After Roy Hager and Mike Merrill heard a moving story about a group of teenage girls from the Republic of Moldova at Frazer Memorial Methodist Church in Montgomery one Sunday this past summer, they felt compelled to help.

And one of the first places the men turned for assistance was UAB. Hager, a 1973 ophthalmology graduate, and Merrill, the executive director of the Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology, contacted Lindsey Knox, director of development for the Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital and the Department of Ophthalmology, to gauge institutional interest.

From those conversations grew a collaboration between Ophthalmology and the UAB School of Dentistry that resulted in free eye care, free glasses and a free dental checkup for several of the girls.

“The girls were very grateful for everything that was done for them,” Merrill says. “I think they were somewhat overwhelmed that so many people would try to help them as they did.

“You have to remember these girls never had anything in the way of material possessions — nothing. Their backgrounds were pretty rough.”

Philip Cameron Ministries brought the girls from their Eastern European home to the United States for possible adoption. It likely saved them from the sex-slave trade of their area. The girls all had tragic childhood stories. One witnessed her father kill her mother with a machete; another girl’s mother offered to sell her for $3,500. A third girl was held back in the sixth grade for four years because it was thought she had a learning disability when what she actually needed was a pair of eye glasses.

“Many of these girls were put in an orphanage because their parents didn’t want them,” Hager says. “All of their stories shocked me. The girl held back in the sixth grade for so long because they didn’t know she had trouble with her eyes got to me, mostly because that’s what I do.

“I told Mike we didn’t need to ever let something like that happen again. We will always do eye exams from now on with these girls when they are brought to the United States and do whatever else they need.”

Hager, an ophthalmologist at ITEC in Montgomery along with Charles Robbins, provided free eye exams to each of the girls. They found that several of the girls needed glasses. One of the girls was blind in one eye solely because she did not receive the proper eye care she needed as a young child. Hager says. Another was diagnosed borderline glaucoma and will be examined by Hager again next year when she comes back to the United States.

“Many of their problems are things we see in our practice every day,” Hager says.

See COLLABORATION p3

Research enters the virtual realm with VisCube-SX

The UAB School of Engineering has acquired new multi-screen, immersive 3D display technology — the first of its kind in Alabama — that will enable doctors to practice procedures outside the operating room and enable engineers to test the integrity of structural designs before construction begins.

The technology, called VisCube-SX, is an immersive virtual-reality system that places users in a computer-generated setting of their choosing.

“This technology is a real breakthrough at UAB because it will enable researchers from many disciplines to further their work in a virtual environment that promotes discovery and learning, which should enhance the accuracy and success of procedures and designs in the field.” says Bharat Soni, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

The VisCube’s 3D projection, which can only be experienced while wearing specially designed polarized glasses, offers users a real-world experience that envelops them with generated images able to react to movements, actions and directions, Soni says.

“There are many implications for this device — from doctors who want to practice medical procedures before operating on a patient to engineers who want to test the function of a newly designed biomedical device before moving forward with clinical trials,” says Alan Shih, Ph.D., a research professor of mechanical engineering.

“This tool continues to set the UAB School of Engineering apart as it seeks technologies and opportunities that promote and benefit an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research,” says Linda Lucas, Ph.D., dean of the UAB School of Engineering.

Kimberly represents UAB, NIH at vice president’s news conference on stimulus

It’s not every day you get to rub shoulders with the vice president of the United States and The Terminator as part of your job. Yet that was the case for Robert Kimberly, M.D., director of the Comprehensive Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Autoimmunity Center (CAMAC) and professor in the Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology (CIR). Kimberly found himself in the same room with Joe Biden and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger at the request of the National Institutes of Health to answer questions on new research efforts being supported by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds.

The White House invited ARRA recipients to participate in an Oct. 30 news conference led by Biden. Kimberly was one of five researchers picked by the NIH to answer questions from audience members on a new, multi-site, UAB-led national study on finding a genetic link to end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in lupus patients. The $3.35 million Grand Opportunity grant from the National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) will create a national consortium to conduct a genome-wide association study.

“The project is an effort to define biologic factors that make it more likely that people with lupus will end up with severe kidney injury,” Kimberly says. “If we can identify those people in advance by perhaps some genetic factor, we’ll know better how to tailor the therapy needed for each individual patient.”

The consortium already has a substantial head start, building on established networks and clinical research infrastructure already in place.

“It’s a unique project — one that’s never
New national online volunteer-recruitment registry for clinical research launched

UAB is one of 52 institutions participating in ResearchMatch.org, the first national online, disease-neutral volunteer-recruitment registry developed to improve the way biomedical research is conducted across the country. This easy-to-use tool can help match researchers and people who want or need to volunteer for clinical trials while protecting privacy, said Lisa Guay-Woodford, M.D., director of the UAB Center for Clinical & Translational Science.

Volunteers are notified electronically that they are a possible match, and then they may decide whether or not to release their contact information to member researchers. For a complete list of participating institutions, visit www.researchmatch.org/partners. To register, visit www.ResearchMatch.org.

Linney is interim dean for College of Arts & Sciences

Jean Ann Linney, Ph.D., dean of the UAB School of Social & Behavioral Sciences, will become interim dean of the new College of Arts and Sciences effective Jan. 1, 2010. “Dean Linney has the depth and breadth of credentials to serve in this interim capacity,” Provost Eli Capilouto said.

“She has been very engaged in the realignment process and is excited about the potential of this initiative.”

A national search for a permanent dean will begin in the very near future. The search committee will be headed by Harold Jones, Ph.D., dean of the School of Health Professions.

CCC affirms value of mammography at 40

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center strongly supports the recommendations of the American Cancer Society that women should begin mammography screening at age 40 and continue on an annual basis as long as they are in good health, says Edward Partridge, M.D., center director.

“The take-away message is that each woman needs to consider her individual benefits and risks and discuss them with her health-care provider when it comes to decisions about breast cancer testing and screening,” Partridge says. His comments came after the announcement of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) decision to push back its guidelines for recommending mammography to age 40.

Recommended annual mammography and clinical breast examination for all women beginning at age 40 is the best advice, says Helen Kronitras, M.D., co-director of the UAB Breast Health Center and a scientist at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“Mammography does not prevent breast cancer from happening, but it tries to find breast cancer early — when it’s treatable and when it’s curable,” Kronitras says.

UAB Hospital wins Alabama Quality Award

The Alabama Productivity Center at the University of Alabama will present UAB Hospital with the highest level of its Alabama Quality Award on Thursday, Dec. 3.

The Level 3 Alabama Excellence Award is presented to organizations that have demonstrated sustained performance and excellence of effective productivity and quality-improvement strategies, techniques or practices that could be shared with other organizations with the expectation that they will contribute to economic health of the state of Alabama.

“We submitted a comprehensive application based on the criteria for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and hosted a site visit by a team of examiners,” says UAB Hospital Manager of Quality Process Improvement Alice Bracknell.

Associate Vice President for Quality and Regulatory Affairs Deborah F. Grimes, J.D., applauded Bracknell’s leadership. “Alice and her steering team should be congratulated for their work. This could not have been accomplished without the collaboration of the entire leadership team,” Grimes says.

The Quality Award steering team included Business Officer Timothy S. Tanner of Food and Nutrition Services, Medical Nursing Service Director Pamela S. Autrey, Ph.D., and Quality Resources Manager Fanuka Leonard.

The Alabama Productivity Center is a nonprofit organization established by UA and Alabama Power Company to find ways to use university research and educational resources to stimulate economic development in the state.

Biweekly pay notices sent by e-mail only effective Dec. 11

Beginning Dec. 11, deposit notices no longer will be mailed to employees’ home address. E-mail notices will be generated for biweekly-paid employees on the date that the paycheck is available online as soon as is done for monthly paid employees.

During the next few weeks, employees need to ensure they have systems access, a BlazerID and uab.edu e-mail address and Adobe Reader software for viewing. A sample e-mail notification, links to BlazerID Central and Oracle Adminsystem documentation for accessing employee payslips is available online.

Béla Fleck & The Flecktones to present “A Holiday Feast”

UAB’s Alys Stephens Center will present Béla Fleck and the Flecktones in “A Holiday Feast,” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9. Tickets are $52, $42, $32/$20 for students and $10 for kid-friendly tickets. UAB freshmen can see this show for free with their Alys Arts Card. Call 975-2787 or go to www.AlysStephens.org.

Come to the Holiday Open House at 5:30 p.m. for special offers in the ASC Gift Shop & Gallery and free treats.
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**Christmas toy drive is under way**

Christmas morning is special to children of all ages, especially those who are anxious to see what Santa Claus left under the tree. Children in UAB Hospital awaiting a transplant, fighting cancer or seeking treatment for some other disease aren't as fortunate. They don't get to experience the morning in their own homes or on their own terms.

The Hospital Maintenance Department has spent several decades working to ensure these children experience the joys of the holiday at a party with Santa and gifts. This year will mark the 28th annual Christmas Toy Fund celebration and fund drive benefiting the Child Life Program.

"This is an event that we absolutely love to do," says Doug Williams, an electrician who is directing the efforts for the eighth year. "We look forward to hosting this event for the children and their families. It's truly a highlight of the year for us all."

This year's Christmas Toy Fund celebration is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 17 on the second floor of the North Pavilion Atrium. The time will be announced in the coming weeks and all faculty, staff and students are invited.

Donations for the purchase of toys and supplies for the program are being accepted. Please send a check payable to the UAB Maintenance Pediatric Toy Fund, 619 19th St. South, Room 8306, Birmingham, AL 35294.

"Obviously this has been a very difficult year for many in our community, so we're behind on donations," Williams says. "Any help from the UAB community is greatly appreciated.

For more information, contact Williams at 934-6181 or dowilliams@uab.edu, or Tabitha Isaac at 975-3231 or tisaac@uab.edu.

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**Collaboration**

CONTINUED from page 1

"When you're a child, you don't know what you're supposed to see. You think whatever you see is what everybody sees. When situations like that arise here, the school sends a note home that says they don't think a child can see very well and need to get their eyes checked. These girls just never had that opportunity."

**Providing care**

The Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology has a community-outreach program called EyeCare Alabama. UAB's Department of Ophthalmology frequently provides resources for the outreach, which provides free services to disadvantaged Alabamians.

This situation did not fit into the normal scope of the academy's mission, but Merrill says the organization felt a responsibility to help the girls. "We had to help these young ladies because it was just the right thing to do," he says.

Merrill contacted Research Professor Mary Jean Sunseri, Ph.D., in the School of Optometry who provided glasses to the girls who needed them. Knox then contacted Sommer Mackin, major gifts officer in the School of Dentistry, on behalf of Merrill to gauge that school's interest in providing care for the girls. Mackin approached Dean How Thomas, Ph.D., about the outreach project, and they immediately agreed to help.

The girls came to Birmingham and were treated by Assistant Professor Steve Mitchell, D.M.D., and several of his students.

"Dean Thomas called to see if we could do anything to help, and I said certainly," Mitchell says. "I didn't know much about it, just knew they were from somewhere called Moldova. I didn't even know where that was."

"I was on my way home from an off-campus clinic the day we agreed to do it and I was listing to the replay of the 'Rick and Bubba Show' on the radio and they were talking about these girls," he says. "I got filled in on the way home because we had already agreed to help."

Mitchell says opportunities like these are an important part of learning for his students.

"If our students are going to graduate and become professionals who understand they have an obligation to take care of those less fortunate, then they've got to have a chance to see it firsthand while they're in school," Mitchell says. "From an educator's perspective, that's one reason these are extremely valuable opportunities — to enable our students to see the kind of impact they can have firsthand."

All but two of the girls have returned to Moldova. The Alabama Academy of Ophthalmology is trying to secure permanent visas so all of the girls can return to the United States forever, but they need legal and political guidance. They also are trying to purchase a van to help with transportation.

To learn more or offer assistance, contact Merrill at jmikemerrill@gmail.com or 334-279-9755.

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**KIMBERLY**

CONTINUED from page 1

"This fund makes it possible for us to purchase toys, crafts, crayons, coloring books and movies. Child Life and the 5 North Staff are thankful for the Maintenance Department and the UAB family who support this endeavor so much every year. It truly makes a difference and has an impact on the children and their families."

The stimulus money has enabled Kimberly to hire two research assistants and a part-time administrative assistant. A team of rheumatologists, nephrologists and statisticians at UAB and other sites in the next month.

In addition to the CAMAC, CIR and the Nephrology Research Center at UAB, other schools participating in the consortium are Emory University, Johns Hopkins University, Medical University of South Carolina, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, University of Florida and Wake Forest University.

A team of rheumatologists, nephrologists and statisticians with active research protocols has been assembled. Clinical infrastructure is in place, and data collection already has begun.

"This is a brand new project, and it's built on a foundation of strong collaborative work," Kimberly says. "I hope this is perceived positively. And while it's very nice to have the NIH believe that our lupus end-stage renal disease project had the elements they wanted to be at the press conference — both the scientific potential and health-care impact potential — it also probably means they're going to be watching and working with us closely. To say that we all feel a little bit of pressure right now is probably an understatement. But that's OK. We'll get it done."
Transition clinic eases teens into adult medicine setting

You've lived through the middle of the night feedings, the temper tantrums and the back-to-school blues. So why, when someone says the word “teenager,” do some parents visibly wince?

It's likely because those parents have teenagers living in their home. The teen years are a period of intense growth physically, morally and intellectually. It's understandable that it's a time of confusion and upheaval for many families.

But as difficult as the parent-teenager connection can be, another bond also reaches a critical stage during the late teen years — the relationship with their doctor.

Children ages 18 and 19 are on the cusp of leaving the care of their pediatrician, and the teenagers most at risk are those with diseases that require regular management, including diabetes.

The Multidisciplinary Comprehensive Diabetes Clinic, the clinical arm of the Comprehensive Diabetes Center at UAB, opened the new Adolescent Transition Clinic to help ease patients ages 18-24 through that transition. Adolescents and young adults are seen Thursdays on the first floor of The Kirklin Clinic.

“Adolescents and young adults are a vulnerable group, and their needs differ from children and adults,” says Fernando Ovalle, M.D., clinic director. “They have other issues going on, too — dealing with peer pressure issues, changes in their bodies, psychologically they don’t know who they are yet, what they want to be or what they want to do. Their relationship with their parents becomes strained at many times. It’s sometimes difficult to get along with their peers, their parents or anyone. They want to be liked and part of a group. But often it’s especially hard for those who have a disease and who are to some degree different than the rest. Consequently, Ovalle says, it’s one of the worst times for patients to be changing doctors.

“They’ve grown up with their pediatrician. They’ve developed a relationship with them and feel a degree of trust, comfort and respect for them,” he says. “They feel a need to comply with whatever they tell them because it’s somebody who has helped them the whole life. They’re more likely to follow their instructions and do what they are being asked to do because of that relationship.”

Pediatric endocrinologists from Children’s Hospital will bring their patients to the Adolescent Transition Clinic and continue to see their patients for several visits as they integrate them into a new environment. It gives patients an opportunity to learn the new clinic space, get into the system and meet and become comfortable with the new staff.

“It may seem kind of trivial, but it’s a major transition for the patient, and this probably will have a significant impact in keeping them in the system, seeing a physician and getting regular care,” Ovalle says.

Joy Atchison, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics, and Brooks Vaughan, M.D., assistant professor of medicine and pediatrics, are leading the transition efforts.

Social workers, dietitians

Young adults and adolescents also lose touch with their physicians for another reason: lack of insurance.

Once adolescents graduate from high school many lose their insurance, and they don’t have money to pay for their own insurance or pay for clinic visits. A social worker will be available in the adolescent clinic to help patients with insurance decisions and help find ways to get them care and medications when they don’t have insurance.

“We certainly want to provide them the professional support and counseling we know they need when confronting health and insurance challenges,” Ovalle says.

One-stop shop

“We have been very fortunate to get the support from the Comprehensive Diabetes Center to conduct the adolescent clinic,” Ovalle says. “They’ve received generous support from several sources. A large part of it has been raised by a group of benefactors led by David Silverstein, Benny LaRusso and Robin Sparks.”

The Crippled Children Foundation also awarded the clinic a grant to help subsidize the work of the diabetes educator and the social worker.

“This is a one-stop-shop for teenagers, adolescents and adults,” Ovalle says. “Our patients have access to four or five different specialists during their visit, including a nutritionist/certified diabetes educator, endocrinologist, ophthalmologist, orthopedic surgeon and a podiatrist. We are able to bring together all of the different disciplines typically involved in the care of diabetes in a single space and have our patients see the specialists they need to see in a single day.”

Call 801-7450 for information on the Adolescent Transition Clinic or to schedule an appointment. Visit diabetes.dom. uab.edu for more on the Comprehensive Diabetes Center.

Sports star undergoes surgery, regains sight at UAB

B aljit Singh was looking forward to 2010. The premier event in professional field hockey, the World Cup, is to be hosted in his native India next year. And Singh, 28, was the goalie on the Indian National Team. He was considered the best goalie in Asia, ranked fourth in the world. Until a practice incident on July 17 changed everything.

Singh and the team were practicing in Bundi, in northwestern India. It was a common drill: the coach hitting a golf ball at Singh, trying to keep the ball low. A field hockey ball is about the size of a baseball, and by trying to stop the much smaller and faster moving golf ball, it was thought a goalie could improve his reflexes and timing. Only this time the coach hit the ball too high.

The ball struck Singh directly on the right eye, breaking through his protective mask. The impact caused four fractures in the bones of the eye socket and did extensive damage to the eye itself.

He was rushed to a Delhi hospital and had the first surgery to save his eye within 24 hours. Ophthalmologists there told Singh the optic nerve and his center vision, the macula, were damaged. He was told there was nothing to be done and any further procedures would only cause more damage.

But Singh and his family refused to accept that outcome. They did some research on the Internet and one name kept popping up: Robert Morris, M.D., associate professor of ophthalmology at the Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital at UAB and president of the International Society of Ocular Trauma. Morris and his colleagues Dung Witherspoon, M.D., and Ferenc Kuhn, M.D., are renowned for their ability to repair damaged eyes after severe trauma.

They have pioneered new techniques and instruments that enable them to gain access to and operate on the back of the eye. And they have shown that even injured eyes with no light perception can sometimes be returned to useful vision.

Singh arrived in Birmingham on Aug 7. Upon examination, Morris discovered that the goalie’s damaged eye was smaller than normal and shrinking. He had minimal light perception.

“Mr. Singh understood that reconstructing the eye after this sort of trauma is like opening a surprise package,” said Morris. “He could not assure him that it would be possible to restore any useful vision. He also understood that fine detail vision was unlikely. Nonetheless, he wanted us to try.”

On Aug. 11, Morris operated for the first time. Blood was drained from the eye and the retina reattached. Silicon oil was injected into the eye to stop the shrinking and give the eye shape. Morris discovered that Singh’s optic nerve and macula were not destroyed, although the macula had been detached due to bleeding.

“He began to see colors again, which was a good sign that the macula was beginning to recover,” said Morris.

In a follow up visit in mid-September, Morris fitted Singh with a contact lens. His vision improved to 20/200, which is the top line of the eye chart. Morris said there is potential to regain greater vision over time, but this was a significant improvement over the bare light perception prior to surgery. A final determination of how much vision Singh will regain won’t be possible until early in 2010.

Singh, who returned home in early October, said he plans on continuing his vision, not playing field hockey.

“I’m hopeful to regain full vision, but whatever will be, will be,” Singh said. “I have full faith in Dr. Morris.”

Joy Atchison, M.D. (center) and Brooks Vaughan, M.D. (right) meet at a recent clinic. The two are helping to open the Adolescent Transition Clinic, which is helping patients adjust to the transition from pediatric to adult care.

Robert Morris, M.D., associate professor of ophthalmology, has performed surgeries on basketball player Wilson Chandler and singer Charlie Wilson.

Singh
Vinodh Srinivasasainagendra isn’t your average statistician. Number crunching is a key part of his job as a computer and bio-informatician within the Section of Statistical Genetics (SSG) in the Department of Biostatistics. But he’s also involved in life science laboratories because of the nature of the department’s research in genetics and genomics.

“This is a very much a unique position,” he says. “I don’t just crunch numbers on a daily basis. I get to talk with members of other sections and collaborate with other departments within UAB, and we’re working to solve health-related problems.”

Vinodh’s extraordinary programming skills, creativity and his ability to conceive, coordinate and resolve high-level computational problems within a team environment all distinguish him as a worthy selection for November’s Employee of the Month.

UAB is celebrated worldwide for its cutting-edge research in the biomedical sciences, and Jelal Wang, system programmer lead, says it is sometimes surprising to see people unfamiliar with current biological research to find computer programmers and statisticians working in life-science labs.

“In genetics and genomics in particular, the focal point of a great deal of research is on the genetic code that underlies disorders including cancer, diabetes and obesity,” Wang says. “Understanding code is exactly the technical skills ranging from an expertise in distributed and parallel computer technology to facility with a broad and still-expanding collection of programming and statistical languages, database design and management tools and software packages. Co-workers say he can work across Windows and Linux platforms and combine all of these elements and bring them to bear — often in resourceful ways — on the high-level computational problems that frequently are encountered in the biological sciences.

Grant proposals

Vinodh has also made contributions to his department in the area of grant proposals. “Specifically, he often is counted on to perform complex, multi-step data-mining queries across multiple, online databases, including PubMed, CRISP, ISI and others,” says Hemant K. Tiwari, Ph.D., associate professor of biostatistics. “Sometimes he does this on very short notice and still produces high-quality tables and beautiful graphical works of art. These creative works have, without a doubt, contributed to the SSG’s and thus UAB’s continued success in finding and securing research funding for many important scientific projects.”

Vinodh says he appreciates that he works in an environment that can provide an abundance of resources that enable him to do his job effectively and efficiently. “The SSG is an active member of high-performance resource facilities on campus, and this enables me to solve problems with computational need in a more efficient way. Being able to collaborate and interface with a wide range of subject domain experts allows me to understand and disseminate my efforts well,” he says.

David Allison, Ph.D., professor of biostatistics, says Vinodh’s efforts are crucial to the SSG enterprise.

“Without a person like Vinodh, who has both a wide range of computational skills and an ability to work well in teams of investigative scientists, much of the research upon which UAB’s reputation is founded simply would never reach fruition,” adds Allison. “We are all fortunate that Vinodh is keeping his UAB training and expertise here in Birmingham. He is one of the behind-the-scenes employees who makes UAB’s progress and reputation possible.”

Vinodh says he appreciates his co-workers who nominated him for the Employee of the Month award, and he calls learning of the honor, “My most memorable day at UAB. I love what I get to do here,” he says. “We do research in so many areas and a lot of problem solving. I feel we’re doing work that is a good service to humanity, and that’s what I like the most about the section.”

To nominate someone for Employee of the Month, send letters of nomination to Kelly Mayer at kmayor@uab.edu or visit www.uab.edu/ottom.

New LDR in Women & Infants center named for Goepfert

Friends and family launched a letter-writing campaign to generate funds to name one of the labor and delivery rooms in the new Women and Infants Center for Alice Goepfert. They combined the two during a special dinner earlier this year when Styslinger, Wade and Moody told Goepfert they were raising money for the new Women & Infants Center and that they expected to generate enough funds to name one of the labor and delivery rooms for her.

“It is one of the nicest things anyone has ever done for me to acknowledge the importance of the work I do, the people I work with and what the department of OB/GYN has done for the people of Alabama,” Goepfert says. “I was just incredibility touched and honored.”

So were Styslinger, Wade and Moody. They have relied on Goepfert through the years for guidance — medical and otherwise — and when the fundraising opportunity came about they couldn’t wait to do it.

“We’ve known each other for so long, and we know each other’s families so well, that by the time you reach our age you’ve gone through a lot together,” Styslinger says.

“We’ve seen her work hard and make sacrifices for and for her to be so successful, we just couldn’t be happier.”

By women, for women

The new Women & Infants Center is scheduled to open Feb. 21, 2010. It was decided early that part of the fundraising for the facility would be by women, for women, says Roberta Shapiro, interim director of the Women & Infants service line.

Several teams of women were created. Styslinger was part of Theresa Bruno’s team, and they quickly determined they wanted to raise the money to honor a woman. Styslinger, Bruno and Goepfert were touring the new facility one day when they learned about naming opportunities for several rooms.

“Theresa and I thought it was a good opportunity to honor Alice, but we kept the thought to ourselves until we decided on a strategy to raise the funds,” Styslinger says.

So Styslinger recruited Wade and Moody to help. They launched a letter-writing campaign targeting friends and acquaintances from Selma in addition to the push in the Birmingham area by the other team members. Their efforts yielded more than $75,000 in monetary gifts.

“We got in touch with all of our friends from high school and her friends and family, cousins, aunts and uncles,” says Wade. “It was such a personal experience. This was one of the most happy and exciting experiences I’ve been a part of because of how much I think of Alice.”

Excellent care

Goepfert says the importance of the funds raised by her friends and team goes beyond her name on labor and delivery room No. 4 in the new building.

The money will be used to aid the women and infants of Birmingham, the surrounding counties and the state.

UAB Obstetrics & Gynecology provides comprehensive services for women throughout our life and prides itself on being a premier academic medical center that strives to provide excellent patient care.

“We care for women across the spectrum — every cultural and ethnic group from any socio-economic background — and we provide excellent care to these women and their infants regardless of who they are, where they came from or what issue they have,” Goepfert says. “Now they will get what always has been the best level of care in the best facilities.”

Goepfert’s friends say they understand UAB’s importance to Alabama when it comes to caring for those in need, and that they were eager to help raise the money in Goepfert’s name.

“I wanted to give a donation to honor Alice so that she was reminded that we think so much of her work and her dedication, and I love the idea of women helping other women,” Moody says. “I think the new Women & Infants Facility is very important for advancement of women’s health in the state.”
Honorary coach’s passion for UAB shows in his work

Paul George is one of UAB’s biggest cheerleaders and a natural choice to be one of the football teams’ honorary coaches for 2009. George recently spoke with the Department of History; Dan Conley, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of History; Dan Conley, Ph.D., professor and chair of the public health in epidemiology; Waterbor George is one of UAB’s biggest cheerleaders and a natural choice to be one of the finals’ honorary coaches for 2009.

George wears many hats in the School of Engineering; he primarily is responsible for fundraising. He recruits students from area schools, and he coordinates the Blazer B.E.S.T. robotics competition, which recently hosted its second annual event in Bartow Arena in which 25 teams representing more than 30 schools competed.

“We probably had 2,000 people come through Bartow,” he says. “I showed the 40 Years of Breakthroughs video that was produced for UAB’s 40th anniversary celebration a few times. It was a great day, and we have a tremendous amount of momentum heading into our third year.”

George recently spoke with the UAB Reporter on the privilege of being selected as an honorary coach, building the perfect robot for a football team and recruiting the smallest among us to become fans of UAB.

Q. What does it mean to you to be selected as an honorary coach for your alma mater?
A. As my grandfather would have said, ’I couldn’t be happier if I was twins’! I’m really thrilled to have been chosen for this honor. I see the growth of our athletics program as a key element in engaging our student body in university activities. When I see our students at athletic events painted up in Green and Gold and screaming until their voices are gone, it makes me incredibly proud.

Q. What’s your favorite UAB sports memory?
A. That’s tough. Certainly beating Kentucky in the 2004 NCAA basketball tournament is one of them. Beating LSU in football back in 2000 is another. I’ll never forget watching Rhet Gallego hit that field goal as time ran out.

Q. If you were a football coach and you could build one robot to use at any position, what position would you choose and why?
A. I would have to say quarterback. I know that all of the players have to think fast, but I am amazed to watch the split-second decisions that a quarterback has to make. They have to process information like a robot, so that would be my choice for a prototype robotic football player. And, if we can get started on this now, we can use Joe Webb as the blueprint.

Q. Who are you recruiting right now that you expect to be a future UAB star?
A. Students coming into our Engineering programs are highly motivated achievers. Some will go into industry, some will go on to graduate school, some will go to medical or dental school, and we think all of them will be future stars. Personally, my 10-year-old daughter Alana already is a raging Blazer fan — and it certainly would make her dad happy if she one day found her college home here.

ASC Kids’ Club to perform “Yuletide in Dogtown” Dec. 5

The Alys Stephens Center ASC Kids’ Club will present “Yuletide in Dogtown,” an ASC original theatrical production, at 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 5. Tickets are $8. Call 975-2787 or go to www.AlysStephens.org.

The residents of Dogtown are back and waiting for the holiday season with tail-wagging glee. All seems to be going well until a cat is spotted in Dogtown. Can the mayor keep peace during the holiday season or will fur fly? Audience members are invited to sing the refrains to the show’s delightful songs. Enjoy holiday treats after each show, and bring a camera to have pictures made with the show’s costumed characters.
Findings about brain’s response to distress may lead to treatment for PTSD, more

UAB psychologists now are able to see in detail the ways various regions of the human brain respond when people experience an unexpected or traumatic event.

Results from a new study could lead to the creation of biological measures that could identify people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or identify PTSD sufferers who would benefit from specific treatments. UAB psychologist David Knight, Ph.D., principal investigator on the study, explains the research in a video at www.uab.edu/news. The findings will appear in the January 2010 issue of the journal NeuroImage.

Health care, research to reduce child mortality in Zambia

Jeffrey S.A. Stringer, M.D., has been awarded a five-year, $11.2 million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation African Health Initiative to design and implement a large-scale primary health-care program to reduce child mortality in the sub-Saharan African nation of Zambia.

The project will train health workers in three rural health districts in standard protocols for common conditions and assure that each health center has the resources it needs to deliver quality care. Community health workers also will be engaged to ensure that patients remain in care and return for follow-up visits. Additionally, an electronic medical record will be developed to help measure how well service delivery meets standards of care and to identify areas that need improvement.

“We will focus on the major causes of child mortality, including pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria and malnutrition, plus improved adult HIV/AIDS care and pregnancy care, but our major emphasis will be on kids,” Stringer said.

Stringer directs the UAB-affiliated Center for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia, which has collaborated on a number of health care and research programs with the government of Zambia since 2001.

Research supports renaming immune-system gene after antibody is discovered

UAB researchers have uncovered the genetic identity of a cellular receptor for the immune system’s first-response antibody, a discovery that sheds new light on infection control and immune disorders. The discovery is a crucial part of immunology that UAB investigators led by Hiromi Kubagawa, M.D., a professor in the Department of Pathology, in conjunction with Japanese researchers, are asking that the gene linked to this antibody receptor be renamed to better describe its role in early immune responses.

The proposed name is the Fc mu receptor (FCMR) gene; it describes a key region of the immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibody that binds this receptor. IgM is by far the largest antibody in the circulatory system, and it is the first antibody on the scene in response to an invading pathogen, such as a virus or bacteria. The IgM-tagged pathogens then trigger various immune responses through this receptor FCMR. The new findings are reported online in the Journal of Experimental Medicine and in the publication’s Nov. 23 print edition.

Behavioral therapy gives best short-term results for treatment of incontinence

Behavioral therapy resulted in fewer bothersome incontinence symptoms and greater patient satisfaction than a continence pessary for the treatment of stress urinary incontinence in women, according to UAB researchers who presented at the 30th annual Scientific Meeting of the American Urogynecologic Society. Long term, however, there were no differences in satisfaction or symptoms, and combining the two treatments was not better than using either alone, Holy E. Richter, Ph.D., M.D., explains in a video at www.uab.edu/news.

UAB researchers, partners pursue “greener” power generation

The UAB School of Engineering is leading research into the capture and storage of carbon, a process The Wall Street Journal recently named one of Five Technologies That Could Change Everything.

In this scenario, carbon dioxide is separated from combustion products at fossil-fuel power plants, transported through pipelines and injected into underground geological formations as a means to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

UAB researchers, working with Southern Company geologists and engineers, will help identify the rock layers that would best serve as cap rock to seal against upward migration or loss of sequestered carbon dioxide. The research is funded by a grant from the Department of Energy.

Register for radiation safety training

Occupational Health and Safety is offering a Radiation Safety Training Course for lab personnel who have never attended a formal course in radiation safety practices and/or those using radioisotopes for the first time.

The in-class portion of the course will be held from 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 1, and an examination will be given Dec. 16. Both will be held in the School of Nursing Building Room G023-24. The review the training manual is online. Call the Radiation Safety Office at 934-4751 or 934-2487 to register by Monday, Nov. 30.

IRB informed consent training offered now

The 2009-2010 IRB training and quiz on informed consent now is available for researchers who need to complete their mandatory, biennial training.

The registration process differs for UAB personnel and authorized non-UAB personnel, and instructions are posted at www.uab.edu/irb. A score of 80 percent or higher on the informed consent course quiz is required.

Direct questions about training to 934-3789 or irb@uab.edu; direct questions concerning the online course technology to Fredia Dillard at eteacher@uab.edu.

MHIRT program calls for applications

The Minority Health International Research & Training program provides students with public health/biomedical research experiences and promotes professional development at renowned international institutions under the mentorship of UAB and foreign scientists.

For information on training sites, types of research, eligibility and benefits, go to www.soph.uab.edu/mhirt. Deadline for applications is Jan. 10, 2010.

Protect your intellectual property

Many discoveries that result from funded research can be commercialized for the financial benefit of UAB and its faculty. The UAB Research Foundation can help you protect your interests before you publish your results to the public domain.

Learn more at www.uab.edu/uabrf.

Clinical trials online

A list of clinical trials under way at UAB is posted online at www.uab.edu/reporter. Select “Read Classifieds” to review.

This is not a comprehensive list of all trials conducted at UAB, but it reflects those submitted by investigators for publication.

Learn more about these topics and other UAB research at www.uab.edu/news.
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BLAZERS vs. TROY
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24 • 7PM • BARTOW ARENA

BLAZERS vs. FAMU
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28 • 7:30PM • BARTOW ARENA

BLAZERS vs. MTSU
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 • 7PM • BARTOW ARENA

BLAZERS vs. ETSU
GENE BARTOW CLASSIC
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4 • 7PM • BARTOW ARENA