



Scoop



Friday, December 18, 1998

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - HOUSTON MEDICAL SCHOOL

'99 JOB FAIR FOR FIRST YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS JAN. 14

The 1999 Job Fair for UT-Houston First-Year Medical Students who would like to participate in the 1999 Summer Research Program will be held from noon-3 p.m. on Thursday, **January 14, 1999**, in the Medical School Leather Lounge. Faculty members who would like to participate as mentors for MS1s will have the opportunity to distribute materials and talk to interested students about research opportunities in their departments/areas. The program, **June 1 - Aug. 6**, provides opportunities for first-year UT-Houston medical students as well as undergraduates, to work under the direction of faculty researchers (basic sciences and clinical) on research projects. Students will be paid a stipend by the Office of Education Access and Equity (OEAE), and at the end of the 10 weeks, are asked to write up an abstract about their summer research projects to be published by the OEAE. To list research opportunities, interested faculty members should forward their names, office phone numbers, e-mail addresses, Medical School Building addresses and a brief (one or two line) description of their research interests. For inquiries contact **Dana Farver** via e-mail (dfarver@admin4.hsc.uth.tmc.edu) or at 500-3192.

Breaking News - The Medical School received the sad news on Dec. 15 that **John Gay**, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for the Memorial Hermann Healthcare System passed away. Noted **Dean Max Buja**, "In the short time since the hospital merger, John became a friend and colleague, and he will be missed by this Medical School. He was a talented executive who worked every day to make a difference for the quality of healthcare throughout the Houston community."

PHYSICIANS OF THE YEAR

Dr. Elizabeth A. Hartwell, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, was recently selected Physician of the Year for Hermann Hospital. **Dr. Susan E. Denson**, Pediatrics, was named Physician of the Year for Hermann Children's Hospital.

FYI - Due to the Christmas holidays, there will be no *Scoop* next week.

TOMMIE CARTER - DECEMBER EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Tommie Carter, health education coordinator, Radiology, and our December Employee of the Month, has a warm and quiet presence that commands attention.

Perhaps that's why, when Radiology hired her five years ago, she efficiently proceeded to sort through past needs and start innovative procedures that still exist today. "I found the system too cumbersome and proceeded to streamline our activities," she recalled. When residents graduate, Tommie makes sure they receive framed certificates, one of her innovations. "I always make sure that they have extras too; they'll need them wherever they go, anywhere from the mid-west, southeast, back to their home state or home city. We even have a roast for them with baby photos thrown in to boot," she added. "We warn them that if they don't hand over the photos, we can easily pick up the phone and dial their mothers, who would be more than happy to oblige," she winked. Both **Lea Roberts** and **Tara Cannon** assist Tommie in her duties.



FYI - Not only has **Dr. Ferid Murad** returned from Stockholm where he received the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine on Dec. 10 — he is also featured with his award co-recipients in this month's *Scientific American* (p.18, Jan. 1999 issue).

DR. RAHMAN INVESTIGATES REDUCING HYPERTENSION

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, according to **Dr. Noor Rahman**, Dept. of Internal Medicine, Division of Renal Diseases and Hypertension, is a "silent killer." One million deaths a year in the U.S. are from cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure was indicated in 90% of those cases. Only 27% of those living who have high blood pressure, about 50 million people annually, are treated appropriately. Appropriate blood pressure would be 140/90 or less. Hypertension can lead to stroke, heart failure, heart attack, and kidney failure. Possible signs of hypertension include shortness of breath, forgetfulness, and swelling of the feet. Rahman is presently a private investigator for a worldwide Hypertension Optimal Treatment (HOT) Study. In four years of investigation, his team has coordinated their research with other research groups, seeing a total of 19,000 patients. Rahman's team has been the number one patient recruiter in the U.S., examining the effects of the medications felodipime, enalapril, metoprolol, and hydrochlorothiazide, as well as the newest type of high blood pressure medicine, angiotensin receptor blockers, which have very few side effects. Nonpharmacologic approaches to reducing hypertension include a good diet, smoking cessation, alcohol reduction, weight loss, and exercise. "There is no magic bullet," says Rahman, "with this disease. What we have found to be most effective is good communication, providing medication on time, making sure the patient feels like a team player, and convincing them to take their medication consistently." The researchers' track record so far has been good. They have decreased mortality, morbidity, cardiovascular events, and achieved 140/90 blood pressure in 92% of their patients. "This is a controllable disease," Rahman concluded.



Dr. Noor Rahman

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-HOUSTON
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER



Medical School

L. Maximilian Buja, M.D., Dean
Bryant Boutwell, Dr.P.H., Assistant Dean
Colleen O'Brien, Editor
e-mail: cobrien@dean.med.uth.tmc.edu
FAX: (713) 500-0597

E-Scoop online: <http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu>

Produced weekly by the Office of Community Affairs and Public Education



SHERRY DUNN - NOT JUST ANY EMPLOYEE

Editor's Note: At yesterday's December 17, 1998, Dean's Holiday Reception, **Dean Max Buja** presented **Sherry Dunn** with a Dean's Special Recognition Award for her "outstanding commitment and dedicated service to the employees of the UT-Houston Medical School." Scoop provides below an overview of Sherry, who continues to make a difference for all employees on a daily basis.



In 1985 **Sherry Dunn** joined the Medical School Employee Relations Committee (ERC), the oldest ERC in the Health Science Center, because she wanted to interact with other employees and plan and execute events that make people glad they work in the Medical School. Then, she ended up being president from 1989 to 1996. "No one does these things alone," she said modestly. "I have certainly been blessed with so many people in my life here at UT who have helped make some of my wild ideas come true.

"It's really up to each person to get involved in order to make things better," says Dunn, who is simultaneously chair of the UT-Houston University Classified Staff Council (UCSC) and chair of the Medical School Employee Relations Committee. "I got on the UCSC originally because I thought we would have a chance to make a difference in things like the grievance procedure. Policies are not always applied equally to all employees in a department."

Dunn, the executive assistant in the Medical School's Department of Microbiology & Molecular Genetics, was the first employee hired when that department was created in 1989. Last month marked her 20 years at UT-Houston. From 1966-74 she worked at the Dental Branch. She left UT for 11 years and returned in 1985 to the Medical School (Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and then Neurobiology and Anatomy).

While she is UCSC chair, her personal mission is to assure the growth and strength of the Council, and she is striving to accomplish this by promoting a mentoring program among classified employees. By encouraging the current membership of the Council to involve non-members on standing and ad hoc subcommittees, Dunn hopes to increase the Council's effectiveness well beyond the physical limits of its 31 elected members.

She mentioned that one of her most rewarding roles has been as a member of the UCSC's ad hoc survey committee that resulted from a classified survey conducted in 1997. The five areas of concern identified in the survey were policy equity, training and development, performance planning and feedback, rewards and recognition, and communication. Subcommittees have been established for each area and strategies for solving the problems that were identified in the survey are currently being developed.

A member of the UCSC since it began in 1993, she says, "I have watched it grow into a more productive, better-educated and resourceful group. We have not been afraid to tackle important issues concerning classified employees, and do our best to make a difference. Also we strive to be visible, committed, and we work to the best of our ability to represent those individuals who elect us."

As a UCSC member, Dunn works to promote activities that build good will between administration and the classified staff. Morale boosters such as the Star Awards and the Classified Employee Workshop are good examples of such activities. The Star Awards, now in its third year, honors employees based on their length of UT-Houston employment with a dinner, a program, and service awards. The Classified Employee Workshop is an all-day event of presentations and breakout sessions. Because of financial support from the institution, as well as various schools and departments, the workshop is free for the 300 attendees. The next workshop will be March 31, 1999.

"This once-a-year event is not enough since only 10 percent of classified personnel get to attend each year," explains Dunn. This is only one of the challenges the UCSC is working to solve. The Medical School ERC and the UCSC are working with PeopleWorks to design more on-site learning opportunities to aid in professional development and improve morale. "We must train our work force for the new demands in the changing world of healthcare," Dunn believes.

"The ERC also plans fun events, like the Holiday door decorating contest, Valentine's Day Sale, and Craft Fair. There are also informative presentations, such as the professional development programs," she said. September 16, 1998, marked the seventh Employee Appreciation Day, which Dunn helped establish because many classified staff do not get the recognition they deserve. (On this day lunch is provided free to all classified employees.)

Employee of the Month is another morale-building program Dunn worked hard to make a reality. It began in January 1995. "What many people do not understand is that each person is selected based on a description only; no name is attached. The selection committee members vote after reading and discussing nominee descriptions; they do not know who they are voting for," she explained. At the end of each year, an Employee of the Year is selected.

Always an organizer, Dunn grew up in Cleburne, Texas, the oldest of five sisters. "My parents always told me I had to set a good example for my sisters as well as others. I guess that early message is still part of my attitude," she says.

She knows that without the support of her chairman, **Dr. Sam Kaplan**, she would not have been able to participate in these UCSC and ERC activities, much less accomplish what she has. "For me, Dr. Kaplan is a good mentor and role model. I learn so much from him, especially how to organize. He does not wait until the last minute to tackle an activity, and because he works so far ahead, he can juggle many projects at once," she explained. - **N. Shire**



Dr. Sam Kaplan in foreground