

# MMG Newsletter

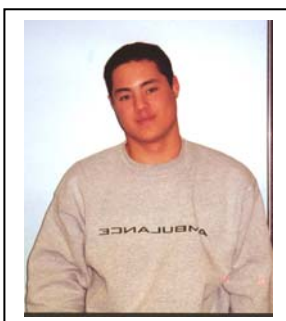
Volume 1, Number 1

Summer 1999

## Welcome New Graduate Students

Did you meet all of our new graduate students? We hosted a party to welcome everyone on Friday, August 27, at 4:00 p.m. in the Stafford Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Lobby. The new students are:

Nicloe E. Bowers  
Karen Champagne  
Qiang Chen  
Joonhee Han  
Tang Hua  
Heather Kendall  
Mathew W. Sawyer  
Mingyuan Shao  
Akamol (Eddie) Suvarnapunya  
Tongsheng Wang  
Haibo Zhang  
Wei Zhang



Phil Chan is our new graduate student in the Accelerated Master's Program.

## TA of the Year Award

Congratulations to our TA of the Year for 1999, Kirk Brown. The competition was keen this year, as was clearly shown by the dedication of our graduate students. Their commitment to the excellence of our TA program enhanced the class experience for all. Honorable mention goes to Kim Carey and Rebecca Guy. Congratulations everyone!

## Undergraduate Summer Research Students



From left to right, Front Row: Meagan Moore (Middlebury College), Audrey Murray (Hunter College), Julie Kendrew (Dartmouth College), Cindy St. Hilaire (UVM).  
Back Row: Nicole Donovan (Middlebury College), Emily Coonrad (SUNY Plattsburgh), Phil Chan (UVM), Meghan McInerney (UVM).

### Honored Teachers



Gerry Silverstein, Paula Fives-Taylor, Brenda Tessmann

Congratulations to our Department's honored teachers. **Gerry Silverstein**, 1993 recipient of the Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Award, and College of Medicine Basic Science Teacher of the Year 1995-96, 1991-92, and 1988-89.

**Paula Fives-Taylor**, UVM Alumni Association's George V. Kidder Outstanding Faculty Award 1999, College of Medicine Basic Science Teacher of the Year 1985, elected to Alpha Omega Alpha, Medical Honor Society by Medical Students in Honor of Teaching Expertise, 1988, and National Science Teacher's Association Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award, 1968.

**Brenda Tessmann**, 1999 Nominee for the Kroepsch-Maurice Excellence in Teaching Award.

Here are a few pictures from the celebration for them held June 2 in our backyard.



## Undergraduate News

Congratulations to our Department majors who made the Dean's List for Spring Semester 1999. The are:

Erika Albinson, Class of '00  
Meredith Gillis Dixon, Class of '00  
Michael Logan Florucci, Class of '02  
Devin Marie Goss, Class of '00  
Christopher Campbell Lenox, Class of '00  
Matthew MacDonald Seavey, Class of '01  
Sanjiv Vijay Shah, Class of '01  
Michelle Tamara Shepard, Class of '02

Way to go, and keep up the good work!

We have several new First Year students majoring in Microbiology or Molecular Genetics. Two are Vermont Scholars from Colchester High School; Sara Cabral, majoring in Microbiology, and Cris Folley, Jr., majoring in Molecular Genetics. Watch for these two as they are likely to be outstanding students and seek out undergraduate research opportunities. (courtesy of Warren Schaeffer)

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### More Award Winners!

Congratulations to **Sean Michael Garvey** and **Zheng-Zheng Wei**, co-winners of The Lucille P. Markey Outstanding Senior in Molecular Genetics Award for 1999, and **Aleksandra Colic**, winner of The Warren R. Stinebring Outstanding Senior in Microbiology Award for 1999.



## John M. Burke to Serve as Interim Dean of Graduate College

Release Date: 07-26-1999  
*by University Communications Staff*

Dr. John M. Burke, Vice Provost for Research, will begin serving as interim Dean of the Graduate College, effective Aug. 1, Provost Dr. Geoffrey Gamble has announced. He replaces Dr. Andrew Bodman in the Graduate College. Bodman, who also had served as Senior Vice Provost, has left UVM to become Provost and Vice-President for academic affairs at Western Washington University.

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## UVM Animal Science Professor Named Dean of CALS

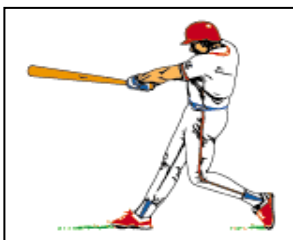
by Lee Griffin  
Release Date: 08-13-1999

University of Vermont Provost Geoffrey Gamble has announced the appointment of a new dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS). Andrew John Bramley, currently the chair of UVM's Department of Animal Sciences, will take over the college's leadership effective Aug. 15. Bramley, who uses his middle name, also will become the director of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

## Biohazards Have Great Season!

by Mike Wichroski

This is the second year we've had a team and we had a big turnout. Faculty persons on the team were Gary Ward and Doug Johnson. Post-docs were Michelle Shields, Robert Pinard, and Ken Hampel. Grad students included me (the manager and coach), Jon Cherry, Kirk Brown, Karl Skowronek, Jon Rose, Tim Trott, Carolyn Donahue, Kim Carey, Stacey Gilk, Tammy Richman, and Cindi Villarimo. Also included we're staffers Mike Mitton and Mike Fay and Eric Myette.



Overall we had a good season. We finished in first place with a record of 9-4-1.

Unfortunately, we went into the playoffs a little overconfident and got beaten in the first round. This seems to be a "curse" with MMG intramural sports. However, we hope to finally win next year.

We've got most of our players coming back including Ken Hampel, who was our all-star pitcher, Mike Fay, our intimidating first baseman and faculty representatives Gary Ward and Doug Johnson. Of course, Doug spent most of the season on injured reserve.

Overall, the softball season is a good time as it provides graduate students

with something to look forward to during the day (not that our work suffers at all ☺). At the end of the season we have a party and awards ceremony. The awards are not serious. Our biggest rivals include the Biochemistry Department, which has failed to beat us the past two years (although the games have been very close). Those games tend to get a little rowdy as there is some bad blood between the teams (not something you'd expect for softball, but it happens).

That's pretty much the lowdown on our team. We will be playing again next year. I'm assuming it will probably continue until I leave unless someone else takes it over. I'm hoping it will continue to be an annual thing.

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### Assorted Lab News

Jeff Bond writes that **Doug Robinson** will enter the Ph.D. program in Biomathematics at N.C. State in September. Doug received an M.S. in Mathematics and wrote a thesis entitled, "Analyzing Protein Evolution Using Amino Acid Transition Matrices," which Jeff supervised.

#### News from the Burke Lab:

By now, most everyone knows that **Robert Pinard** and **Danielle Vitiello** are engaged to be married. Robert requested Danielle's "hand" while they

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were away in beautiful Greece in June. Danielle left the Burke Lab in May and is now back to clinical rotations and will be a "doctor doctor" in May of 2001.

**Attila Seyhan** has left the Burke lab, and has a new job in private industry. He has settled in the Santa Cruz area of California and is working at a company called Somagenics. Life has been hectic for him since arriving (surprise!) He is nine miles from the beach and just a few miles from Grand Basin National Park. Attila hopes to hear from you, and can be reached at:

Attila A. Seyhan, Ph.D.  
Research Scientist  
Somagenics, Inc.  
MMRI, 325 East Middlefield Road  
Mountain View, CA 94043

Work phone: (650) 237-0280  
Fax: (650) 965-0104  
e-mail: [aseyhan@somagenics.com](mailto:aseyhan@somagenics.com)

**Nils Walter** has left the lab as of Friday August 13 to work at The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Nils will be an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Ann Arbor. Christine will be joining him in a couple of months. Nils can be reached at:

University of Michigan  
Department of Chemistry  
930 N. University  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1055  
Phone: (734) 615-2060  
e-mail: [nwalter@umich.edu](mailto:nwalter@umich.edu)

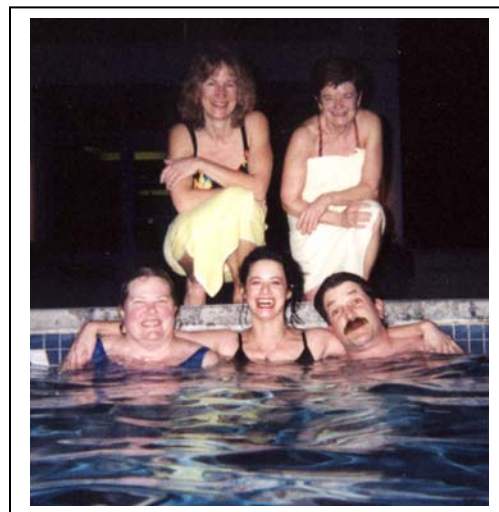
Home address: 2030 Yeoman Court  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
Phone: (734) 996-4288

**Erika Albinson** is back in the lab after a year studying in Sydney, Australia. She is currently working under Ken Hampel attempting to reactivate the Group I Intron Project. She has one more semester left at UVM and then Erika will finally graduate with a B.S. in December 1999. Her future plans are to travel Europe.

**Phil Chan** has been doing undergraduate research under Nils Walter's supervision and was awarded a 1999 HELIX Undergraduate Research Summer Internship award.

#### News from the Fives-Taylor lab:

The whole Fives-Taylor lab traveled to Vancouver to attend the International Association of Dental Research Meetings this March. They



made a real splash at the meeting,

where eight outstanding presentations were given. Check out the hot tubs!

**Hui Wu**, Ph.D. (received in May 1999) was very fortunate to be hired immediately as a Research Associate by Dr. Burton Sobel, Chair of the Department of Medicine. Hui will work with the Infectious Disease Unit at the Fletcher Allen, interact with the Clinical Faculty, spearhead their research endeavors, and provide some research experience for the I.D. Fellows. Celebrating the completion of his degree, Hui traveled to China to visit his parents whom he had not seen in five years. They were very proud of him! Upon returning from his trip, he married Yabing Chen, a Ph.D. in the Cardiology Unit working under the direction of Dr. David Schneider. Hui and Yabing celebrated their wedding with both Eastern and Western style ceremonies here in Burlington. A great time was had by all.

School starts the end of September for **Catherine Bressette**, who graduated with her Master's Degree from MMG in 1998. She was awarded two fellowships to complete her Ph.D. at the University of Washington. One was for being the top entering student in pathobiology, the other was for academic excellence. She will be studying pathogenesis of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and *treponemes*. Two of her papers have just come out.

And now for some real nostalgia....

Dr. **Chris Fenno** who got his Ph.D. in the Fives-Taylor lab in 1993 is now an Assistant Professor in Biology at the University of Michigan. Even better news - he heard that he was in a good position for funding on his first R01 from NIH.

**Prem Sreenivasan** got his Ph.D. in the Fives-Taylor lab in 1993. He is a senior staff scientist at Colgate-Palmolive in Piscataway, New Jersey, working on oral bacteria. He utilizes the technologies he acquired in Paula's lab. He and his wife Revathi have just had a baby boy named Vivek.

**Eric Holden** got his Master's degree in the Fives-Taylor lab in 1990. He worked in biotech industries for several years in California. After being promoted to management, his work focused on starting up small biotech companies in the Silicon Valley. This led him to pursue his Master's Degree in Business Administration. He received the Flavin Fellowship Award and has been admitted to the University of Massachusetts MBA program.

Paula has recently heard from her 1987 Master's graduate, **Sandra Peene McCurdy**, who had this to say, "I am very happy at Pfizer in my new group. The last couple of weeks I have been screening hybridoma supernatants. It is bringing back old memories of working in your lab. I really enjoyed those times in your lab."

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**Suzanne Fachon-Kalweit** got her Ph.D. in the Fives-Taylor lab in 1985. She married Bill Kalweit who graduated from UVM Medical School and is now a cardiologist in Springfield, Ohio. After years of heartbreak and desperate trying, they finally had a "miracle" baby, a son named Christopher.

**Dr. Laurie Elder**, who got a Ph.D. in the Fives-Taylor lab, is the head of the Clinical Laboratory at Wright State University in Dayton and teaches the medical students there. She was just awarded the Basic Science Teacher of the Year Award from the medical students.

News from the Pederson Lab:

**Junjie Chen**, a past graduate student from David Pederson's lab is an Assistant Professor at the Mayo Clinic in the Department of Radiation Oncology.

This July, **Marilyn van Duffelen** participated in the Twin Cities/Wisconsin/Chicago AIDS Ride, bicycling over 500 miles, from Minneapolis to Chicago, to raise funds for the treatment and prevention of AIDS. She joined 1800 riders and 500 volunteers on a cross-country trek during our recent drought. Temperatures reached over 100°F, high enough to denature the insulin in her pump. However, she came through every mile safely. With your help, the



Ride raised 5.8 million dollars this year. Thanks to all who supported this effort.

News from the Gilmartin Lab:

**Brent Graveley** (MMG Ph.D., 1996) has accepted a position as Assistant Professor, University of Connecticut Health Science Center, Department of Genetics and Developmental Biology. Brent and his wife Elizabeth (former Gilmartin lab tech) have a new daughter, Jordana Merlot Fleming Graveley, born on Sunday, June 13, 1999, at 4:44 a.m. Everyone is doing well.

**Sean Flaherty** (MMG Ph.D. 1997) has just started his residency in OB/GYN at Yale.

MMG grad student **Jon Cherry** will be married on September 26, 1999.

MMG grad student **Krishnan Venkataraman** married Sandhya Khurana in India on July 5.

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MMG grad student **Kirk Brown** recently uncovered the identity of the breed of his dog. We want to see a picture!

MMG major, **Megan McInerney**, currently working in the Gilmartin lab, will be leaving in the Fall to join the peace Corps.

Former technician in the Gilmartin lab, **Sunil Upender**, will be starting Medical School at UVM in the Fall.

More lab news:

**Janet Murray**, a graduate student in Doug Johnson's lab, had a beautiful baby girl, Jenna Cathleen Murray, on August 9, 1999.

Guangping Shen's daughter, **Zhengzheng Wei**, who graduated from MMG, UVM, this May, was married to **Jianhong Hu**, a graduate student in Dr. Mary Tierney's lab, on June 12.



Congratulations to all!

Welcome to **Heather Galick**, Lab Tech III in Susan Wallace's lab.

**Zhenxi Zhang** has volunteered to meet with incoming foreign graduate students to help them adjust to teaching English-speaking students. This should be a major benefit for the Department, and we owe him our thanks for his consideration.

**Tom and Joan Moehring**, MMG retirees now living in Florida, sent us an interesting news article concerning the alligators residing in their area. Stop by the main office and read up on alligator attacks and trappings. The article will be posted on the Tom and Joan Moehring Bulletin Board.

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### **Art and Science Partnership**

Check out the cover of *The EMBO Journal*, Volume 18, number 8, April 15, 1999. The beautiful colors depicted on this cover, reminiscent of an October day in Vermont, are a photograph of 'Rustic Meander I,' a quilt 34" x 44", designed and created by our own Janet Kurjan. Watch for another example of Janet's work on another *EMBO Journal* cover in August.

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### **Welcome To New Faculty**

By Warren Schaeffer

This is to introduce to you, one of our newest faculty members, Dr. Thomas Lewis. Tom received his Ph.D. in 1986 at Oregon State University where he majored in Microbiology. His research there was involved with the physiology

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and genetics of sterol assimilation and metabolism in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. During his postdoctoral tenure at New Mexico State University in the Department of Biology, he conducted research on the molecular biology and physiology of water stress tolerance and amino acid accumulation in *Rhizobium meliloti* in an effort to improve the understanding of limitation imposed on alfalfa nitrogen fixation by arid climates. He comes to UVM after leaving his most recent position as Project Leader at University of Idaho, Institute for Molecular and Agricultural Genetic Engineering in the laboratory of Dr. Ronald Crawford. He describes his work as having been focused on two projects: the physiology and chemistry of the bacterial transformation of carbon tetrachloride and TNT. The aim has been to identify the activities which lead to detoxification of the each pollutant and to examine the limitations of these processes in remediation technology development.

His plans here include active research interaction and collaboration with colleagues in the School of Natural Resources and other relevant individuals throughout UVM. As for his teaching interests, his interests lie in eventually developing courses in environmental microbiology, microbial physiology, and a specialty course in the area of microbial degradation of xenobiotic chemicals.

Tom brings a wealth of experience in the area of environmental microbiology and we look forward to interacting with him.

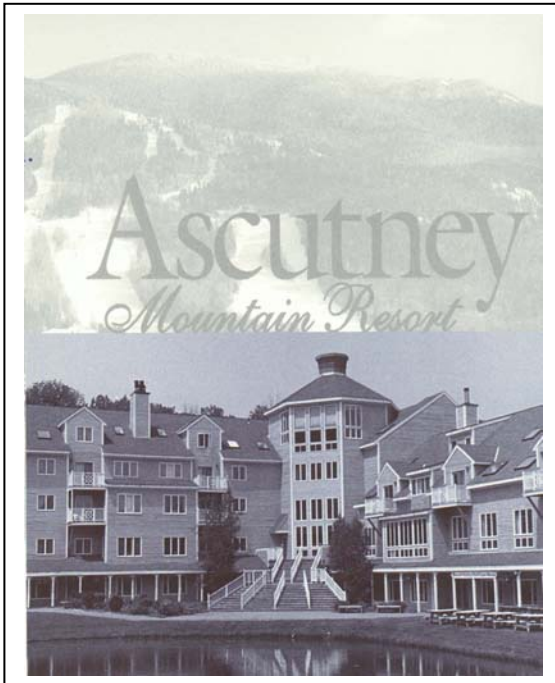
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### Retreat Update

The Second Annual MMG Departmental Retreat will be held on October 15 & 16, at the Ascutney Mountain Resort. The detailed schedule is not yet finalized, but here's a sneak preview:

The Retreat Planning Committee is very pleased to announce that our guest speaker this year will be Dr. Scott Hultgren, from Washington University. Dr. Hultgren's research on the mechanisms of bacterial pilus assembly spans biochemistry, molecular genetics and structural biology (check out the back-to-back articles on which he is an author and the accompanying "Perspectives" in the 13 August issue of Science). Dr. Hultgren has a great story to tell, and it will be of interest to all in the department. Dr. Hultgren's official hosts for the retreat will be a committee of students, headed by Jon Cherry. The scientific end of the meeting will also include oral presentations and posters by members of the department. This year the oral presentations will focus on new and exciting work out of each of the labs (rather than chalk-talk-type overviews) and they will be given primarily by graduate students & postdocs.

The poster sessions were a highlight of the last retreat, and everyone attending this year's retreat is again encouraged to present a poster. Presenting a poster is a great way for the people you see every day in Stafford to find out what you're doing and for you to get useful feedback on your work, no matter what stage your work is at. **PLEASE GET YOUR ABSTRACTS IN TO DOUG JOHNSON BY AUG. 31.**



On the nonscientific side, we hope to schedule in a 3-hour block of free time on Friday afternoon for hiking, golf, tennis, leaf-peeping, swimming, etc. And for those of you who felt that the music at the last retreat left a little to be desired, have no fear: this year Scotty Jameson ("the UPS guy") has agreed to DJ for us! We haven't seen much of Scotty lately, as UPS moved him to a route in

Jericho, but he still remembers most in the Department by name, and he's enthusiastic about providing some dance music for us Friday evening. We've asked him NOT to bring any karaoke equipment, as that could be dangerous with Doug Johnson in attendance.

Check your e-mail and mailboxes for more details on the retreat as they develop - see you in Ascutney!

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### **Coming Attractions...**

In our next issue we will feature Markus Thali, our newest faculty member coming on board as a result of the Virology Search.

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### **THANKS!**

Special thanks to Warren Schaeffer, both for news, taking pictures and scanning both his own and others' and putting them on disk for use in this newsletter. Also, special thanks to everyone who contributed a news item or two, or wrote an article. This help was invaluable in putting the newsletter together. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

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### **Your Help Is Needed!**

Please help name the newsletter. Bring your suggestions to Debbie in the main office. If there are several great names submitted, we may have a vote. Final decision, however, rests with the editor.

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