

# AWIS

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE  
*Los Angeles Ventura County*

Volume 3, Issue 2

June 2010

## Check out the news from AWIS National!

The America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Reauthorization Act of 2010 (H.R. 5116) was passed on May 28, 2010 by the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 262 to 150. The next step is to get COMPETES passed by the Senate. In the coming months, we will keep you up-to-date about our efforts on “the Hill” and hope you will engage with us to ensure that gender equity is being addressed at the nation’s highest level. ♦

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## Upcoming Event for the LA/Ventura County Chapter of AWIS

### Career Development Workshop Negotiation for Women Workshop

Thursday, June 3 (6-8 pm)

Eldonna Lewis Fernandez, MSgt USAF  
Retired  
Dynamic Vision International Inc.

### Aresty Conference Center

USC Health Sciences Campus  
Harlyne J. Norris Research Tower –NRT, LG  
level  
1450 Biggy St, Los Angeles 90033

Networking Reception to follow

RSVP encouraged for this event

Co-sponsored and Hosted by  
AWIS LA-Ventura County and USC Keck School  
of Medicine

Parking available at Health Sciences Campus Parking –  
Biggy Street Structure (HSP, P6) 1334 Biggy St, Los  
Angeles 90033, Parking Costs -\$8; USC Cardinal and Gold  
permits- free

Visit <http://www.awislavc.org> for downloadable maps and  
to RSVP. For more information on this event see page 7♦

## LA/VC AWIS Congrats! Column

Written by Jennifer Gordon, Past Vice-President AWIS LA/VC

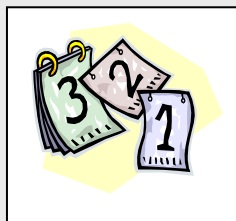
Dear AWIS Members,

Its time to start tooting our own horns a bit. We are really excited to introduce a new section of our quarterly newsletter called the LA/VC AWIS Congrats Column. We would like this to be a forum where you tell us something that you or another member of AWIS has achieved recently that you think should be recognized.

For example, did you graduate in the last 4 months? Did you get a paper published? Did you get a promotion? Did you receive an award or a fellowship? Well tell us! We are proud of you and we want the rest of the chapter to know!

Not only does this shout out allow our chapter to recognize the fabulous women we have as members, it helps demonstrate how we achieve our mission to: Support women at all stages of their careers, Promote a collegial environment where women feel confident to share their experiences, and Cultivate the next generation of women in science to be confident and ready to pursue their full potential.

We are amazing women who do amazing things, and its time to let everyone else know!!! So please email us at [webadmin@awislavc.org](mailto:webadmin@awislavc.org) with the name of the person you want to recognize, how long they have been a member, their achievement and where they are from. In the subject line indicate "AWIS Congrats Column". We hope to hear from you soon!



**AWIS LA-Ventura  
County Chapter  
June Social !  
Networking Meet  
and Greet**

**Tuesday, June 8 (6:30-8:30 pm)  
@ El Torito Grill at the Sherman  
Oaks Galleria, 15301 Ventura  
Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, 91403**

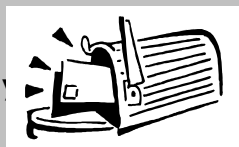
The AWIS LA-Ventura County Chapter is holding a no-host networking happy hour and "Meet and Greet".

Come meet members of the local science community as well as potential Chapter officers from our upcoming June election.

Current committee members and those in the planning group will be on hand to discuss the many easy and exciting ways to make a difference with the AWIS LA-Ventura County Chapter. We'd love to hear what activities and event interests you have for our Chapter's future too!

Please note that there is another El Torito in Sherman Oaks. We will be gathering at the one located in the Galleria.

To RSVP for this event and for more information about our current Chapter activities and the upcoming elections, please visit our website: <http://www.awislavc.org>.



**AWIS Congrats Column is now taking submissions...want to recognize another LA/VC AWIS Member?** Just click below to send an email to [webadmin@awislavc.org](mailto:webadmin@awislavc.org)

## Improving Work-Life Satisfaction for Women in Science

Sponsored by AWIS and the Elsevier Foundation

Written by Tracy M. Blois, Co-Vice President

On Wednesday, February 17, Cindy Simpson (AWIS National Director of Programs and External Relations) came to Baxter Corporation in Thousand Oaks to give a Work-Life Satisfaction Workshop to approximately 40 women of the Los Angeles-Ventura County area. Funded by a grant from the Elsevier Foundation, she delivered three workshops while in California with more workshops scheduled with AWIS chapters throughout the year. Casual conversation and light refreshments were enjoyed as Cindy introduced herself to and mingled with some of those attending while others continued to arrive.

Safura Babu-Khan started the evening off with a brief introduction and overview of the history and activity of the Los Angeles-Ventura County chapter. She introduced the officers present, Grace Jiang and Tracy Blois, who recently became Co-Vice Presidents. Safura presented information about the chapter committees and showed pictures from past events. Attendees were encouraged to join the chapter as members if they were not members already.

Following the warm introduction by Safura, Cindy began the workshop, which was broadly applicable to all ages and levels. It involved active participation and break-out sessions in small groups to discuss topics in more depth. Among the topics covered were: (1) Plan and Prioritize, (2) Recharge your batteries, (3) Cultivate a strong support system, (4) Exercise your No! On the packet of information handed out to each participant was the following quote, which fit nicely with the themes of the workshop:

*“Juggling family and work seems a lot to me like weaving an elaborate blanket. There are different strands for work, husband, kids, school, sports, doctors appointments, shopping-so many strands! And each day I select the strands I need to work with, choosing what is most important. The textures may not match and the colors may clash. There are probably dropped stitches and even knots of clumsy repair. But if you were to step back, the blanket would be rich and warm and, in its own way, beautiful.” --Cal Baier Anderson, Ph.D., Juggling Through Life’s Transition, from Motherhood: The Elephant in the Room.*

As Cindy began the workshop, the room became actively engaged in discussing our biggest work-life challenges, searching for solutions to those challenges, and as always, meeting new faces from around the Los Angeles-Ventura area. Cindy explained that the Work-Life Balance phrase is a misnomer; there will never be a perfect balance between the two, but rather work and life are in equilibrium with some days involving more work and some days involving more life. Instead of balance, it is more effective to strive for work-life **satisfaction**. She emphasized that your work-life satisfaction goals will fluctuate throughout your life, throughout the year, and sometimes throughout the day! Satisfaction starts with awareness of your situation, your strengths and weaknesses, your values and priorities, your current level of satisfaction and your current work-life challenges, and the resources available to you. To explore individual values and priorities Cindy had participants do a personal exercise called the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday tribute where you imagine it is your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and you ask yourself what you want friends and family to be remembering you for. No one stated they want to be remembered for contributions at work. Additional exercises included small group discussions on who your support system is and on solutions to the challenges discussed as pairs in the beginning. The evening closed with coming up with one personal change that can increase our work-life satisfaction. Overall, the workshop was extremely worthwhile and ended with everyone wanting more! There will be additional resources at [www.awis.org](http://www.awis.org) to supplement the materials covered at the workshop. ♦

## **A Brief Report from the AWIS LA/VC Networking Events – we were there, but where were you? Be sure to join us next time!**

### **An Evening of Fun and Networking at the Edison**



At our first social event of the year, AWIS women from six organizations gathered for happy hour at The Edison in downtown Los Angeles. While taking in the beauty and architectural details of the historic power plant as well as scrumptious truffled mac and cheese, members were able to meet and mingle in an informal setting. Topics from research interests and career paths to fun outings around the city were discussed against the backdrop of the Edison's 1920's-era jazz band. It was certainly a fun evening for all and we look forward to exploring more of Los Angeles throughout the summer!

### **LA/VC AWIS Members Help Out at Local Outreach Days**

On Saturday, March 6, AWIS members spanned the Los Angeles/Ventura County area volunteering at two local science day events. At Cal Lutheran, they assisted with the Brighter Horizons Math, Science and Technology Conference presented by the American Association of University (AAUW) Women Thousand Oaks, Ventura County, Camarillo, and Simi Valley branches. On the other side of the county, women helped with the Pasadena Girls Science Day put on by Pasadena City College. Both days are put on for 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders to nurture interest in science, technology, and math and promote careers in technological fields.

### **HeLa Cell Author, Rebecca Skloot, visits UCLA**

Rebecca Skloot, author of the recent book, [The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks](#), visited UCLA on her book tour. Hosted by the Center for Society and Genetics, Ms. Skloot shared excerpts from her highly-acclaimed biography of the woman behind the discovery of the HeLa cell, and conducted an active question and answer session. Following the talk, AWIS members gathered at a local coffee shop for continued networking and discussion.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### **NEXT MEETING**

JUNE 3, 2010 AT USC – SEE PAGE 1

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

NETWORKING MEET AND GREET

JUNE 8, 2010

SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

### **NETWORKING EVENTS**

WE WILL BE PLANNING UPCOMING NETWORKING EVENTS – CONTACT US IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING TO ORGANIZE THESE EVENTS! GO TO [WWW.AWISLAVC.ORG](http://WWW.AWISLAVC.ORG) FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DETAILS.

**Interested in becoming more involved in the chapter? Do you have an idea for a networking event? Is there a great speaker you would like to hear? If yes, please let us know!**

Send an email to [awis-laventura-county@googlegroups.com](mailto:awis-laventura-county@googlegroups.com)

### **CHECK IT OUT...on the AWIS LA/VC Website**

There is now a section called "*Interesting Items*" where non-AWIS items of interest are posted. If members have items they want to contribute, just send an email to [webadmin@awislavc.org](mailto:webadmin@awislavc.org)

## **Restoration of Faith in Good Science Education: The Experience of a Science Fair Judge**

Written by Donna Simmons, PhD AWIS LA/VC  
Donna is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Brain Architecture Center at USC

On Tue, May 18 I served as a judge at the California Science Fair, where I also saw Sophia Tsai and several others I know from USC. There were probably other AWIS-LAVC members that I didn't happen to see in the huge crowd. I try to participate as a judge at CSSF most years and I very much enjoy the experience interviewing and encouraging the students. I recommend other women scientists consider doing it too, as a fun and rewarding experience.

Sign up now and the judging committee will contact you a month or two before the fair <<http://www.usc.edu/CSSF/>>. The total number of students has been increasing steadily and I'm sure even more judges will be needed next year. The instructions and judging handbook (available on line) are very complete and helpful. So all you have to do is read through the abstracts for your panel ahead of time, show up with your scientific background and enthusiasm, and follow your panel chair's specific instructions for the day. The discussion and voting process among the panel after the actual judging sessions is often very interesting, too. It is a long morning very well spent!

This year for the first time I stayed to participate in the panel of judges for the Project of the Year award. I was a little surprised how much I enjoyed the experience, in spite of having to spend an extra two hours 'working' at the Fair. My excuse in the past had always been time constraint, but this year I was a panel chair and the job fell to me since no one of my panel volunteered... What a great experience it was to go through all the categories (Senior high students, in my case) and have each first place project (\$500 winner) presented by their panel representative for comparative voting.

*Continued in next column*

It was a treat to privately tour the 'best of the best' in a short space of time; and to participate in the secret vote to choose the student who would receive the \$10,000 [YES!!!] prize for Project of the Year. This award is donated by Patricia Beckman, in honor of her parents - founders of Beckman Instruments. I'm told it is a private donation, apart from the Beckman Foundation, which to me makes it that much more impressive.

By my count of the projects we judged, the first place winners in at least 9 of the 13 senior high school subject categories this year were women! This includes Kaavya N. Jayram, the Project of the Year winner (in Math and Software) who is only a 10th grader... May I say "WOW"? My hope for the future of science in general, and faith in good science education for women in America has been restored! ♦

### **Unable to attend networking events, but interested in expanding your professional network?**

LA/VC AWIS Chapter members can begin taking immediate advantage of the networking opportunities provided by this organization by getting "LinkedIn". Note, this opportunity is for members only. If you still need to join, see page 2 for details.

It is easy! Just follow these simple steps:

1. Join the LA/Ventura County of AWIS
2. Go to <http://www.linkedin.com/>
3. Sign in to your account or if you are new to Linked In, create your account
4. Search for the group "LAVC AWIS"
5. Select "Join this group" ♦



## Elections 2010: Update

- ✓ Elections will be held from June 14-20, 2010
- ✓ Results will be announced June 28, 2010
- ✓ Brief biographical information about the candidates is provided below



### *Candidate for President.*

**Tracy Blois.** Tracy recently defended her Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UCLA, where her scientific interests involve membrane protein biophysics. In addition to continuing her research on membrane proteins, Tracy works as a Marketing Intern in the UCLA Technology Transfer office. She holds a B.A. in Biochemistry from the University of San Diego where she was inspired to pursue a graduate degree by her female professor who remains a valuable mentor. Tracy has always been passionate about outreach, but her personal experiences have developed a deep interest in scientific outreach, specifically, to inspire and encourage other young women to pursue careers in science. Tracy is committed to furthering the strong foundation on which AWIS Los Angeles/Ventura County was built and in strengthening membership to ensure future success for the chapter.

### *Candidate for Vice-President.*

**Xinzhao Grace Jiang.** Grace graduated from University of California at Riverside with a Ph.D. degree in Analytical Chemistry in 2006. Her graduate work was focused on studying nucleosomal proteins in cancer cells using mass spectrometry. Her work was published in *Biochemistry* and other scientific journals. During graduate study, she also worked at Biogen as summer intern. In 2006, Grace started her work at Amgen as a scientist at Analytical and Formulations Science. Her major responsibility was to provide analytical support to the process development of Amgen's large molecule therapeutics. Grace joined the AWIS LA/VC chapter in July 2008 (when it began). She has been an active member of the steering committee and successfully led the speaker event featuring Cynthia Larive from UCR, in Jan 2009. She was the recipient of several awards including the Excellent Teaching Assistant Award from Northeastern University, One Star award and several Bravo awards from Amgen.

### *Candidate for Treasurer.*

**Kathryn Lee.** Kathryn would like to serve as the LA-Ventura County Chapter Treasurer in order to give back to an organization that has given so much to me. Since joining AWIS in 2007, she has been an outreach volunteer in the San Diego Chapter. She joined the LAVC chapter in 2008 and looks forward to helping grow our new and vibrant chapter. Kathryn began her career as a biomedical engineer in private industry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology National Magnet Laboratory. She completed a Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin in 1998 and a certificate in Clinical Trials and Medical Product Development from UCI in 2006. During graduate school, she worked for the Seton Hospital system and later as a doctoral Fellow and Senior Research Associate at the Southwestern Regional Laboratory.

### **AWIS Member Spotlight**

The AWIS Member Spotlight will be a recurring feature in our quarterly newsletter.

If you know a member who you would like to see featured, please let us know! If you are a member and would like to be featured, please contact us at

[awis-laventura-county@googlegroups.com](mailto:awis-laventura-county@googlegroups.com) ♦

*Continued on page 7*

Elections Continued from page 6

**Candidate for Treasurer. Kathryn Lee.** Kathryn held an additional fellowship from the Institute of Educational Leadership, Educational Policy Program. I was a part-time faculty member in quantitative methods at California State University Long Beach and Northridge, and in the graduate nursing program at the University of Phoenix. In 1996, she joined the Southern California Diagnostic Center team - an agency providing services without cost to California's most difficult to diagnose and treat students with neurological, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities. Increasing scientific and quantitative literacy is her passion and in addition to AWIS outreach activities, she have served on the Boards for Census in Schools and the International Statistical Literacy projects.

**Candidate for Secretary.**

**April Shiflett.** April is currently a post-doctoral researcher in the Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics department at UCLA where her research focuses on the human parasite *Trichomonas vaginalis*. She received her BS degree with honors in Genetics from the University of Georgia in 1999 and then spent the following two years working as a technician in a lab at UGA studying *Trypanosoma cruzi*. April began her graduate work with Stephen L. Hajduk in 2001 working on another human pathogen, *T. brucei*. She completed her PhD in 2007 at Brown University as part of the Brown-MBL Joint Program in Biological and Environmental Sciences. **April** first became involved in AWIS as a post-doctoral scientist. Meeting other women scientists, learning about their career goals and trajectories, as well as how they have met challenges that she expects to face as well, has proven to be an invaluable part of her growth as a scientist. AWIS has been central in increasing her involvement and participation in science beyond the lab and department at UCLA. April is excited to be nominated for the position of secretary, and if elected plans to use her position to help support the goals of this organization. ♦



- ✓ Elections will be held from June 14-20, 2010
- ✓ Results will be announced June 28, 2010

Continued from page 1

## Career Development Workshop Negotiation for Women Workshop

About the Workshop:

This workshop is based on the book, "Think It, Do It: You Have the Power-52 Life Lessons" by Dr Nina Craft. Negotiation skills are discussed based on the acronym, COVITA™ created by Dr. Craft.

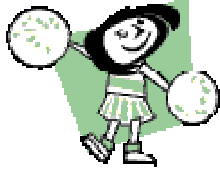
Although not necessary for the workshop, the speaker has offered to make the workbook available at a substantial discount (\$5, normally \$15) for those who wish to have it after the workshop.

About Eldonna Lewis-Fernandez:

Eldonna Lewis-Fernandez has 30 years of Contracts Negotiation experience both on the commercial and military sides. She was 23 years active duty Air Force and has conducted many trainings within her military career on a wide array of leadership and contracting topics. Ms. Lewis-Fernandez is a member of the Los Angeles Area District One Toastmasters Speakers Bureau and is providing this workshop as a service of this program.

Eldonna writes, "I am developing some special exercises for this workshop that will enhance the content. The key to negotiation is confidence. We negotiate everyday and don't realize it." ♦

Visit <http://www.awislavc.org> for downloadable maps and to RSVP. For more information on this event see page 1



## LA/VC AWIS Congrats! Column



### **Tracy Blois, Ph.D.**

AWIS member: since 2009

Graduated from UCLA with Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology,  
May 2010

Thesis : "*Development of a Steric Trap Method to study soluble protein and membrane protein folding*"

### **April Ho**

AWIS Member: since 2008

Graduate Student, UCLA School of Medicine, Dept. of Neurology

Research highlighted by ABC News – Los Angeles:

[http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/health/your\\_health&id=7395021](http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/health/your_health&id=7395021)

Ho et. al. (2010). *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. May 4;107(18):8404-9.

April also just received a spot in McKinsey and Company's Summer Program!

### **Sophia Tsai, Ph.D.**

AWIS member: since 2008, but involved with AWIS since 2006

Graduated from USC with Ph.D. in Molecular Biology, March 2010

Thesis: "*Structure and Regulation of Lymphoid Tyrosine Phosphatase (LYP) in Autoimmune Response*"

### **Yael Wexler-Cohen, Ph.D.**

AWIS member: since 2009

Postdoctoral Fellow, UCLA, Dept. of Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics

Awarded a prestigious EMBO long term fellowship for her work entitled:

"Identification of a *Trichomonas* hydrogenosomal membrane translocon"

### **Jennifer Gordon, Ph.D, Past Chapter V.P.**

AWIS Member: The beginning of our Chapter!

Post-doc at UCLA

Recently awarded a highly prestigious AAAS fellowship in Washington DC to start in the fall. ♦



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