added a substantial English Language Learners component. Kirkland has earned the reputation as an enthusiastic, caring, demanding and dedicated teacher. Kirkland is responsible for planning, developing and implementing two new courses, Digital Forensics and Programming Logic, which previously were not offered at UAB. He is developing the new course and Virtual Communities in Business for spring. Johnston also knows for integrating technological tools into the classroom that have been underutilized, including “clicker” technology in the Introduction to Business course to better engage first-year students. He also uses numerous social media technologies, including Sharepoint, Twitter, Facebook and Wordpress. Former student praised Johnston for assisting him and another student in finding a job. He met with them during office hours, outside office hours and still has extended an invitation to help in any way possible to ensure that we have the opportunity to launch a successful career. I have never met an individual that was more dedicated, passionate and loyal in the investment of others than Dr. Johnston.

Robin Foley
Engineering
Foley, Ph.D., an associate professor in Materials Science and Engineering, is a recognized expert in the materials characterization area and has received numerous awards for her publications. Colleagues say Foley brings the knowledge and experience associated with the analysis and characterization of materials failures into the classroom to motivate students and aid in their education. She also has been responsible for dramatic improvement in undergraduate laboratory facilities during the past two years. The improvements include the purchase and installation of new equipment, the procurement of new cabinets, installation of a new fume hood and replacing the flooring. The changes have resulted in a clean, modern laboratory that is outfitted with some of the most up-to-date equipment available. Students say Foley is an outstanding teacher who is willing to help whenever needed. "I was struggling with stereographic projects and understanding the placement of the different crystallographic planes, but was afraid to ask for help," one student says. "Dr. Foley saw me struggling, sat with me and worked out each problem until I understood the material. Needless to say, I received a perfect score on that question, but what impacted me more was what happened after the test. Dr. Foley came to me to personally congratulate me on passing the test, giving me hugs and encouragement. That moment meant more to me than passing the test."
Six honored with annual President’s Award for Diversity

S ix members of the UAB community received the 2010 President’s Awards for Diversity for their commitment and contributions to diversity on campus. UAB President Carol Garrison recognized outstanding leadership in five categories: faculty and staff plus professional, graduate and undergraduate students.

Brian Sims, M.D., Ph.D., a UAB assistant professor of pediatrics and cell biology, received the President’s Diversity Faculty Award for his efforts to promote diversity in the UAB School of Medicine and increase the numbers of minority post-doctoral candidates at UAB. He is a member of the School of Medicine’s Diversity Task Force. He also has been a member of the search committee for the School’s Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

Isabel Scarrín, Ph.D., an associate professor in the UAB Division of Preventive Medicine, also received a Diversity Faculty Award for her work to address health disparities in the African-American and Hispanic communities. Scarrín is a scientist with the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center (MHBRC) and a co-founder of Matos Junta, the first multicultural program at UAB targeting Hispanic and Latino students.

Marsha Snow Optometry

Snow, O.D., an associate professor and chief of Low Vision Patient Services, has been teaching in optometry since 2001 and also holds a secondary appointment in the School of Education. Her didactic teaching includes her role as course master for Clinical Low Vision Rehabilitation. Snow was awarded the Excellence in Clinical Science Instruction by the UAB AOSA in 2003 and has consistently received above-average scores on student evaluations. “It is difficult to put into words the impact Dr. Snow has made on me during my years in Optometry school,” one student said. “She has been a great teacher and mentor. She understands the subjects in understandable parts. ‘He always started with the basic concepts and then built upon his basic understanding with new material to enable the students to understand the knowledge, one student said. ‘Even for me, an international student, there was no difficulty at all following and understanding the material.’”

David Vance Nursing

Vance, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Family/Child Health and Caregiving Department. He teaches in the DNP and Ph.D.-research-design statistics courses and the Honors in Nursing Program for graduate and undergraduate students. He has achieved high teaching-effectiveness ratings from his students in these programs and has demonstrated exceptional standards for learning, scholarship, professionalism, mentoring and service, say colleagues. Students speak to his ability to mentor them through the necessary statistics and the publication process. They also lead his contagious enthusiasm for scholarship at all levels. One student said Vance was hands-on in his independent study research practicum course, in which Vance allowed the student to use his data for a secondary analysis on empowerment in HIV-positive women. “When he provided me with the data, he didn’t hand me a bulk of papers and say, ‘There you go, good luck,’” the student says. “He went through the data with me on a weekly basis, page after page, until together we were able to conceptualize a general outline for the manuscript. My learning experience in the statistical analyses of the data was invaluable. He enabled me to think critically as an independent researcher, while simplifying my thought processes with his input and expertise. This collaboration led to my first publication as a first-year resident.”

Alice Goepfert Medicine

Goepfert, M.D., is considered an exemplary and innovative educator, and in her 15 years in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology she has consistently excelled in teaching, which is substan- tiated by her many distin- guished awards and hon- ors. Goepfert has repeat- edly demonstrated extensive knowledge of both the medical and teaching aspects of OB/Gyn through many scholarly activities and developments. She has taught organized and facilitated conferences and programs and seminars on maternal-fetal medicine and undergraduate and graduate medical education at the local and national levels. Her effort is a major resource to students, residents, fellows and colleagues. “Dr. Goepfert is one of the most outstanding clinical educators I encountered during my third and fourth years of medical school,” says one student. “She clearly is passionate about teaching medical students, which extends beyond simply imparting information. She challenges students to think critically and independently and to become more adept at solving clinical problems. Her teaching style truly motivates students to expand their critical thinking and ultimately become better physicians.”

Douglas Watson Natural Sciences & Mathematics

Watson, Ph.D., professor of biology, has the appropriate background to teach courses at the introductory and gradu- ate levels. Students in these classes have commented on his extensive knowledge of the subject matter, passion for teaching and his ability to use a variety of teaching techniques to engage the students. In an evaluation, one student said he wanted to take a course Watson was teaching because “I knew I was going to get my money’s worth in my professor.” Colleagues say Watson has the ability to interest and capture students and the quality of being able to say the right thing at the right time to get his point across. “It makes him one of those instructors that you will remember fondly for the rest of your life,” states a colleague. “Doug does not hesitate to offering biol- ogy students the best teaching experience possible and because of this commitment has excelled at all aspect of teaching.” Students say Watson’s teaching style is “well-organized” and that he brings the students into understandable parts. “He always started with the basic concepts and then built upon his basic understanding with new material to enable the students to understand the knowledge,” one student says. “Even for me, an international student, there was no difficulty at all following and understanding the material.”

Inmaculada Aban Public Health

Aban’s passion for teaching began in her high-school years when summer vacation meant teaching math to her neighbors. Today, Aban, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Biostatistics, says her friends may have thought they were playing, but it was something she took seri- ously, and it laid the foundation for her career as a teacher. Colleagues and students say she is well organized and presents well-prepared lectures. Aban has taught Statistical Theory II, Advanced Inference and Statistical Theory I during the past year. All students in the Biostatistics program are required to take the Statistical Theory courses. “Dr. Aban is a great instruc- tor,” one student says. “Her enthusiasm for teaching is very apparent to her students. She always is very well prepared, open to questions, easy to approach, makes herself available to students outside of class and also finds a way to challenge her students to make them go beyond what they think they can accomplish. Her method of teaching is fun, easy to follow and causes the students to stay on their toes.”

Andrew Keitt Social & Behavioral Sciences

Keitt, Ph.D., associate professor of history, has taught a variety of courses, from introductory surveys including Western Civilization and skills courses such as The Historian’s Craft to specialized upper- division courses and graduate seminars in his specialization — the religious and intellectual history of early modern Europe. Keitt employs his “Reacting to the Past” pedagogy in classes where appropriate. The method, which consists of complex games set in the past, in which students are assigned roles with victory objec- tives, has been popular with students. “He has taught me in both the undergraduate and graduate levels,” one student says. “I always have been impressed with his work ethic, teaching methods and his willing- ness to help.” Colleagues say his work with the Freshmen Learning Communities and his Reacting to the Past seminars are providing new and exciting learning oppor- tunities for students. “Andrew has spent countless hours researching and testing various techniques and methods,” one colleague says. “His career exemplifies dedication to teaching.”

Irene Tamí Maury, a doctoral student in the UAB School of Public Health, received the President’s Diversity Graduate Student Award. Maury is an international program coordinator with the UAB School of Nursing. She also has volunteered with a number of cultural activities sponsored by UAB International Scholar and Student Services (SSSS), including the annual International Bazaar and the International Food Fair. She also worked with the SSSS Speakers Bureau, visiting several schools in the Birmingham area.

Kelli Money, a senior chemistry major, won the Diversity Undergraduate Student Award. Money has been a volunteer Spanish translator at Cooper Green Mercy Hospital and a teacher’s assistant at Jackson Elementary School through the UAB Center for Urban Affairs.

These awards were presented during a special banquet held Jan. 28 as part of UAB’s annual Community Week. Weeks a weekend series of events designed to challenge ideas related to diversity and culture.
Bird is more than just a business officer to Dental school

Maria Bird spends most of her days at her desk with her head down. She’s not despondent, unhappy or uninterested in others — just the opposite. But as the business officer in the School of Dentistry’s business office, she’s typically in her office crunching numbers to make sure everything balances.

So when Bird was informed she had been selected February’s Employee of the Month, she says she was quite surprised.

“Shecked, actually, but also elated,” she says. “I do work behind the scenes, and I’m always buried in numbers. I have a limited amount of people I see on a daily basis, and it feels really great to know that in some way I’ve been able to help others and leave them with a positive experience.”

Colleagues say Bird has a tremendous impact since she became an employee in 1998 and consistently demonstrates an ability to be a leader within the school.

Ginger Hattaway, director of Administrative & Fiscal Affairs, says Bird’s accomplishment list is long. It includes an analytical analysis of clinic expense; building spreadsheets to trend and track clinic income and expense by department and working with the business office to ensure reconciliation of systems.

Though Bird’s job may not be visible to most, Hattaway says it is extremely important to the success of the School of Dentistry.

“The job Maria does is not a highly visible position, but it is very valuable and affects our operations tremendously,” Hattaway says. “I most appreciate her for the contributions she has made to my office by improving personnel, budget processes and financial processes, including the reconciliation and trending of revenues and expenses for the overall school and enforcing school and university policy.

Maria has an eye for detail and is able to identify solutions to problems with little supervision. She is a very dedicated employee who cares about her work, the school and the university.”

Bird has worked as a business officer in the dental faculty practice, clinical dentistry and now in the dean’s office. Her administrative experience in these areas has broadened her knowledge of finance, accounting and human resources.

Robbie Burrell, business officer in the School of Dentistry, says Bird is a hard worker whom others seek out for answers to problems.

“I have witnessed firsthand her ability to tackle complex issues with her precise analytical skills,” Burrell says. “She always thinks outside of the box and knows the questions to ask to get to the root of the problem.”

Bird has been instrumental in developing a checks-and-balances system to reduce the amount of paperwork that flows through the dean’s office.

She worked with other business officers to set up a system to log the many human-resource documents, faculty-data forms, hire letters and offer amounts. The result is less paper to organize and a more cohesive way to do business.

“I keep up with the progress of these documents and forms, and it’s improved the flow and the amount of time it takes to get things approved,” Bird says.

Bird’s background in the other business areas within the school has made her an ideal mentor to others, says Debra Stanford, executive assistant in the dean’s office.

“Her advice and guidance is often sought on financial issues by all departments within the school, and she has mentored many department representatives,” Stanford says. “She never is too busy to stop what she is doing to help a fellow employee with a financial issue.”

Angela Smith is one of the financial officers who says she has benefitted from Bird’s knowledge.

Smith says she appreciates Bird’s leadership, high moral character and the utmost professionalism. She always provides technical advice and assistance to resolve problems for all departments within the school.

Bird says helping others is something she enjoys, and she knows it’s only going to help make the school more successful.

“If I can help someone else with their job, it makes me seem more fulfilling,” Bird says. “I’m very proud to be a part of an outstanding and dedicated group of people, and it’s a great honor to be recognized by them. I only hope I can continue to find ways to improve my job and theirs.”

To nominate someone for employee of the month, send at least three letters of recommendation to Christina Peoples at csyj@uab.edu or visit www.uab.edu/ctsm.

MAX MICHAEL

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The Rev. Donald Solomon founded the Congregations for Public Health (CPH) along with Michael in 2002 after a group of African-American pastors met with Michael to discuss health, social and educational practices in the field of autism and mental health. His students are prepared to increase the health and well-being of all populations. His students are prepared to increase the health and well-being of all populations. His students are prepared to increase the health and well-being of all populations. His students are prepared to increase the health and well-being of all populations. His students are prepared to increase the health and well-being of all populations. His students are prepared to increase the health and well-being of all populations.

Michael says he would like to be involved in public health issues and working to improve the community because “it’s the right thing to do.”

He says he has been fortunate and lucky throughout a career that has placed him in a position to give back to people who don’t find themselves in situations that are as comfortable has his own. Michael says growing up in the ’60s during the Civil Rights and Women’s Liberation movements showed him the inequities that many face and taught him the importance of building a community.

“That was a time when you grew up in and learned about a sense of community,” Michael says. “We all live in this world, city or community together, and we all have a responsibility to make sure that everybody that is in the community is reasonably comfortable. The challenge is that it’s real easy to sit in here and do pi-in-the-sky stuff and write an article about it and stick it on a shelf. It’s another thing to say, ’That was a cool idea, but it doesn’t work in the real world.’ That’s the fun part of it — to see what works and what doesn’t.”
Software tested to teach kids animal safety

Psychologists at UAB are testing The Blue Dog software program designed to teach children to interact safely with dogs, especially those ages 5-9 who are more likely to be bitten.

“Dogs are wonderful companions that bring great happiness to millions of children and their families,” says UAB psychologist David Schwebel, Ph.D., director of the UAB Youth Safety Lab.

One hundred children ages 3-6 from the Birmingham area are needed for the trial study at UAB. All children in the study must have at least one dog in the home. All of the dogs used in the UAB study are pet-therapy dogs registered with The Delta Society, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving health through service and therapy animals. To volunteer for the study, contact Schwebel at 934-8745.

“If this computer game successfully teaches young children to interact safely with their pet dogs it could have enormous impact on reducing accidental bites from pet dogs,” says Schwebel.

In the game, kids learn about animal safety. They explore a day in the life of a dog and learn what it means to be a pet-therapy dog. The children learn about important safety reminders like: How to be gentle when approaching a dog. How to ask the dog’s owner before petting a dog. How to avoid eye contact. How to avoid back postures.

Children play as a dog named ‘Blue,’ and must complete several missions to protect the dog. For example, a mission titled ‘Care for the Syrian Hamster’ teaches children to be gentle and wait for the dog to come to them. Another mission titled ‘Stay Safe Around the Pool’ teaches children to stay clear from the pool area.

Research Digest

Psychologist David Schwebel says the children in the study and their parents will be given The Blue Dog software program. The program presents a series of games that instruct children to avoid behaviors that can aggravate a dog.

WOMEN

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Psychologist Tika Benveniste, Ph.D., principal investigator and chair of Cell Biology. “This highlights the existing excellence in MS research that is evident at UAB and the hope and goal that we will be able to bring more new people into the field and really push the envelope in MS-related research.”

The purpose of the grant is to develop and evaluate novel therapies that can manipulate the immune system to better treat MS, a disease that has no cure.

“We have four projects that are all interdisciplinary and involve established investigators in the field of MS coupled with new investigators who are working in fields including Parkinson’s disease, neuro-developmental diseases, arthritis, psychiatric diseases and spinal cord injury,” Benveniste says. “The grant provides support for people to work in these laboratories and an infrastructure for this grant group to get together on a regular basis and to have research symposia.”

The award is expected to provide the infrastructure for the recruitment of new faculty interested in MS or related diseases. It also has a strong educational component and provides training opportunities for graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and medical residents.

Known quantities

That MS and its symptoms have been recognized for more than 140 years with no cure and no definite known cause is “amazing,” says Benveniste.

One known quality of the disease is that it is triggered by an overactive immune system. Immune-system cells are able to traffic through the blood-brain barrier when that barrier should keep the brain sequestered from the immune system. Once the activated immune cells get into the brain they begin producing toxic molecules.

The thought is that perhaps there is a way to prevent the entry of these cells into the brain or inhibit them in some way so they no longer can produce the toxic molecules.

We’re trying to understand how we can dampen this activated immune response and inflammatory response that is the cause of myelin damage and neuronal loss — both hallmarks of MS,” Benveniste says. “We’re trying to prevent these two detrimental events.”

Fresh ideas

The NMSS hopes that bringing in researchers who have never worked in the field of MS will bring about fresh research ideas. They hope it will lead to locating the cause of the disease and bring about therapies to treat and prevent it.

Rita Cowell, Ph.D., assistant professor in psychiatry, and Candace Floyd, Ph.D., assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation, are two of the researchers who will be looking into MS for the first time.

Cowell’s lab research focuses on neurodevelopmental disorders. She hopes her research might shed some light on the substantial cognitive impairment in MS.

“Recent evidence suggests that particular interneurons in the brain involved in learning and memory are sensitive to brain inflammation,” Cowell says. “If we could figure out how to protect these cells from inflammatory damage in MS, we may be able to ameliorate some of the profound cognitive deficits in patients with MS.

Floyd’s research is on traumatic spinal cord injury and her expertise in evaluating locomotion and sensation.

“Spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis involve similar cell types and patho-physiological processes,” Floyd says. “And knowledge learned from the study of one could likely contribute to the understanding of the other.”

David Standaert, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Center for Neurodegeneration and Experimental Therapeutics, also is new to the field of MS research. His interest comes from the recent recognition of the role of the immune system in many brain diseases and the increasing overlap between MS and other brain disorders.

“MS long has been considered an immune-mediated disease, but in recent years it has become clear that also there is a degenerative component that may account for much of the long-term decline in function seen in the disease,” Standaert says. “Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and similar disorders, in contrast, have been thought of as primarily degenerative. But increasing evidence points to a prime role of the immune system and neuro-inflammation in neuro-degeneration.”

“I hope the NMSS Collaborative Research Center will foster cross-cultural thinking about the interrelationships between immune-mediated events and neurodegeneration, and that a clearer understanding of the mechanisms of neuro-inflammation and neuro-degeneration may lead to therapies which are broadly effective in these disorders,” Standaert says.

Co-investigators on the grant also include Khrum Bashir, M.D., associate professor of neurology, and John Räcker, M.D., assistant professor of neurology, ensuring that the research and clinical arms will work closely together with the ultimate goal to develop drugs that can be taken to the bedside.

The NMSS Collaborative Research Center also hopes to partner with the UAB Center for Pediatric Onset of Demyelinating Disease (CPODD) — the only clinic in the Southeast dedicated to treating children with demyelination.

Other grant co-principal investigators are: Scott Barnum, Ph.D., Michael Bremer, Ph.D., Patrizia DeSarno, Ph.D., Richard Jope, Ph.D., Peter King, M.D., Chandar Raman, Ph.D., and Alex Szalay, Ph.D.

The center will begin holding monthly meetings soon. Contact Benveniste at tika@uab.edu if you would like to participate or for more information.

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Join us for a Stroll to Protect Alabama’s Babies

Saturday, April 10, 2010
UAB Campus Green

Registration: 8am
Warm up: 8:45am
Stroll/Walk: 9am

Bring your stroller-aged babies and the entire family out for a walk for a great cause: preventing child abuse in our region. The 4K Stroll will feature:

- A stroller-safe path along the Campus Green
- A walk path around the perimeter of the Campus Green for fast-pace walkers
- A Kids Zone activity area with free games, crafts and activities for kids of all ages
  - An Education Fair featuring area nonprofit agencies working to prevent child abuse in our region
  - Merchants and vendors with great products and services to sample
  - Great prizes! Goodie bags! Food! Music! and lots of FUN!

Every stroller present, every step taken and every dollar raised helps prevent shaken baby syndrome and child abuse.

Register online today at www.medicine.uab.edu/stroll
Or call 205.975.5659 for more information

UAB Shaken Baby Prevention 4K Stroll
Honoring National Child Abuse Prevention Month
Benefitting the UAB Shaken Baby Prevention Program