

Science Day training awards honor mentor and fellow of the year

By Monica Frazier

As part of the 11th annual NIEHS Science Day Nov. 7-8, awards were presented for Mentor of the Year and Fellow of the Year, in recognition of the importance of quality training at NIEHS. The recipients are chosen by the NIEHS Trainees Assembly (NTA), from nominations received from staff throughout the Institute.

Mentor of the Year

Dale Sandler, Ph.D., principal investigator and chief of the Epidemiology Branch, was selected as Mentor of the Year. Hazel Nichols, Ph.D., Sandler's nominator and research fellow, presented the award. Nichols explained that, although she joined Sandler's lab for the science, her interactions with Sandler have given her an exceptional mentoring experience. "Dale is the most complete role model I've encountered," she said.

Nichols read excerpts from some of the additional letters of support for Sandler's nomination, and it was clear that, among other attributes of a good mentor, Sandler is excellent at guiding her scientists and staff, without hindering their individual development. She has provided networking and career development opportunities, supported career transitions even if they occurred unexpectedly, and provided exceptional scientific and personal support.

Fellow of the Year

Steven Roberts, Ph.D., an Intramural Research Training Award fellow in the Chromosome Stability Group (CSG), was named the second annual Fellow of the Year. The award recognizes extraordinary qualities in trainees that will prepare them for a well-rounded research career, such as passion for and dedication to research, demonstration of leadership excellence and service, congeniality, science communication aptitude, and mentoring ability. In addition to the recognition, Roberts received a \$1,000 travel grant to use for attending the scientific meeting of his choice.

Roberts was nominated by Dmitry Gordenin, Ph.D., senior associate scientist in CSG, who presented the award, saying Roberts was one of the best postdocs he had ever mentored in his scientific career. In his nomination, Gordenin wrote, "Roberts has a rare combination of creativity, talent, and insight, combined with great work capability, work ethic, and scrupulousness" - qualities all fellows should aspire to have.

(Monica Frazier, Ph.D., is an Intramural Research Training Award fellow in the NIEHS Mechanisms of Mutation Group.)



NIEHS 2013 Mentor of the Year Sandler, right, joined Nichols, a research fellow in Sandler's group who nominated her for the award. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



NIEHS 2013 Fellow of the Year Roberts, right, accepted his award from his nominator, mentor, and frequent co-author Gordenin. Gordenin's description of Roberts as a scientist and a person was a persuasive argument that he most certainly deserved the recognition. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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