Students to run tornado relief forgivable-loan program

UAB students will have a unique opportunity to be social entrepreneurs in support of their community in the wake of disaster, thanks to the generosity of several anonymous donors.

The UAB Tornado Relief Forgivable Loan Program, established by UAB in early April, will make small loans (in most cases, in amounts of up to $1,000 each) to people affected by the April 27 tornadoes. The loans will be interest-free and due in one year, but can be forgiven completely or in part on their payback date if ongoing need is demonstrated. The program will be administered jointly by the foundation and the UAB School of Business.

Students will work with both Regions Bank and the law firm of Balch & Bingham to administer the program.

Students will identify prospective borrowers by working with the community’s collaborative Long-Term Recovery Committee, established by more than 40 human service agencies in the greater Birmingham area, including the UAB Benevolens Fund, said UAB School of Business Dean David R. Klock, Ph.D. The purpose of the committee is to address the longer-term needs of those affected by the tornadoes — needs that often become apparent after people have obtained assistance from first responders. The committee is beginning its work immediately.

Students will work with both Regions Bank and the law firm of Balch & Bingham to administer the program. Regions will assist in the delivery of loan payback date if ongoing need is demonstrated.

Lucas named interim provost

Linda Lucas, Ph.D., dean of UAB’s School of Engineering since 2000, has been named interim provost.

“Linda is an energetic and innovative leader,” said UAB President Carol Garrison.

“She has been a driving force for the growth and excellence of our engineering programs; she has the respect of her colleagues and a heart for student success; and she has deep institutional knowledge of UAB and our community. I know she will do a great job.”

Garrison said a national search for a permanent provost will begin soon. Lucas’ appointment was effective May 18. Former Provost Eli Capilouto was named president of the University of Kentucky May 3.

Lucas joined the UAB faculty in 1982 as an assistant professor. She was named department chair of biomedical engineering in 1995. She holds joint appointments in several UAB university-wide Centers, the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, and departments within the School of Dentistry.

She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and chemistry from the University of Alabama and a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from UAB.

She has master’s degrees in mathematics, education and materials engineering from UAB. She earned her doctorate from UAB in biomedical engineering with an emphasis in biomaterials.

Lucas is a past president of the Society for Biomaterials and the Biomedical Engineering Society. She is a Fellow in the American Institute for Medical and Biomedical Engineers and an International Fellow of the Society for Biomaterials.

Faculty from UAB, Zambia and Malawi collaborate

A two-way exchange program will help the School of Nursing prepare health-care professionals to address disparities in care for people in Zambia, Malawi and the United States.

Lynda Wilson, Ph.D., assistant dean for International Affairs, is coordinating the collaboration among the Sparkman Center for Global Health, UAB schools of Public Health, Health Professions and Medicine, Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy and University of California, San Francisco. The program is funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to UAB in 2010.

The first 12 visitors under the program spent two weeks on campus in May learning to address health needs of populations with the greatest needs for care. The Zambians spent another two weeks paired with faculty advisors at UAB and the McWhorter School of Pharmacy, and fellows from Malawi were paired with faculty advisors at UCNF.

Nurses, physicians, pharmacists and physiotherapists were among those who learned about public health organizations and advocacy groups that serve culturally diverse urban and rural communities, and they worked with faculty advisors to establish learning goals. “They could observe classes, go to clinical facilities, learn about teaching resources and set up a plan for our faculty visits to their country,” Wilson said.

“They’re very positive about the experience,” Wilson says. “They’re seeing things with new eyes. They were especially eager to learn about our simulation lab. They have one they’re developing and expanding. We’re equally excited about the opportunity this provides our faculty too.”

The program is bidirectional, which means faculty from the UAB will visit Zambia and Malawi to learn firsthand the challenges their contemporaries face daily and stay in their colleagues’ homes when they travel.

Visitors from Zambia and Malawi stayed in the homes of UAB faculty or other volunteers while here.

Wilson and her husband Craig Wilson, M.D., professor of epidemiology and director of the Sparkman Center for Global Health, housed two of the Zamian faculty Craig Wilson, who has worked in Zambia as part of UAB’s Center for Infectious Disease Research (CIDRZ) and in other capacities since 1998, says the opportunity for personal interaction strengthens the learning opportunities.

“It’s really a fantastic way to promote cross-cultural understanding,” Craig Wilson says. “You have an opportunity to have real personal interaction, and I think a lot of value comes with that.”

Lynda Wilson agrees. The Monday morning after the visitors spent their first weekend with host UAB faculty, she asked each of the visitors to share their weekend experiences.

“One woman said she learned to drive a tractor because her host family lived on a farm,” Wilson says. “Another man, who is an obstetrician, said he saw couples work with a midwife, said he saw couples work with a midwife.”

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Munchus is named interim director

George Munchus, Ph.D., has been named interim director of UAB’s African-American Studies program, which is part of the College of Arts & Sciences. Munchus is a professor of management and director of business service-learning in the School of Business.

Artist Dalek to create new works on campus

Artist James Marshall, more commonly known as Dalek, is an artist and the creator of the iconic character Space Monkey. Marshall will install four enormous, site-specific wall paintings at the UAB Visual Arts Gallery.

Aikido at UAB to begin June 2

Aikido is a modern Japanese martial art with deep roots in Samurai tradition and is an excellent way for you to reach your fitness goals or for self defense training. Introductory classes will be held June 2-June 30. UAB employees, students and alumni are welcome.

Request for apps for Charles Barkley Health Disparities Research Awards

The UAB Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center invites applications for the 2011 funding of research projects focusing on health disparities. Projects may be in the areas of basic science, clinical science, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, community-based research, or outcomes/comparative effectiveness research and must demonstrate relevance to health disparities. Letters of intent are due June 3. Applications are due July 18. Direct questions to Mindy Black at 934-6978.

UAB Cancer Center to host Survivors Day

Cancer survivors, their families, friends and caregivers will celebrate Survivors Day from 7 a.m. to noon June 4 at Pepper Place Saturday Market, 2829 Second Ave. South.

Apply for doctoral trainee positions

The UAB Nutrition Obesity Research Center announces the availability of funding for three doctoral trainee positions in the UAB Pre-Doctoral Training in Obesity-Related Research program. This is a universitywide training program. Motivated applicants seeking to work in a team environment wanted; applications are due June 7. Visit www.norc.uab.edu/opportunities/pre-doc for full details.

Campus Rec has special offer for the summer

Is your son or daughter coming home from college for the summer? The Campus Recreation Center offers special short-term rates for patrons who have a child living with them for the summer months. For just $80 for the summer, or $30 a month, your student gets access to all our facility has to offer.

UAB Campus Rec Center has special offer for the summer

For information on membership or program opportunities, call 996-3038 or visit www.uab.edu/campusreccenter.

UAB Reporter online only during summer

The UAB Reporter will publish online editions only during the months of June and July. The newsletter will resume its biweekly printing and distribution schedule with the Aug. 8 issue.

Little tykes take to the track

Mounted on their tricycles and bikes, dozens of 4- and 5-year-olds from the UAB Child Development Center set off on a race course May 24 during the annual bike rodeo. UAB Police flashed vehicle lights and barricaded 15th Street as a parade of smiley-faced tykes pedaled their way toward the course.

The event was part of the center’s end-of-school-year activities and culminated with a picnic and, then, of course, naptime.

EDITOR: Linda Center
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Traci Bratton
WRITER: Tyler Grier
CONTRIBUTORS: Kukki Lamont Ellis, Jenifer Leslin, Bob Smith, Mindi Sutton, Shannon Thompson, Nicole Wint

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Deadlines: News items must be submitted by noon Monday the week prior to publication and are used at the discretion of the publication staff.

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All the world’s a stage for prof and Seasoned Performers

“It was a pretty standard rehearsal for a play that still didn’t open for several more weeks. There were some missed lines, some props that didn’t work out quite right. But the cast of Night Call Nurses, or What The Health!!!, soldiered on. You notice something right away about this cast: Gray hair. A few wrinkles. Or more. They are The Seasoned Performers. Alabama’s only senior-adult theatre company, performing a play about aging, for seniors — but enjoyable to everyone else.

Andy Duxbury, M.D., is the playwright. He’s had a love of theatre since he was in high school, but his career path took him down a different road. Now Duxbury is a geriatrician at UAB and a lucky man who combines his passion for theatre with a mission to improve society’s approach to aging.

Night Call Nurses is the second play Duxbury has written for The Seasoned Performers. His first, Grimm and Bear, was a comedy in which the aging villains of fairy tales learn a lesson about self-empowerment and the values that seniors bring to our society. The Seasoned Performers toured for two years with that show, ultimately performing it at the National Senior Theatre Festival in North Carolina. Night Call Nurses, as did its predecessor, has a message about aging.

“Night Call Nurses is about three aging actresses, who in their younger days had appeared on a local radio daytime soap opera called Night Call Nurses,” says Duxbury. “Now in their 70s and 80s, they are called back to the radio station for a reunion show and must deal with their own health issues, their place in society and the patronizing attitude of the Baby Boomer who runs the station.”

The show has five characters and a minimal set, and the troupe loads the production into a van and takes it on tour to senior centers, libraries, schools and churches — wherever they can find an audience, young or old.

“Children and teens can learn a lot from the show and from seeing seniors being actively engaged and engaging,” says Elise Mayo, the artistic director for The Seasoned Performers. “There’s a message for the Baby Boomers, too, who are trying to avoid aging and pretend that it’s not happening. Fact of the matter is we’re born, we live, we die.”

But before we die, Duxbury says, seniors have a vital role to play in society.

“It’s important that seniors fulfill the natural role of the elder of the tribe,” he says. “To be the repository of wisdom and leadership and the carrier of culture and meaning to younger generations. It’s the role of the parent to provide shelter, safety and food to their kids. It’s the role of the grandparent to teach those children who they are and what it means to be who they are.”

Duxbury is a faculty member with the UAB Center for Aging, which has collaborated with The Seasoned Performers to allow him the liberty to be both physician and playwright. The messages he delivers in close to his 70-, 80- and 90-year-old patients differ little from the ones that permeate Night Call Nurses.

In its original form, the play focused on senior empowerment. But in rehearsals, Duxbury and Mayo, both Baby boomers, saw there was a valuable message for the younger generation. Just as seniors must embrace their role as the village elder, then the boomers also need to accept their position on life’s timeline. In short, the play tells everyone the same thing — act your age.

“We all grow old — it’s the journey of life,” says Mayo. “So it’s important that we don’t try to hold on to youth, to pretend that we’re still in our 20s or 30s. We will have important things to say in our 60s and our 70s — things no one else will have the experience or life-lessons to say.”

“Our culture is so youth-centered that there is not much understanding of the wisdom of age,” says Duxbury. “My goal as a playwright and a geriatrician is to help people — young, old and in between — understand that age brings knowledge, experience and value. I want seniors to know they are valuable and have something to say. And I want the rest of us to realize that we ought to be listening to them.”

Night Call Nurses performances are touring through 16 counties in Central Alabama. A performance schedule is online at www.seasonedperformers.org.

Geriatrician and playwright Andrew Duxbury has important messages for older Americans.

Geriatrician and playwright Andrew Duxbury has important messages for older Americans.

Garciatraician and playwright Andrew Duxbury has important messages for older Americans.

ZAMBIAS

CONTINUED from page 1

The program also promotes cross-cultural understanding through visits the cohort made to public health organizations and advocacy groups that serve disadvantaged urban and rural communities.

The group spent one day in Lusiville at Servants in Faith and Technology (SIFAT), a Christian nonprofit organization that provides training in health, nutrition and community health to develop solutions to hypothetical cases. Wilson says the students should be able to learn and teach each other. “It’s a way to break down barriers and think with a larger world view that just Alabama. We’ll see what happens after our faculty travel there a few weeks.

“Hopefully new ideas will emerge on how we can keep working together. That’s the vision.”

Mickey Trimm, Ph.D., associate professor of health care management, traveled to Zambia in 2009, and he readily admits he was astounded at what he saw when he first arrived.

“I didn’t see a lot of the typical technology of our hospitals,” Trimm says. “You hardly saw any x-rays, CT scans.” Zambia lacks the resources to detect and treat diseases such as heart disease or cancer the way we do here in the United States. Trimm says. “But primarily they are dealing with infectious diseases. Malaria, cholera, tuberculosis and AIDS/HIV are the key problems. More than one in every seven adults in the country is living with the HIV/AIDS. And the people there do an amazing job training those with the limited resources they have. It’s impressive to see them work.”

Trimm is one of the UAB faculty involved in the U.S. State Department-funded grant program that enabled2 faculty from the universities of Zambia and Malawi to travel to UAB for training in May.

“It’s important that we help them build their capabilities. We can’t train all their staff or care for all their sick. We’re teaching them to fish instead of giving them fish,” Trimm says. “It’s important for them to feel empowered and to care for their own.

Trimm, a self-admitted gadfly who holds degrees in engineering and health care, was excited that the Zambians and Malawians would have an opportunity see the technology available to train health-care professionals here.

“We use the Internet extensively in our teaching methods here,” Trimm says. And we have some other techniques that enable students to develop clinical and critical thinking skills. Some of that may be helpful as the Zambian government expands access to broadband capabilities.”

But he admits his initial interest in this project was to learn how Zambians care for their sick on a very limited budget. “I thought that might be helpful as we try to provide rural health care in Alabama with the limited resources we have. We’re both learning from each other. And that is a very good thing.”

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New interim deans for dentistry, engineering named

Michael Reddy, D.M.D., DMSc, has been named interim dean of the UAB School of Dentistry, effective June 6. Reddy, chair of the Department of Periodontics since 2004 and former assistant dean for Planning and Clinical Activity, is a graduate of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine who joined the UAB faculty in 1989. He also is a senior scientist in multiple UAB research centers, including the centers for Metabolic Bone Disease and the Aging.

UAB President Carol Garrison said a national search for a permanent dean will begin soon.

Reddy will temporarily replace the school’s current Dean Huy F. Thomas, Ph.D., who will become the new dean of the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine.

Melinda M. Labor, Ph.D., has been named interim dean of the UAB School of Engineering. Former Dean Linda Lucas, Ph.D., is currently serving as interim provost. Labor, a professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering who has served as associate dean, has been a member of the school’s faculty since 1993.

A graduate of UAB and Birmingham-Southern College who received her doctorate from Vanderbilt University, her specialty is environmental engineering.

Her research interests include watershed and stormwater management, sustainable development, pollution prevention and the investigation of links between environmental pollutants and human health.

Emergency Department to screen all adult patients for HIV

Twenty-one percent of U.S. residents infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are unaware they carry it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In simple terms, more than 220,000 carriers are not being treated and may be spreading the virus that causes AIDS to others.

UAB Hospital and 25 metropolitan hospitals will begin screening every patient treated in the emergency department for HIV to reduce those numbers. The CDC will provide $1.6 million to UAB during the next three years through the Alabama Department of Public Health to fund the testing program and expand treatment opportunities.

“Routine testing for HIV infection is becoming the standard of care in many hospitals in the nation,” said James Galbraith, M.D., a UAB emergency medicine physician and coordinator of the testing program. “This is an effort to identify those who are unaware they are HIV-positive and get them appropriate care and treatment.”

“Every infection that we prevent and every newly infected patient who gets therapy means that we slow this cascade of infection and help reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the country,” said Michael Saag, M.D., director of the UAB Center for AIDS Research.

Starting this summer, Galbraith says, the emergency department will test all patients ages 18-65. The Rapid HIV test is simple, done as part of a normal blood draw or as an oral swab. The results will be ready within 30 minutes, often before the patient has completed their visit. A negative result will be communicated through the normal discharge instructions provided by the unit nurses. A positive result will be communicated by a physician, in a private setting.

“We want to handle positive results with sensitivity and care,” says Galbraith. “We will provide post-test counseling services in the ED, and our colleagues at the 1917 Clinic, UAB’s home for HIV/AIDS care and treatment, will link positive cases to long-term treatment and counseling services available at UAB or community-based organizations. Judging by the number of patients we see each day in the ED, we anticipate having roughly one positive test per day.”

Treatment advances such as the development of antiretroviral therapy — a drug cocktail of three or more medications — have made a profound difference in what it means to be HIV-positive.

“New treatments for HIV developed during the past 15 years have transformed HIV into a chronic, manageable disease, in which patients can live a full life,” Saag said. “These therapies work best early in the course of infection, before a patient actually becomes sick and when testing is the only way to know if the infection is present. Compared to where we were 30 years ago, when AIDS was first described, the progress is breathtaking. AIDS is no longer is the death sentence it used to be, provided the person infected with the virus finds out in time for the treatments to work.

Patients can opt out of the test, but Galbraith says HIV-testing is becoming more common, and a 2009 pilot study conducted in the UAB emergency department during a three-day period found that most people were receptive to the test.

“We’re implementing strategies that will make this effort fully transparent in order to reinforce our universal testing policy and prevent false assumptions of targeting specific groups,” said Galbraith. “Our goal is simply to help identify those unaware of their HIV status and get them to the appropriate treatment as soon as possible. This is a very logical next step in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

“The CDC recommends that all adults should get an HIV test at least once,” said Galbraith. “For those who do not engage in risky sexual or needle-sharing behavior, one test may be enough. But those who do engage in risky behavior should have an HIV test annually.”

A study in the Annuals of Internal Medicine in 2010, conducted by researchers at Yale and Stanford universities, estimated that one-time screening of low-risk individuals and yearly screening of high-risk ones would prevent nearly 7 percent of new infections.

UAB will hire five additional laboratory technicians in the Emergency Department to process the tests, ensuring that the work flow in the ED will not be adversely affected by the new screening. HIV-testing services will be provided at no cost to ED patients.

LOAN PROGRAM

CONTINUED from page 1

proceeds, and Balch & Bingham will provide the forms of loan documentation.

“We believe that this program is entrepreneurial because it addresses a problem in an innovative way,” Klock said. “UAB can be an engine of innovation in a wide variety of fields, including by addressing the social needs in our community.”

This program exposes our students to the values of respect for the dignity of disaster victims, empathy for their financial situations, and the importance of collaborative servant leadership, all in a setting that is outside the traditional classroom,” he said.

Tornado victims who wish to make an application to borrow money under the program should contact any of the Birmingham area human services agencies, most of which are participating in the Long Term Recovery Committee. UAB students and employees may contact the UAB Benevolent Fund at 205-934-1581 or in a setting that is outside the traditional classroom,” he said.

Anyone who would like to donate to the UAB Tornado Relief Forgivable Loan Program can do so online at www.uab.edu/uabef or mail a check payable to the UAB Educational Foundation to 1717 11th Ave. South, Suite 101A, Birmingham, AL 35205. Foundation Treasurer Jodie Moter said that in keeping with the original donor’s wishes, amounts repaid by borrowers and/or any remaining funds as of May 1, 2012, will be used in support of the students of the UAB School of Business.
New study: Lowering fat intake affects risk for diabetes

Small differences in diet — even without weight loss — can significantly affect risk for diabetes, according to AUB research published online May 18 by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

In this study, 69 healthy, overweight people who did not have diabetes — but were at risk for it — were placed on diets with modest reductions in either fat or carbohydrate for eight weeks.

“At eight weeks, the group on the lower fat diet had significantly higher insulin secretion and better glucose tolerance and tended to have higher insulin sensitivity,” said Barbara Gower, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Nutrition Sciences and lead author of the study. “These improvements indicate a decreased risk for diabetes.”

Gower says the unique aspect of this study is that the results were independent of weight loss.

The study participants were fed exactly the amount of food required to maintain their body weight, and the researchers took into account any minor fluctuations in body weight during analyses. Thus, results from this study suggest that those trying to minimize risk for diabetes over the long term might consider limiting their daily consumption of fat at around 27 percent of their diet.

“People find it hard to lose weight,” said Gower. “What is important about our study is that the results suggest that attention to diet quality, not quantity, can make a difference in risk for Type 2 diabetes.”

The findings were even stronger in African-Americans, a population with an elevated risk for diabetes. Gower says African-Americans on the lower fat diet showed a stronger difference in insulin secretion compared to the lower carb group, indicating that diet might be an important variable for controlling diabetes risk in that population.

Study participants in the lower fat group received a diet comprising 27 percent fat and 55 percent carbohydrate. The lower carb group’s diet was 39 percent fat and 43 percent carbohydrate. All food for the eight-week trial was provided by the study.

“The diets used in this study were actually fairly moderate,” said UAB dietitian Laura Lee Goree, R.D., L.D., a study co-author. “Our findings indicate that the lower-fat diet might reduce the risk of diabetes or slow the progression of the disease.”

A typical dinner meal on the lower fat diet would include sesame chicken with rice, snow peas and carrots, frozen broccoli, fat-free cheese, oranges and a dinner roll.

According to the American Diabetes Association, Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes; millions of Americans have been diagnosed with it, and many more are unaware they are at high risk. Some groups have a higher risk for developing Type 2 diabetes, particularly African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and the elderly.

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Gulf seafood is safe, but more monitoring is needed

The safety of seafood from the Gulf of Mexico became a central concern following the Deepwater Horizon blowout in April 2010. Even after previously closed Gulf waters began reopening in summer 2010, consumer confidence in the safety of seafood from it remained shaky. Now a new review lead authored by Julia Gohlke, Ph.D., assistant professor of environmental health sciences in UAB’s School of Public Health, affirms that levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) found thus far in Gulf seafood samples have been well below levels that would be of concern for human health.

The article, “A Review of Seafood Safety after the Deepwater Horizon Blowout,” was published online May 12 in the peer-reviewed journal Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP). Gohlke and her co-authors reviewed federal tests of seafood in the Gulf, with samples taken from waters off the Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida coastlines. The concern was that levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), pollutants that occur in oil and tar deposits and are carcinogenic, would be making the marine life unsafe to eat, but what they found was that the numbers confirm the seafood is safe.

“Based on the amount of oil released, this result is quite surprising,” Gohlke says, “but we also know the Gulf’s warm waters and the use of dispersants may have contributed to what we’re seeing now. The oil can be broken down much faster in warm water and the use of dispersants at the wellhead may have allowed for even more rapid breakdown, as well as sedimentation of the oil.”

Still, Gohlke says there are long-term concerns; therefore, further testing of fish, shrimp and other ocean edibles should continue for the foreseeable future. The authors of the EHP review developed several recommendations after reviewing toxicology reports from oil spills worldwide. They also examined protocols for re-opening fisheries after the Deepwater Horizon blowout and previous spills.

They recommend that Gulf seafood continue to be tested for PAHs in light of potential recontamination from disturbance and redistribution of uncaptured oil. After previous spills, PAH levels have been elevated in fish and shellfish for periods ranging from several weeks to several years. Little is known about the toxicity of dispersants applied deep under water, as during the Deepwater Horizon disaster, but given the lack of information on environmental persistence of dodecyl sodium sulfosuccinate (DOSS) — a primary component of the two chemical dispersants used to clean the oil in the water — they also recommend continued testing for this compound.

“The oil spill is unique in several respects — the depth at which the oil was released, the unprecedented amount of oil leaked and the amount of dispersants used at depth,” Gohlke says. “Reports have indicated there is still oil on the sea floor. If that’s the case, it could still work its way up the food chain. That’s why we advocate for long-term monitoring of both PAHs and metals.”

Additional testing is recommended for metals including mercury, cadmium and lead, which are found in crude oil and in drilling fluids.

“Based on evidence from previous oil spills, it is in the interest of public health to monitor levels of metals in seafood,” Gohlke says. Some metals are known to bioaccumulate in seafood and can damage the developing nervous systems of infants and young children.

According to the authors, continued monitoring for PAHs and DOSS in the Gulf of Mexico and additional testing for metals will protect consumers now and also provide valuable information for preparedness in response to future spills.

The study’s co-authors include Dzigbodi Doke, a UAB environmental health doctoral student; Meghan Tipre, a UAB epidemiology doctoral student; Mark Leader, research scientist in epidemiology; and Timothy Fitzgerald with the Environmental Defense Fund, in Washington, D.C. The work was supported in part by the Walton Family Foundation.

The Deepwater Horizon blowout occurred April 20, 2010, and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) began closing commercial fisheries May 2, 2010. By June 21, 37 percent (225,290 square kilometers) of the Gulf of Mexico Exclusive Economic Zone was closed to commercial fishing. NOAA began reopening federal waters to fishing June 23, 2010, after sensory and chemical testing of Gulf seafood by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), NOAA, and state agencies indicated it was safe to eat. The well was capped July 15, and as of April 19, 2011, all federal waters had been reopened to fishing.

Gohlke also is working on other independent testing projects in the Gulf. She was awarded a $20,000 pilot grant from UAB to study the impact of the spill on the environment. That helped lead her to a position on the advisory board of the Gulf Reef Fisher’s Shareholder’s Alliance, from which she is helping that group develop an independent testing scheme to ensure the seafood being sold is safe.

“It’s a great market-based program initiated by fisherman to help restore consumer confidence in their product,” Gohlke says. Learn more about this initiative at mygulfwild.com.

School’s out, kids are online: How to keep kids cyber-safe

School’s out for summer, and for some kids that means more time in a virtual world — surfing the Web, hanging out in online chat rooms and posting to Facebook and Twitter.

According to a recent report in the journal Pediatrics, 22 percent of teenagers log on to a social media site more than 10 times a day, and three-quarters have cell phones.

While kids see summer as a time to explore cyberspace, there is plenty for parents to worry about, from “sexting” to cyber-bullying.

“The Internet is a vast place with great things on it for children like games and educational lessons,” said David Schwebel, Ph.D., a UAB psychology professor.

But kids also are risks and danger such as sex crimes, violence, hatred and prejudice; a lot of things children need to be protected from.”

It’s difficult to completely police a child’s Internet activity, Schwebel said. “Parental controls can help, but are not foolproof. Parents need to teach children to act safely and get help when needed.”

Schwebel offered these tips:

• Young children always should be supervised online. This is a great opportunity for parents to have playtime with the child and also teach them lessons about the Internet.

• Sit down with your child and guide them to safe places on the Internet and identify red flags that warn them of inappropriate content.

• Teach your child to say, “No!” Internet trends, such as taking photos of yourself in dangerous places and posting them online, are often hard to resist for a child who wants to be popular. Talk to your kids about these kinds of fads and make sure they understand the consequences and also know how to walk away.

• Set online time limits. Don’t let your child sit in front of a computer all day. “Sitting on the Internet does not burn calories,” Schwebel said. “Children need to be out running, playing and active.”

• If your child exhibits inappropriate behavior — talks about suicide or about meeting strangers in the mall — seek help right away.

For more information, the American Academy of Pediatrics website at www.aap.org.
Sims brings work ethic, fun to Office of Sponsored Programs

UAB is a big, big place, as Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) Officer Jerome Logan quickly found out when he began his employment at the university in January.

When Logan started, he needed everything — a Blazer ID, a place to park, office supplies — and to quickly grasp the department’s administrative procedures.

Tracy Sims was there to help.

“She handled getting me up to speed and really made me feel part of the UAB family — all while juggling her own work responsibilities,” Logan says. “My observations have been that everyone in our department understands that if a task needs to be done well, Tracy is a reliable, consistent person to have it taken care of quickly, efficiently and accurately.”

Sims’ patience, understanding and efficiency make her an integral part of the OSP and a deserving recipient of May’s Employee of the Month award.

Sims’ official title is data processing specialist, but she also serves as a jack-of-all-trades within the department.

Whether it is getting an event scheduled, teaching someone data-entry procedures, updating the complicated clinical trial, assuming the administrative duties in our building’s annual Homecoming skit competition a few years ago. Only a few employees took part in that inaugural skit, but the group came in second place. Now, many employees across the 11th floor are involved each year — and they’re winning the contest.

“The 11th floor is No. 1 in the Administration Building, and everybody knows when it comes to Homecoming,” Sims says with a laugh.

With Stedman’s Blessing, Sims also started a once-a-month lunch event for the office. Employees gather during their lunch hour one day a month for chips and dip and play games or participate in CD or DVD swaps. Karaoke is on tap for their next lunch gathering.

“It’s just something to get us together and hopefully build morale a little bit,” Sims says.

Fellow employees notice and appreciate Sims’ devotion to them as more than just co-workers. They see someone who cares for them and wants them to succeed and have fun while they work to further UAB’s mission.

“It’s obvious that the overall success of OSP is important to Tracy,” says Treva McAboy, OSP officer. “This office is fast paced and it can be very stressful at times. Everyone who attends the lunch gets to know someone who should be Employee of the Month, nominate them.”

If you know someone who should be Employee of the Month, nominate them.

Send at least three letters of nomination to Send at least three letters of nomination to Leticia Waldon at lwaldon@uab.edu.

THE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS BOARD OF THE UAB MINORITY HEALTH AND HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH CENTER HOPES TO HIT THE JACKPOT FOR HEALTHY HAPPY KIDS AT CASINO ROYALE.

The Young Professionals Board of the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center hopes to hit the jackpot for Healthy Happy Kids at Casino Royale benefit for MHRC Healthy Kids Program.

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The annual hors d’oeuvres-and-cocktail event begins at 7:30 p.m. in Birmingham’s Working Play. Tickets are $50 in advance and $65 at the door. For tickets, visit uab.edu/casinoroyale, call 975-5659 or email ypb@uab.edu.

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