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DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY AND MOLECULAR GENETICS

<http://www.uvm.edu/microbiology>

MMG NEWS

SUMMER 2004

MMG Retreat Update

By Markus Thali (for the Retreat Committee)

Something new and different is coming! You may have wondered why you haven't received any information about this year's retreat yet?! (Well, may be you haven't...) - Here is why: There will be no retreat this fall.

What is the reason for this? Based partially on the feedback from many of you, the Retreat Committee decided that it was time for a change. Consequently we have discussed various possibilities and we will soon seek Susan's approval for the following plan: A one day only, single topic retreat in late spring 2005 - (With at least some supergroups now in place we felt that the retreat no longer needs to be a forum where the groups present their current research) - You should get more specific information within the next few weeks, for now please mark the tentative date (May 17 or 18, 2005) in your calendars -

Anya Gushchin - the Warren R. Stinebring Outstanding Senior in Microbiology Award - Anya plans to continue to volunteer for the Himalayan Cataract Project as well as doing medical interpreting for the Spanish and Russian communities. Her plans are to go to Asia at the end of the year to help with the cataract camps, and at the same time apply to MD/PhD programs. Her long term goals are to complete a residency program in ophthalmology and to be engaged in academic research.

Welcome Our New First Year Students

Chelsey Adams
Meredith Benson
Erin Burk
Amanda Goodman
Paige Hoisington
William Pinard
Jonathan Pinette
Kirsten Spear
Jonathan Stimson

MMG Undergraduate News

Awards

This year's recipients of the Outstanding Senior Awards were: **Carolyn McGuinness** - the Lucille P. Markey Outstanding Senior in Molecular Genetics Award - Carolyn plans to take a year off before applying to graduate school and next year she will be working as a Research Technician and Laboratory Manager in Albany at the Wadsworth Center.

Publications by Our Students

Jessica Schwartz is an author on the manuscript "Myocarditis susceptibility in female mice depends upon ovarian cycle phase at infection," which will be published in the *Journal of Virology* in the next 4-6 months.



2004 CALS College Honors Recipients from MMG

Carolyn McGuinness: *Promoter Methylation is the Underlying Mechanism for Silencing of Dipeptidyl Peptidase IV (DPPIV), a Tumor Suppressor Gene in Melanomas*



Valarie Cook:
Identification of Genes responsible to Delta Signaling

More Undergrad News

What are our 2004 undergrads doing? **Danielle Bordeau** is busy traveling the greater US. **Valarie Cook** is a field agent in the West Nile Program at the VT Dept of Health. **Anya Gushchin** is working at Fletcher Allen hospital this summer. **Elizabeth Koch** is applying to medical school. Currently she is working at Fletcher Allen as a Medical Assistant. **Carolyn McGuinness** is a research technician at Wadsworth Center in NY. **Matthew LeComte** is a research technician in Dr. Cedric Wesley's lab.

Michelle Shepard ('02) entered this fall into MD/PhD program at UVM.

Chad Taylor ('02) completed a certificate in bioinformatics at Northeastern University and plans on going to Boston University next fall for a masters in bioinformatics.

Jill Husson ('03) has started her journey to becoming a doctor at New York Medical College.

John McKinnon (List) ('03) has begun his masters of education at UVM.

Eleanor Rees ('03) has started at Brandeis University studying for a degree in genetic counseling.

Faculty Awards

Doug Johnson is this year's recipient of the CALS Carrigan Award for outstanding teaching.

Paula Fives-Taylor has been elected to the American Academy of Microbiology.

Warren Schaeffer received the Society for In Vitro Biology Fellow Award which was presented at the 2004 World Congress on In Vitro Biology in San Francisco in May.

MMG Graduate Student News

Welcome New Graduate Students

On August 26 we welcomed our new graduate students. They are:

Jayanthi Garudathri
Benjamin Stark
(Ann) Belinda Thompson
Qin Yang

Graduations!

Since our last newsletter, MMG has seen quite a few graduate students successfully defend their thesis and finish their graduate studies. Congratulations and good luck in your future endeavors to all.

Ph.D. Students

Zhenxi Zhang, from the Burke lab, defended last September and is now a Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Pennsylvania; **Kirk Brown**, from the Gilmartin lab, defended last December and is now a Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Massachusetts-Worcester; **Jon Cherry**, also from the Gilmartin lab, defended in January and is now a Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Massachusetts-Worcester; **Cyndi Villarimo**, from the Burke lab, defended in March and is now a Postdoctoral Associate University of California, San Francisco; **Qiang Chen**, from the Fives-Taylor lab, also

defended in March and is now a Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Vermont and member of the Fives-Taylor lab; **Kim Carey** defended in April and is now a Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University, and **Stacey Gilk** defended in May and is now a Postdoctoral Fellow University of North Carolina, both from the Ward lab; and **Alysia vandenBerg**, from the Johnson lab, defended in June and is now a Postdoctoral Associate Mt. Sinai Hospital, and **Dan Zurawski**, now in Bethesda at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and **Eddie Suvarnapunya**, now a Postdoctoral Associate at Rockefeller University, both of the Stein lab, defended in August.

M.S. Students

Stephanie Phelps from the Heintz lab and **Philip Chan** from the Burke lab, both defended in January.

News from the Basement

Stephanie and **Brenda** are LOSERS! - with respects to weight loss that is. We've been busy this past year trying new recipes that fit into our healthier lifestyles - if you are interested in exchanging some great recipes, stop by B009

What is Stephanie doing with all her free time now that her degree is finished? Besides just trying to keep up with my kids, I've taken up archery! I'll be getting my shiny new compound bow soon - so don't get on my bad side, especially if you are standing within 18 meters!

News from the Pederson Lab

Laetitia and **Boris Bardot's** baby girl **Maroussia**, was born July 9th, and is already just as charming as her mother.

News from the Raper/Fowler Lab

The lab has been busy this past year with undergraduate and post-bac students joining the fun. **Chris Baker** anchored the team with the skills he developed last summer during his HELIX internship. Various cloning projects were accomplished by post-bacs **Jeff Kaye**, **Giuliana Robertson**, and **Bryan Farley**. MMG undergraduate **Joe Pare** joined the lab in January and worked full time this summer, thanks to an NSF "research experience for undergraduates" supplement to Tom's grant. Joe successfully mutagenized one of the *S. commune* pheromone genes and tested the effects of the changes on the pheromone's function. The academic year culminated with Chris's graduation and a party at Tom's place. In addition to this year's gang and their partners, we were joined by former lab members **John McKinnon** and **Elle Rees** and their respective significant others. There were no lasting injuries sustained in the competitive croquet game. No winner was determined because the mosquitoes invaded and darkness fell. A spirited game of Pictionary followed dinner. Again, no lasting injuries were sustained.

We heard recently from one of our favorite people, former MMG grad **Marie Guyette**. She finished her M.S. in Genetic Counseling at Howard University and accepted a position at Genzyme, where she has been since last fall. Looking ahead, Joe and Giuliana will be back in the fall, Chris is starting grad school at Dartmouth College (Molecular and Cellular Biology), Elle is starting grad school at Brandeis University (Genetic counseling), Jeff, Giuliana and Bryan are working on applications to med or vet schools, John deferred grad school at UVM (Education) for a year to put a few \$\$ in the bank, and Cardy is enjoying retirement, writing her book and generally living well. Tom is a very lucky guy to be around all these great people and proved in the Pictionary game that the only way he'll get in the Louvre is with a ticket.

News from the Wallace Lab

Bob Melamede is alive and well and chairing the Biology Department at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Bob and **Amiee Stephenson** (former graduate student in the Fives-Taylor lab) are the proud parents of baby Luke.

Eleanor Jolie Courcelle was born May 4, 2004,



weighing 6lbs. 15oz. Her proud papa is **Justin Courcelle**, a faculty member at Mississippi State, who was an undergraduate research student in the Wallace Lab in the early 90s.

The lab had three undergraduate students in the lab this summer, **Alicia Holmes** and **Greg Krantz** are MMG majors, and Eleanore Werner, an HHMI supported student from Dickenson College.

The Wallace lab members are happy campers, having worked hard for newly funded (finally!) NCI Program Project and R01 renewal.

Susan Wallace is co-chairing the big DNA Repair meeting to be held in Bermuda in November...students and postdocs are following her there.

News from the Matrajt Lab

"The Lab is finally running!" said Mariana. She is very happy and excited.

Mariana started in January as a new Assistant Professor. The research in her lab focuses on the human pathogen *Toxoplasma gondii*.

Dr. Matrajt received her Ph.D. from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where her dissertation research was awarded first prize by the Argentinean National Academy of Medicine for the best work in infectious disease diagnostics. Her postdoctoral training was carried out in the laboratory of Dr. David Roos at the University of Pennsylvania.

T. gondii stage interconversion process is central to its survival and pathogenicity, yet it remains poorly understood at the genetic and molecular level. The long-term objective of her research is to elucidate the genetic basis and mechanisms underlying interconversion between these two developmental stages: tachyzoites and bradyzoites.

In addition to being a researcher in Parasitology and Molecular Genetics, Mariana is also a good tennis player. So, if you feel like visiting a 'brand' new lab or playing tennis, just stop by Mariana's lab in 306 Stafford.

News from the Thali Lab

Lynnie Rudner has left the lab and is working in one of the Fletcher Allen clinics in preparation for her goal of going to medical school. We would like to welcome graduate student **Jia Weng** who has recently joined our lab.

News from the Mintz Lab

The Mintz laboratory has moved from Rm 110 to Rm 118 Stafford Hall. The natural light has improved the demeanor of all the occupants and the plants are thriving.

Chris Lenox has expanded his family with the addition of his daughter, **GAIA MADISON LENOX**, 7lbs. 9.5oz., born 7/27/04 at 3:46 EST.

Keith Mintz has added to his pack by the addition of two new German



Ozzie at 8 weeks.

Shorthair Pointers: Mesa (born on Feb. 14, 2004 and Ozzie (born on May 26, 2004). That makes three.

The lab has landed a grant co-funded by NCRR and NIDCR under the IDeA program.

News from the Ward Lab

The Ward lab has undergone major changes this summer, with the graduation and departure of lab members **Kim Carey** (now a postdoc in Craig Roy's lab at Yale) and **Stacey Gilk** (now a postdoc in Con Becker's lab at UNC), and the arrival of postdoc **Jeralyn Haraldsen**. Jeralyn was a grad student in the lab of Linc Sonenshein at Tufts, where she worked on mechanisms of sporulation in *Clostridium difficile*. She seems to be handling the transition to an organism with a nucleus well.

Jeff Mital was married on July 31 to his longtime partner, Diane Schook. Congratulations Jeff and Diane! Rumor has it that **Michael Wichroski** and **Kirk Brown** made cameo appearances at the wedding. Fortunately, no karaoke machine was available. **Aoife Heaslip**, who was a serious gymnast in an earlier life, has been enjoying the Olympics and cursing NBC along with the rest of us. Gary's rotator cuff is slowly recovering. Will Ward and **Heintz** resurrect the Geezers in 2005?

News from the Johnson Lab

There have been a lot of change in the Johnson Lab over the last few months. **Emily Alexander**, **Alysia vandenBerg**, and **Kurt Toenjes** have moved on. Emily has moved back south where she assures us they did have a summer (air conditioning was required). She has a new postdoctoral fellowship at Duke University working on antibiotic resistance. Alysia finished her thesis (Congratulations Alysia on the Eukaryotic Cell paper!) and did a tour of "middle-earth" (the trip actually encompassed many of the countries bordering the Mediterranean sea) in London, Southern Spain, Morocco, Madrid, Barcelona and Lloret, the French and Italian Rivera regions and Paris. She is now apartment hunting in New York City before she starts her postdoctoral work. She says that after navigating subway systems in four separate countries, the NYC subway is a piece of pie. Kurt has finished up his work on yeast in the Johnson lab (Congratulations Kurt on the papers in the *Current Genetics* and *Antimicrobial Agents* journals!). He has joined Paula and Keith on the first floor to work with them on the *Actinobacillus actinomycetemcomitan*. You can find him in room 117. **Karen Cole** has rejoined the lab as a graduate student and is beginning her thesis work. She also got engaged recently to Ed (Congratulations Karen). Doug has been quite busy with all the changes going on in the lab, managing Ian's Little League Team and teaching. He is also a departmental faculty award winner with the Carrigan Award for Excellence in Teaching and Undergraduate Education.

News from the Burke Lab

John Burke's lab has seen several departures and some new arrivals (babies and otherwise) in the past few months. **Zhenxi Zhang** received his PhD and is involved in research at the University of Pennsylvania in the lab of Gideon Dreyfuss. **Michele Shields** recently

moved back to Pennsylvania where her family resides. One of our graduate students, **Micci Essam-Agbesi**, was accepted into the University of Massachusetts graduate nursing program where she will focus her talents on the care of patients and the education of future nursing students. We are happy that **Snigdha Roy** decided to join the lab after she completed several rotations in MMG. In addition, we very recently welcomed **Andreas Koenig**, from the University of Witten / Herdecke, in Germany. He is now working as a postdoctoral associate in the lab and his primary research will focus on cellular microbiology. In October, we will additionally welcome **Iwona Buskiewicz**, who will join research efforts in the lab as a biochemist. Iwona studied in Poland and completed her Ph.D. studies in Germany.

sometime this spring. All in all, the lab has seen a lot of changes and we look forward to more in the future.



Robert, Danielle and Sam

Cyndi Villarimo gave birth to a little boy, Kai,



successfully wrote and defended her PhD thesis as well, and then moved to California where she has begun working in the lab of Jay Levy at the University of California, San Francisco.



Sam, more recently.

The lab's M.D.-Ph.D. graduate student, **Julie Hathaway**, is due to deliver a baby girl on September 15. We anticipate that joy with much happiness for Julie and her husband, Jarlath.

Speaking of babies, **Robert Pinard** and **Danielle Vitiello**, who left the lab a couple of years ago, are the proud parents of a beautiful baby boy named Sam, born