

Trainees celebrate NIEHS Postdoc Appreciation Week

By Jordan St. Charles

NIEHS trainees celebrated National Postdoc Appreciation week Sept. 15-19, with a host of events organized by the Office of Fellows Career Development Director Tammy Collins, Ph.D., and the NIEHS Trainees Assembly. Events, which included workshops, appreciation, and fun, kicked off Monday with “Scientists Teaching Science,” a 2-hour workshop run by Barbara Houtz, a consultant for the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Intramural Training and Education, and culminated with an afternoon of trivia and ice cream on Friday.

Celebration and support

Events celebrated trainees in different ways. Collins held an orientation for new fellows on Monday, and on Tuesday, the Environmental Factor team held an appreciation event for the trainee writers who contribute to the publication.

On Wednesday, Denise Saunders, Ph.D., a consultant for the NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education, led a workshop on “Cultivating Optimism: Maintaining Resilience in the Job Search.”

“The seminar was a great discussion on how to identify ways to help you stay positive during what is often the long, exhausting process of searching for the next position after your postdoc,” said Monica Frazier, Ph.D. “Denise’s suggestions will be very beneficial when I begin the process.”

Science writing career opportunities highlighted

On Thursday, Deepa Singh, Ph.D., of the Mechanisms of Mutation Group, hosted the first in the 2014-2015 Brown Bag Lunch series. Jacqueline Powell, Ph.D., and Jillian Orans, Ph.D., met with a group of trainees to discuss “Life in the Science Writing/Editing Industry.” Powell is a former NIEHS Intramural Research and Training Award fellow in neurobiology. She is currently working at Education and Training Systems International (ETSI) and will soon be at Impact Pharmaceutical Services. Orans is a former postdoc from Duke University, currently working at Camargo Pharmaceutical Services.

Both Powell and Orans described the medical writing profession as family friendly. They observed that a large part of medical writing also encompasses regulatory writing. Orans said that she was able to gain regulatory experience through an internship at Camargo Pharmaceutical Services. Powell reported believing that the experience that she gained at ETSI was instrumental in getting a position at the more regulatory oriented Impact Pharmaceutical Services.

An afternoon of trivia and ice cream

The celebration on Friday started with the current trainees posing for a group photo. Afterwards, NIEHS and National Toxicology Program Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., opened the trivia session with a few comments about how integral postdocs are to research at NIEHS.

Tammy Collins led the trivia, which included questions on turophilia, or the love of cheese, Speak Like a Pirate Day, and the Ebola virus genome. In the end, the Matrix Reloaded team had the most trivial knowledge and won the game.

Prizes were also given for team names, including the Most Scientific Name — Behavioral Phenotypes; the Most Humorous Name — p53 Shades of Grey; and the Most Environmental Name — The Toxic Avengers.

(Jordan St. Charles, Ph.D., is an Intramural Research and Training Award fellow in the DNA Replication Fidelity Group at NIEHS.)



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NIEHS Trainees Assembly members Maile Henson, Ph.D., and Katie O'Brien, Ph.D., served ice cream, generously donated by the NIEHS lead researchers. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Trainees, from left, Natalie Saini, Ph.D., Thuy-Ai Nguyen, Ph.D., and Maria Shatz, Ph.D., joked together during the trivia challenge. Their team, The p53 Shades of Grey, won the Most Humorous Team Name award. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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Collins led the trivia event. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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The "Matrix Reloaded" team, composed of, from left, Stravros Garantziotis, M.D., Jaime Cyphert, Ph.D., Vandy Stober, Collin Johnson, and Carol Trempus, won the trivia event. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Birnbaum opened the celebration, emphasizing how important trainees are to research at NIEHS. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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The Behavioral Phenotypes team, from left, Serena Dudek, Ph.D., Shannon Farris, Ph.D., Kelly Carstens, Danny Lustberg, Maile Henson, Ph.D., and, not shown, Chad Osterlund, Ph.D. and Palmyra Romeo, took home not only their good attitudes, but also both The Most Scientific Name and Last Place awards. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



The trainees gathered with Birnbaum before playing the trivia game on a beautiful, late summer day. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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