

NIEHS celebrates commitment to excellence

By Kelly Lenox

NIEHS celebrated 2014 staff achievements at a Dec. 12 awards ceremony focused on the theme “Commitment to Excellence.” NIEHS and National Toxicology Program (NTP) Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., opened with a perspective from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — “All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

“I think that’s what we do here at NIEHS,” said Birnbaum. “No matter what challenges come our way, we continue our work to uplift humanity, and we do it with a steadfast commitment to excellence.”

Gary Bird, Ph.D., staff scientist in the Calcium Regulation Group, emceed the ceremony and introduced the government and contract awardees. “It’s an honor and a pleasure,” he said.

Unsung Hero Awards — Ligon Perrow, A’tondra Carree, Debra Del Corral

Peer Recognition Awards — Clifton Baldwin, Anne Thompson, Kristen Fisher

Individual Merit Awards — Carol Shreffler, Mary Wolfe, Robin Mackar, Kimberly McAllister, Les Reinlib

Divisional Group Merit Awards

Division of Extramural Research and Training — Martha Barnes, Linda Bass, Gwen Collman, Kimberly Gray, Elizabeth McNair, Claudia Thompson, Beth Anderson, Jennifer Collins

Division of Intramural Research — Joel Abramowitz, Cynthia Arizona, Katherine Fine, Myra Westmoreland, Joan Packenham, Jane Lambert, Craig Wladyka, Edith Lee, Terry Lewis, Christine Philput

Cross-divisional Group Merit Awards

For exemplary leadership, management, and coordination of the Health Effects and Mitigation of Arsenic workshop — Beth Anderson, Maureen Avakian, Danielle Carlin, Justin Crane, Michelle Heacock, Heather Henry, Marisa Naujokas, Angie Sanders, William Suk, Erik Tokar, Michael Waalkes (see [story](#))

For outstanding handling and completion of the NIEHS Division of Intramural Research reorganization — Joel Abramowitz, Cynthia Arizona, Robin Arnette, Catherine Boyd, Yvette Cobb, Nancy Delgais, Katherine Fine, Kristen Fisher, Christine Flowers, Cindy Garrard, Vanessa Howard, Susan Hart, Melissa Jones, Michelle Mayo, Nancy Mitchell, Barbara Morse, Ellen Moul, Joseph Poccia, William Schrader, Kent Stone, Cheryl Thompson, Myra Westmoreland

For exceptional organization and management of the NIEHS Clean Sweep — Kylie Brockenfelt, Kent Cameron, Trisha Castranio, Kenneth Coffey, Leslie Couch, Elizabeth Denholm, William Fitzgerald, Clyde Hasty, Ronald Herbert, Christopher Hunt, Paul Johnson, Paula Juras, John McLamb, Scott Merkle, Antares Nicklow, William Schrader, Valeria Shropshire, Carranza Smith, Michael Spencer, William Steinmetz, Thomas Steinbach, Mary Ellen Sutphin

For development and facilitation of the first Science, Teachers, and Research Summer (STaRS) Institute — Terry Blankenship-Paris, Christopher Campos, Kimberly Cannady, Ronald Cannon, Molly Cook, Joanne Damborsky, Matthew Edin, Lori Edwards, Neal Englert, Jennifer Fostel, George Fromm, Juhee Haam, Michael Humble, Huei-Chen Lao, Eric Milliman, Page Myers, Simone Otto, Robert Petrovich, Bart Phillips, Ericka Reid,



Bird donned a tuxedo for the ceremony, but didn’t let it interfere with the fun, showing doctored photographs of institute personnel among the awards. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Clifton Baldwin, center, received a Peer Award for notable and extraordinary assistance to coworkers. Collman, left, and Birnbaum presented the award. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

2014 highlights

Birnbaum highlighted the following achievements as progress toward the goal of working as “One NIEHS,” with better integration among divisions. “We’re sharing more, we’re collaborating more, and we’re leveraging our resources and expertise more,” she said.

- In 2014, 48 papers were authored by scientists from more than one NIEHS division.

Charles Romeo, Shepherd Schurman, Kevin Trotter, C.J. Tucker, Mitzie Walker, Shannon Whirledge, Belinda Wilson (see [story](#))

For development of an NIEHS strategy to explore the role of mitochondria in the response to environmental exposures — David Balshaw, Lisa Chadwick, William Copeland, Astrid Haugen, Matthew Longley, Kimberly McAllister, Janine Santos, Daniel Shaughnessy, Fred Tyson, Leroy Worth

For developing and deploying the first Web-based Nonneoplastic Lesion Atlas — Amy Brix, Mark Cesta, Beth Bowden, Christine Flowers, Melvin Hamlin, Ronald Herbert, Sharon Hite, Robin Mackar, David Malarkey, Joseph Poccia, Robert Sills, Emily Singletary, Tom Steinbach, Cheryl Thompson, Mary Wolfe (see [story](#))

For exceptional teamwork and service in protecting the health of our employees and visitors — Kenneth Coffey, Lindia Engram, William Fitzgerald, Stavros Garantziotis, Clyde Hasty, Christopher Hunt, Paul Johnson, John McLamb, Scott Merkle, Valeria Shropshire, Carranza Smith, William Steinmetz

For extraordinary effort in restoring services following the fire in the NIEHS data center — William Blair (ORF Contractor), Lynne Duncan, Amanda Dworaczyk, Brian Harris, Alison Hawkins, Matthew Jordan, Richard Little, Terrance Saulter, Joseph Shealey, James Stancil, Terry Wells, Mitch Williams, John Young

For exemplary teamwork and sustained effort in support of the 2014 NIEHS Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) site visit — William Blair, Terry Blankenship-Paris, Spencer Bridges, William Fitzgerald, Carlton (Buch) Gooch, Debbie Gaffney, Mary Grant, Alison Hawkins, Erika Hayes, Christopher Hunt, David Kurtz, Kathy Laber, Scott Merkle, Steve Parker, Charles Pearson, John Roberts, Larry Rogers, Brooke Rogerson, Susan Schnurr, Valeria Shropshire, Mary Waligora, Mitch Williams (see [story](#))

For sustained efforts and impactful contributions in assessing adverse health effects of exposure to inorganic arsenic — Darlene Dixon, Grace Kissling, Wei Qu, Erik Tokar, Michael Waalkes

For extraordinary planning, coordination, and execution of a successful communications plan for the NTP 13th Report on Carcinogens — Beth Bowden, Susan Dakin, Ella Darden, Miriam Gattis, Sanford Garner, Christine Flowers, Gloria Jahnke, Shawn Jeter, Ruth Lunn, Robin Mackar, Helen Rock, Diane Spencer, James Stojan, Cheryl Thompson, Anne Thompson, Yun Xie, Mary Wolfe (see [story](#))

Fellows Awards for Research Excellence (FARE) — Mallikarjuna Metukuri, Margaret Adgent, Sivapriya Ramamoorthy, Qingshan Wang, Natacha Steinckwich-Besancon, Matthew Quinn, Qing Cheng, Pengyi Yang, Barbara Nicol, Percy Tumbale, Quaker Harmon, Erica Ungewitter, Thuy-Ai Nguyen, Deirdre Tucker, Andrew Oldfield, Senthilkumar Cinghu, Georgia Alexander (see [story](#))

- A successful [Science Days](#) event integrated both internal scientists and grantees.
- Cross-divisional faculty are collaborating on cutting-edge research topics including epigenetics, stem cell research, inflammation, predictive toxicology, the exposome, and global health.
- Every division is contributing to research on the Gulf oil spill, the West Virginia chemical spill, and establishment of the new NIH Disaster Research Response Project.
- There is more coordination between internal scientists and grantees, including more studies on bisphenol A.
- The [Big Picture, Small Talk](#) series is a homegrown, bottom-up program to allow those who aren't scientists to get a better understanding of the work done at the institute, and for scientists to learn about other labs and programs.



Elizabeth McMillan, center, received an Unsung Hero Award, for her professionalism in support of Division of Extramural Research and Training administration, from division director Gwen Collman, Ph.D., left, and Birnbaum. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Another Unsung Hero, A'tondra Carree, second from right, was recognized for behind the scenes efforts to ensure accurate timekeeping and payroll for the institute. From left, Chris Long, deputy associate director for management, Joellen Austin, associate director for management, and Birnbaum presented the award. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



The Data Center Restoration Group received a Cross-divisional Group Merit Award from Birnbaum, for extraordinary effort in restoring much-needed services following a fire in the NIEHS data center. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



The Emergency Medical Response Team received a Cross-divisional Merit Award from Birnbaum, for exceptional teamwork and service in protecting the health of NIEHS employees and visitors. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Sharing refreshments in the cafeteria after the ceremony provided further opportunities for cross-divisional cooperation. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



*Birnbaum, right, presented a Cross-divisional Merit Award to the group responsible for exemplary teamwork and sustained effort in support of the 2014 AAALAC site visit.
(Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*

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