



Forum in Focus

WINTER 2004

President's Letter

Dear Forum Members,

Best wishes to you all for a healthy and happy new year. We are anticipating 2004 to be an extraordinary year for the Forum. Our enthusiastic and hardworking board, our longtime friends of the Forum, along with our many new members all make a great Forum team. Together, we can accomplish our mission of raising both awareness and funds for the incredible group of scientists at the SFBR whose efforts are advancing human health.

We kicked off the 2003-04 year with a sell-out Fall Lecture Luncheon at The Argyle. **Dr. Rebecca Rico-Hesse** enlightened us with her discussion on emerging viruses that exist in neighboring countries and the threat of these becoming more prevalent in the United States. It was a very informative and educational topic and we are grateful to Dr. Rico-Hesse for the gift of both her knowledge and time. A special thank you to our First Vice President **Francie Calgaard** and Assistant Lecture Luncheon Chairman **Tricia Steves** for planning such an enjoyable day. December brought our 2nd Annual Bering's Shopping Party, which was, again, a lovely evening of delicious food and wine, along with plenty of great shopping. A big Forum thank you to **Bering's** for being such gracious hosts and generously donating 15% of all



Lisa Sechler, President

proceeds from the evening's sales to the Forum. And, of course, we extend our gratitude to **Allison Zeller** and **Karen Heydenreich** for arranging this delightful evening for us all.

Spring 2004 will be a busy one for the Forum. On Wednesday, March 10, we will host the annual Foundation Evening Tour chaired by **Phyllis Viola** and **Melinda Young**. The evening will include a cocktail buffet catered by **Don Strange of Texas** and a rare opportunity to tour SFBR laboratories and discuss current research projects with Foundation scientists. Mark your calendars, because this is one event you won't want to miss!

On Wednesday, March 24, the Forum will host the Spring Lecture Luncheon at The Argyle, where the winners of our Science Education Awards will be announced. Through the

generosity of the **V.H. McNutt Foundation**, the Forum is able to provide grants to participating high schools for their remarkable work in science. **Joy Fuhrmann** and **Estee Kellogg**, event coordinators, will be sending additional information about this luncheon to you in the near future.

We are all very excited about our Gala, "Broadway Lights," set for Saturday, May 1 at The Argyle. We send a special thanks to **Sandra Rosenberg**, who kindly hosted a great kick-off party for the Gala Committee on October 21. The dedicated team of **Christy Gulley**, **Jill Rosenthal** and **Debbi Chesney** are working to make this a night to remember, so mark your calendars now and get your table together as you won't miss this spectacular event that will feature fabulous prizes, terrific music and dancing, along with delicious cuisine prepared by the talented Argyle staff.

I extend my sincere appreciation to each of you who play such an important role in this organization. From members, to Trustees, to volunteers . . . we appreciate all you do! Your continuing dedication makes such a difference.

Lisa

Fall Lecture Luncheon Brings Record Attendance

On November 19, 2003, Forum members and guests gathered at The Argyle to attend a luncheon and lecture by **Dr. Rebecca Rico-Hesse**, a scientist in the Department of Virology and Immunology at the SFBR, who spoke about emerging viruses in the countries that neighbor the United States.

This event represented the largest audience in the history of the Forum's Fall Lecture Luncheon and we thank each of you who attended. We extend a very special thank you to both **Dr. Frank F. Ledford, Jr.** and **Ann Lakey-Reeks** for their continued support. We are most grateful for their help and guidance, as it is pivotal to furthering our mission.



Spring Lecture Luncheon Reminder

Please mark your calendars now for the **Spring Lecture Luncheon**, scheduled for 11 a.m. on **Wednesday, March 24**, at **The Argyle**, where we will learn more about diet and nutrition. If you need additional information or would like to make your reservation now, please call **Francie Calgaard** at 210.822.7315.

Forum Aids in the Development of Young Scientists

Each year the Forum invites San Antonio area high schools' advanced placement science classes to tour the internationally renowned facilities of the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research. Clearly, this is a unique opportunity (and an honor) for area high school seniors, and one that exposes bright young students to the exciting possibilities of a career in science.

The tours take place from **9:30 to 11:30 a.m. every Wednesday between January 21 and March 24, 2004**. Following a warm welcome by Foundation staff and Forum representatives, the students are treated to a video presentation offering an overview of the Foundation, a peek into its research laboratories and interviews with SFBR scientists about their lifesaving work on hepatitis C, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, lung disease in premature infants and other health problems that plague our world.

After the video, Foundation staff and Forum volunteers guide the students around the SFBR campus, where they get to view the Foundation's famous primate colony and learn how these interesting animals are helping scientists better understand human health and disease.

A highlight of the tour is a personal presentation by an SFBR scientist about his or her ongoing research projects. At the same time that students learn more about a particular disease and the innovative ways local researchers are trying to defeat it, they also can ask the scientists why and how they entered their career field and what the daily work of a scientist is like.

Truly, the student tours are a fantastic opportunity for area high school students, and they are fun and rewarding for Forum volunteers. Having the privilege of touring SFBR *and* seeing the positive reactions from students is a phenomenal experience. If you are interested in serving as a tour guide, please call **Karen Kalter** at 210.492.6618 or **Julie Whitaker** at 830.885.2178.

Annual SFBR Tour Educates and Inspires Supporters

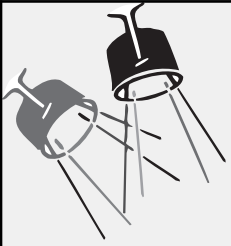
Join us this spring for the Forum Evening Tour at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research where you will walk around and learn more about the organization you work throughout the year to support.

This annual event is a spectacular opportunity to visit one of the leading independent biomedical research organizations in the United States, where world-renown scientists dedicate themselves to research on the detection, cause, prevention, treatment and eradication of disease.

This year's complimentary tour and reception is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 10, 2004, at 6:30 p.m.** The event is organized for Forum members and SFBR's major donors to learn first-hand the impact of our hard work and generous contributions.

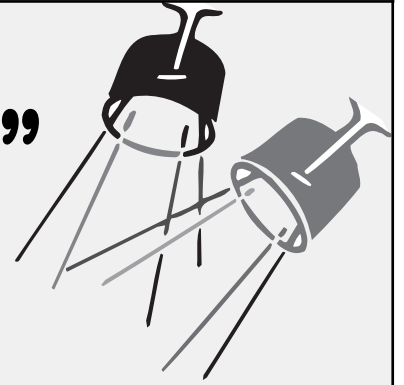
The evening will commence with a cocktail buffet, catered by **Don Strange of Texas**, and opening remarks by SFBR President **Dr. Frank F. Ledford, Jr.** and Forum President **Lisa Sechler**. Guests will then break into smaller groups to visit various areas of the campus. At each stop, a Foundation scientist will speak about his or her own area of expertise. Whether the topic is AIDS, biodefense, cancer, diabetes, hepatitis, heart disease, mental illness, or conditions related to aging, each talk promises to be educational and inspiring.

Forum members and donors may bring a spouse or guest, while additional guests are welcomed at \$15 each. Invitations for this unique opportunity will be mailed soon and RSVPs are required. For more information and reservations, please call **Phyllis Viola** at 210.930.7100 or **Melinda Young** at 210.826.7408.



Opening May 1 at The Argyle . . .

“Broadway Lights”



MAMA MIA!

I'm not a **LION KING**

This year's Southwest Foundation Forum Gala “Broadway Lights” is **AIDA** sight!

No need to fight off those **PHANTOMS OF THE OPERA**.

THE PRODUCERS are promising this to be a **CABARET** kind of night!

A true **CAROUSEL** for all you **GUYS AND DOLLS, BEAUTIES AND BEASTS**.

And not in **CHICAGO**, or **OKLAHOMA** or even on **SUNSET BOULEVARD**, but right here in San Antonio at The Argyle.

So, **RENT** something pretty and out on your **HAIRSPRAY . . . GREASE** up your dancin' shoes, because you **CATS** will not want to **LES MIS** this year's Gala.

Mark your calendars for May 1st . . . It'll be **SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER**.

And until then . . . **BYE BYE BIRDIE**.

By the way, **ANNIE** will be there . . . hope you will be, too!

For information on purchasing either a table for 10 persons or individual tickets now or regarding volunteer opportunities, please call Gala Chair **Christy Gulley** at 210.822.6526.

Forum Members Attend the Gala Kick-Off Party on Oct. 27, 2003





An Evening at Bering's

And what an evening it was! With yet another event of record attendance, Forum members and their guests gathered at Bering's for a private fundraiser on December 2 at the **2nd Annual Bering's Holiday Shopping Party**. With no crowds in sight, attendees were able to take their time as they selected holiday decorations and gifts for family and friends (not to mention a few little treats for themselves).

Everyone enjoyed delicious appetizers, compliments of **Bering's Tea Room**, and relished having their holiday purchases wrapped up while they chatted with good friends. Generously, Bering's donated 15% of the money spent during the soiree to the Forum! Please be sure to thank the Bering's staff for their kindness and generosity the next time you are in the store.



Improved Cancer Treatments May Come from Opossums

Dr. Brad Wang, a staff scientist in SFBR's Department of Genetics, has successfully developed a unique and promising new animal model for cancer research. Using a small South American opossum known as the *Monodelphis domestica*, he has achieved something never before thought possible: getting human cancer cells to grow in an animal with an active immune system.

This is significant because even humans cannot grow cancer cells transplanted from another person, which is the reason cancer is not a contagious disease. The immune system would recognize another person's cells as foreign to the body and eliminate them. That is why, until now, researchers have only been able to study human cancers in immuno-incompetent mice.

Dr. Wang's success with the *Monodelphis* – as reported in the October 1, 2003, issue of the prestigious journal *Cancer Research* – opens the door for a host of promising research opportunities, including the ability to investigate ways to harness a person's own immune system to kill off cancer cells, as well as how the immune system and various chemotherapies work together in this same effort.

In the *Monodelphis*, human cancer cells can grow and metastasize, or spread, before its immune system fights back, eventually causing cancerous tumors to regress. This process will allow researchers to study the different antigens, or foreign proteins, that cancer cells produce during their various stages of growth, and more importantly, which antigens trigger the opossum's successful immune response. This knowledge could potentially be used to develop new therapeutics or even vaccines against cancer.

One final intriguing possibility is the future potential for scientists to take cancer cells from a human patient, put them into 10 different opossums and test 10 different chemotherapeutic drugs or combinations of several drugs. Through this process, researchers could rapidly determine which treatment is most effective against a particular patient's cancer. Although it will take substantial work over the next five to 10 years before this technology can be used clinically, the potential for saving human lives is immense.

ADVANCING THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

A recent article in the *Journal of Virology* highlighted some hopeful findings related to AIDS research by **Dr. Jason Kimata** and his colleagues in SFBR's Department of Virology and Immunology. In their article "Capture and Transfer of Simian Immunodeficiency Virus by Macaque Dendritic Cells is Enhanced by DC-SIGN," the group shared research results showing that a lectin-binding protein known as DC-SIGN, though necessary to immune function, binds to HIV and

spreads it to T cells, or target cells. In this way, a protein that is supposed to assist the body's immune system actually amplifies HIV infection.

It is hoped that this new knowledge might lead to effective treatments or preventions. If scientists can design strategies to block the binding of HIV to this protein, they may be able to thus block the amplification of infection and the spread of HIV.

President's Membership Challenge Names a Winner

As the Forum's 2002-03 year came to a close, President **Lisa Sechler** presented all Trustees with an important challenge – invite your friends to become members of the Forum. A tantalizing (albeit surprise) award was promised for the Trustee who garnered the most new memberships, but Sechler promised it to be worthy of the winner's efforts.

Between the May 2003 and October 2003 Forum meetings, 12 Trustees entered the President's Membership Challenge by submitting names for potential new members. **Karen Heydenreich**, a newly named Trustee, submitted an astounding 45 names, 13 of who are now Forum members.

Because of her gallant work and friend-raising success, Karen was presented with a spectacular (and romantic) night on the Riverwalk at the November meeting – dinner for two at **Texas Land & Cattle Steak House** and a one-night stay at the Riverwalk's only five-star hotel, **The Watermark Hotel and Spa**, which opened to the public on New Year's Eve. The Watermark has received outstanding reviews from the press, and the spa – with nearly 17,000 square feet and 20 treatment rooms – is believed to be among Texas' finest facilities!

With the help of the Trustees, the Membership Challenge yielded 44 new Southwest Foundation Forum members – and more than \$1,500 in annual dues. We extend a warm welcome to all new members and look

forward to meeting each of you at upcoming events, as well as sharing the exciting and life changing successes of the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research.

The Forum graciously thanks The Watermark Hotel and Spa's Director of Sales (and Forum member) **Beth Ticku** along with the **Kennedy family** (including Forum member and new Trustee **Sharon Bray**) for their munificent donation. We are also most grateful to the **Texas Land & Cattle Steak House** on the Riverwalk for their support and generosity. This is certain to be a night to remember for the Heydenreich's!

If you know someone who may be interested in supporting the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research by joining the Forum, please contact Brooke Connolly at 210.826.0260, brooke@connollycompany.com or simply complete the membership form on the inside back cover of this newsletter and mail or fax it in today.

Support the Forum's Mission with Your Time and Talents

Thanks to those of who have already signed up to support the Forum's mission by volunteering. However, we are still in need of additional members to assist with Student Tours and other scheduled events throughout the upcoming year including the Gala and Spring Evening Tour.

Volunteer cards have been mailed for members to sign up for various areas of need. If you have not yet completed and returned the card, please do so now or e-mail **Kim Shepperd** at jkshepperd@sbcglobal.net and indicate which volunteer area interests you most. Fortunately, volunteering your time for the Forum guarantees you will learn something new, support the Forum mission *and* enjoy yourself, so sign up today!

Southwest Foundation Forum Board Members

2003-2004

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