

Online 'Retirement Manager' Joins the Benefits Package in September

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

In a perfect world, at the click of a button, from any computer with Internet access, at any time, you could:

- manage your UT retirement accounts in a secure environment;
- determine if your personal financial plan is on track; and
- access a comprehensive source for personalized financial planning.

Beginning Sept. 1, you can do all that, says UT Health Science Center Benefits Manager Rosemary Kidd, by visiting the UT Retirement Manager. It's a secure Web site where all benefits-eligible employees can review current retirement savings, project future savings needed for retirement and be directed to resources such as financial education articles and financial calculators to help them plan for their financial future.

"It doesn't matter if you are a participant in the Teachers Retirement System or the optional retirement plan," says Kidd. "UT

Retirement Manager will be useful in both instances."

- Participants in the Teachers Retirement System can use UT Retirement Manager to enroll in the UT Deferred Compensation Program, change allocation and review their accounts.
- Faculty or staff in the optional retire-

ment plan can use the site to enroll in the optional retirement plan or the UT Deferred Compensation Program, change allocation and review their existing accounts.

UT Retirement Manager also allows some existing retirement accounts to be funded much faster. For example, wire transfers of

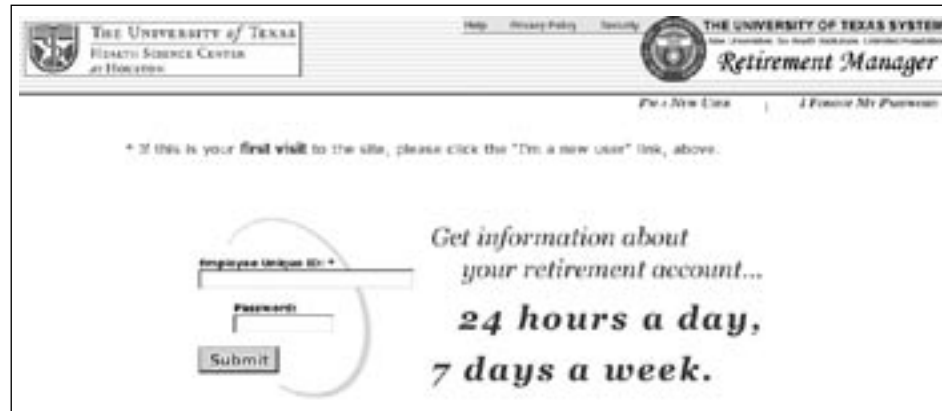
funds can be made to VRSCO, the management company, for disbursement to the appropriate vendors. Funds that are sent electronically are usually in the participant's account on the same day as pay day. However, if a vendor elects not to receive a fund transfer, a check is prepared by VRSCO and mailed to the appropriate company within 72 hours of pay day.

Currently funds are wired electronically to the "Big 8" ORP companies — TIAA CREF, Fidelity, Metlife, Great West, ING, VALIC, Lincoln National and Citistreet.

Our goal, says Kidd, is to have all funds wired electronically so that participants may earn the most from their money as soon as possible.

While the Tax Sheltered Annuity Program is not being managed by this program currently, future enhancements will include the TSA program and may include the ability to review TRS accounts.

Beginning Sept. 1, access UT Retirement Manager at <http://www.utretirement.utsystem.edu>. ★



UT Retirement Manager home page.

TRS Retirement Changes from State Legislation Take Effect in September

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

Actions of the Texas Legislature during the regular session affecting the next biennium are of importance to anyone employed at the UT Health Science Center by the end of FY05.

Senate Bill 1861 had some pluses and minuses.

- On the plus side, it mandated:
 - an increase in longevity pay to \$20 per month for every two years of service up to a maximum of \$420 monthly and
 - an increase in hazardous duty pay (which mainly pertains to UT Police) from \$7 to \$10 per month per year of service up to a maximum of \$300 monthly.

On the down side, the bill also mandated that retirees who return to work for the state after Aug. 31, 2005, cannot receive longev-

ity pay and only their post-retirement service counts toward vacation accrual rates.

Senate Bill 1691, known as the Teachers Retirement System Omnibus Bill, has financial impact on both departments and individuals.

Departments will be affected by the elimination of the 90-day retirement plan waiting period for both the Optional Retirement Program and TRS, effective Sept. 1, 2005, and departments must pay the employer TRS contributions for working retirees hired after Aug. 31, regardless of their percentage of effort.

As to the impact on individuals, there is no change to TRS retirement rules or eligibility for:

- current employees 50 or older, or
- those who have 25 years of service, or
- those whose age plus years of service equals

at least 70.

However, if you are not "grandfathered in" by the preceding criteria, legislative changes mean:

- You must pay the full actuarial cost to purchase out-of-state service.
- You no longer have the option to purchase three years of service at retirement with at least seven years of service.

For current employees under age 50 who do not meet the previously stated criteria (age 55 with 5+ years of service credit):

- As of September 1, 2005, the average salary for calculating retirement will change from the highest 3 years of salary to the highest 5 years of salary.
- The early retirement plan currently in place for employees with 20+ years of service but whose age and years of service do not equal 80 will be eliminated.

- To be eligible for the partial lump sum payment at retirement, the retiring employee's age and years of service must equal at least 90.

- You must pay the full actuarial cost to purchase out-of-state service.
- You no longer have the option to purchase three years of service at retirement with at least seven years of service.

New employees:

- must begin membership in TRS on the first day of employment, except for employees hired in July or August of 2005, who will begin membership in TRS effective Sept. 1, 2005;
- must be 60 years of age for full retirement benefits.

Visit http://www.trs.state.tx.us/Publications/update_0705.pdf for more information on legislative changes to TRS. ★

Former Surgeon General Fires Up Students about Diversity

By Erika E. Durham, Public Affairs

With professionalism, poise and plenty of personality, former U.S. Surgeon General M. Joycelyn Elders, M.D., brought insight to the issue of diversity in health care during her recent visit to The University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston.

Elders, the first African-American woman to serve as the nation's leading physician, spoke July 27 during the Achieving Diversity in Dentistry and Medicine Leadership Training Program which was co-sponsored by the American Medical Student Association and the Association of



Former U.S. Surgeon General M. Joycelyn Elders, M.D., discusses diversity and health care during a visit to the UT Health Science Center campus. Photos by Brian Schnupp, Dental Branch

American Medical Colleges. Elders' talk, made possible through the

health science center's Lone Star Legacy Society, was filled with passion for her subject

and candid remarks about the role dentists and physicians can play in efforts to serve the underserved. She received a standing ovation at the conclusion of her speech.

"This nation believes that every criminal has a right to an attorney, but not that every person has a right to health care. Something is wrong with that," Elders said. "We need to strive for 100 percent access to care and 0 percent disparity."

Elders told the medical and dental students from universities across the nation that there are many children who are

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2-6 p.m., Friday, Oct. 7

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THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON

Meet ... Stephen Kry

New Leader of SIC Prepared for Upcoming Challenges

Erika E. Durham, Public Affairs

At a time when the demand for student events and programs has increased, while the amount of resources to support them has decreased, Stephen Kry, a student of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, has been named the new president of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston's Student InterCouncil (SIC).

But Kry, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in Medical Physics as he takes over from former president UT Medical School graduate Manny Reyes, M.D., said he looks forward to the challenges ahead of him.

And his peers are supportive of his new role. Ryan Barrientos, a student at the UT Medical School who has been involved in the SIC for years, said there is no doubt Kry will fulfill his duties exceptionally well.

"Over the years, Stephen has shown an ability to lead," Barrientos said. "And serving as Vice President last year has given him the experience to multi-task and complete projects. Also, because of his experience, his opinion is well respected among the members of the organization."

And with that type of support Kry plans to face the challenges ahead of him with opti-

mism. According to Kry, the elimination of some programs that supported the SIC have made it imperative that the organization focus on new, creative ways to provide the same services at the same level of quality.

The Adopt-A-Family program, United To Serve and CHASE (Careers in Health and Science for Everyone), a program that mentored high school students, were the SIC programs receiving the most support from the department, according to Kry.

"My focus as the new president is not necessarily to implement any new programs or projects, but more to ensure that we continue to do what we have done — well," he said. "It will be hard work, but it is important that we make sure it is done."

This is Kry's fifth year to serve on the coun-



Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences student Stephen Kry replaces UT Medical School graduate Manny Reyes as the new president of the SIC.

cil, so he speaks from experience. "Over the years we have managed to maintain and improve our level of services, while also managing to keep the costs down. Along with the rest of the university, we have successfully jumped on the band wagon of being more fiscally responsible."

Kry uses Salutation, a welcoming event for incoming freshmen as an example of changes.

Four years ago the event, a then sit-down dinner at a hotel, cost \$12,000.

Last year a mixer took place at the School of Nursing and Student Community Center to the tune of \$5,000. With Kry's leadership it is likely that the team will pull off these top notch results in the year to come.

Kry is a native Canadian and is studying medical physics at the UT Graduate

School of BioMedical Sciences. His mother is a retired teacher and his father a retired petroleum physicist, who nurtured his son's love of science. Kry said the ability to mix science and laboratory research with patient care through medical imaging and radiation therapy is what he most enjoys about medical physics. His studies keep him busy, but not too busy to serve his school and the students.

"The Student InterCouncil provides a sense of campus life to a school that is spread throughout this large medical center," he said. "In undergraduate universities it is easy to feel that connection among the student body. In graduate school it's a little harder to do, but that is exactly what we strive for."

The SIC, which is heavily supported by the Office of Academic Affairs and Auxiliary Enterprises, sponsors social, civic, community and academic events. SIC members manage a scholarship fund, blood drives, and donations to those in the city who are most in need. Its goal is to contribute to the quality of student life at the health science center by participating in the development and implementation of policies and procedures affecting students. ★

Center on Aging Wins Award, Hosts Upcoming Elder-Care Conference

"Caring for Those Who Cared for Us," a video about volunteers in the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, has received a Bronze Award in the 2005 HeSCA Media Festival. The video was developed through the Center on Aging and produced by The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center and translated into Spanish.

Ombudsmen, trained through the Center on Aging program headed by Program Director Diane Persson, Ph.D., are helping a generation of people who can no longer help themselves — the frail elderly who now live in nursing and assisted living facilities. Both residents and facility administrators who have called on the volunteers for help express their appreciation at having another set of eyes and ears to address concerns. "We're tough enough to care. And I'd like to think that one day if

I need it, there'll be an ombudsman there for me," as one volunteer ombudsman says,

"This is another example of the fine way the COA and Ombudsman program are enhancing the image of the UT Health Science Center at Houston and the School of Nursing in our community and beyond," said Nancy Bergstrom, Ph.D., the Theodore J. and Mary E. Trumble Professor of Aging Research and director of the Center on Aging.

HeSCA, the Health and Science Communications Association, is a national association of communications professionals committed to sharing knowledge and resources in the health and science arenas.

Annual Conference

"Is Houston Elder-Friendly?" is the subject of discussion at the upcoming 19th Annual

Selenia E. and Joseph C. Valley Conference, which brings together experts in aging research and elder care, city officials, business people, and community activists for a frank, informative and constructive discussion about the problems faced by Houston's senior population and how the area can prepare to be more supportive of its citizens as the baby boomers age.

Topics will include:

- Key factors that make a community elder-friendly
- Future plans for older adults in the Houston area
- The challenges of planning for a diverse elder-friendly community
- Developing a vision and action plan for an elder-friendly Houston.

The Valley conference, which will take

place 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Friday, Sept. 16, at the University of Houston Hilton Hotel and Conference Center, is hosted by The University of Texas School of Nursing at Houston's Center on Aging, with the support of the Harris County Agency on Aging, the Alzheimers Association-Houston and Southeast Texas Chapter and Care for Elders.

Everyone interested in senior issues is invited to attend. Continuing Education units may be available for nurses, social workers and long term care administrators.

The Hilton Hotel and Conference Center is accessible via Entrance One of the University of Houston central campus. Pay parking is available at the hotel.

Early registration (by Aug. 31) is \$75, \$45 students. Contact: (713) 500-9167 or visit <http://uthcoa.org/> ★

We Did It! Food Drive Hits Goals

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston community stepped up to the dinner plate, donating more than 3,885 pounds of non-perishable goods and \$4,200 to the UT Bags Hunger Food Drive as part of the Texas Medical Center/Channel 11 Spirit of Texas Food Drive. The drive benefits the work of the Houston Food Bank, which can purchase \$25 worth of food for every dollar donated.

"We all can appreciate the challenges the Houston Food Bank faces year round. Hunger does not take a summer vacation," said C. Gwin Morris, Ph.D., vice president for Public Affairs, who congratulated health science center participants for giving the equivalent of \$105,000 of food purchasing power and nearly two tons of food products to help feed Houston's hungry.

That meant the university exceeded its

goal of 3,000 pounds and \$4,000 in cash. A raffle to encourage participation resulted in Gail Whitsitt, Environmental Health and Safety, General Administration, receiving a Kodak EasyShare camera, and Mary Ann Smith, Ph.D., Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Public Health, an iPod Shuffle.

"The UT volunteers who worked as coordinators and helpers did an outstanding job,"

said Elease Jenkins, Office of Public Affairs, overall Food Drive coordinator for the university. (See the complete list of volunteers on the UT Food Drive Web site at http://www.uthouston.edu/community/food_drive/.)

Connie Tapper, School of Health Information Sciences Food Drive coordinator, appeared on KHOU-TV (Channel 11) as she and others sorted and packed donations on the final day of the Spirit of Texas Food Drive. ★

Former Surgeon General Fires Up Students about Diversity

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members of the 5-H club: Hungry, Helpless, Homeless, Hugless, Hopeless. Their basic health-related needs must be met before they can begin to pay attention in school. "What good is reading, writing and arithmetic, when you are physically, mentally, and emotionally sick?" Elders asked.

"Dr. Elders didn't give us just the problem, she also gave us the solution," said Rowena Reyes, a fourth-year student at the UT Medical School, who co-chaired the conference with fourth-year dental student Alice Luan, under the direction of Paula O'Neil, Ed.D., associate dean of Education and Professional Development for the Dental Branch.

Elders stressed the importance of reaching young people with direct care and health education. "You need to start with yourselves," she said. "We can't teach what we don't know and we can't lead where we don't go."

"(The UT Dental Branch) is doing a fine job of emphasizing the importance of oral health in relation to overall health care, but I don't think this is the case everywhere," Elders said.

"We, as physicians and dentists, need to do a better job of stressing this fact. We need more trained leaders to make sure this and other important health-care issues are brought to light."

In addition to advocacy, Elders encouraged the students to become generalists, instead of,

or in addition to becoming specialists, so that they can be instrumental in helping a wider range of patients.

Following her talk, James T. Willerson, M.D., president of UT Health Science Center, thanked Elders for her time and commitment to the cause, calling her courageous.

"You speak what you know is right and you don't worry about the consequences," Willerson said. "I encourage you to keep charging forward. You remind me a lot of Barbara Jordan, and I can't pay you a higher compliment."

Later in the day Richard Haight, D.D.S., president of the American Dental Association, spoke about the need for diversity in today's

dental population and the importance of reaching underserved areas.

Charles Terrell, Ed.D., vice president for Diversity Policy and Programs at the Association of American Medical Colleges, reminded the student leaders to "Never Compromise the Dream," when advancing diversity in medicine.

Earlier in the week, the students listened to a presentation on cultural competence by Tawara Goode, director of the National Center for Cultural Competence and associate director for community planning at Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. ★

UT Staff Member Elected VP of UT System Employee Advisory Council

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

William C. "Billy" Hinton, long-time advocate for classified staff at the UT Health Science Center at Houston, was elected Vice President of the UT System Employee Advisory Council for FY06 at its July meeting in Austin.

"My job as vice president, in addition to the main area of working with the budget and making sure that we are good stewards of our resources, is to help keep the council president from becoming overly stressed — to handle whatever I can to help her out." This year, the president is Ann Tate of UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, the secretary is Sandee Goertzen of UT Dallas, and the historian is Melanie Loving of the UT Medical Branch at Galveston.

"The year will surely be a challenge," said Hinton, "Obviously upcoming changes in retirement benefits (see related story on Page 1) are a concern. However, I believe one of our jobs is to try to show employees at all campuses that UT System is a good place to work — in many ways better than private industry."

Hinton said all employees may not appreciate fully the assets we receive through our participation in the Teachers Retirement System or Optional Retirement Program and

our insurance. "We tend to take what we have for granted, not really looking at how it compares dollar-for-dollar to private industry benefits," he explained.

Hinton also pointed out that the way we get information from UT System is changing — less person-to-person contact, more technological interaction. "I do think people like Dan Stewart in System Benefits are really trying to do the best they can for us in very hard times."

Hinton thinks the council's role is to make sure that the System provides its employees with enough good information to make good decisions about their current situations and their futures. "Sometimes I tend to go at things like a bull in a china shop," he said with a laugh. "But this time, I'm going to try to use my skills to help move things along slowly and smoothly."



Billy Hinton

The council, which held its first meeting in March 2001, defines, analyzes and makes recommendations on employee issues, in addition to providing a forum for communicating ideas and information among employees, to the Board of Regents, and to the executive officers of the UT System. The council is comprised of 32 members and 16 alternates

who represent the UT campuses and the UT system. The council has four standing committees — benefits, communication, compensation and policy. The council's annual meeting with the regents takes place in November.

Hinton, who was a member of the first University Classified Staff Council at the health science center, is in his second year of service as a delegate to the council, which advises System on matters related to A&P

and Classified Staff. He is the manager of Auxiliary Enterprises' UT Housing Office Operations.

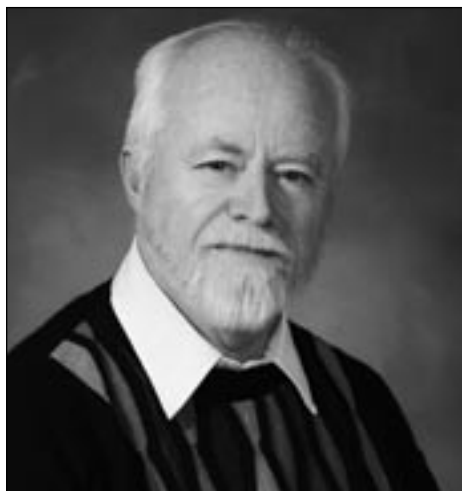
Hinton said that one of the main issues for the council this year will be working to standardize the council's inner workings, such as the way that delegates are selected — some are appointed, others are elected. "And, we may suggest to the Board of Regents that there be an effort to provide for staff-to-administration communication at all campuses. Now, some campuses have councils for both classified and A&P employees, some have one, some have none," said Hinton.

Also, there is a push to increase the delegate terms to three years. "Now, with a two-year term, delegates are just starting to learn what the council is all about and then their term is up," Hinton explained.

Randolph H. "Randy" Scott, Ph.D., associate dean for management at the School of Health Information Sciences, is the A&P representative to the council. Earliest delegates were Gill Rittman, of the Dental Branch, and Michael Jimenez, the late vice president for Human Resources. Scott has been reappointed to the council for another term.

Pamela Lewis, editor for Campus Communications, in the Office of Public Affairs, is the current alternate to the council. ★

Medical School Communications Office Established



The retiring Henny van Dijk.

The Medical School's Office of Community Affairs and the Graphic Communications Group joined forces July 1 to become the new Office of Communications under the direction of Darla Brown, former director of Community Affairs.

Scoop, UT-Houston Medicine, and the school's catalog among others will continue to be produced within the new office. Enhancements to the Medical School's home page and Dean's Office Web site also will be priorities.

Located in the school's remodeled basement, the Office of Communications houses a staff of nine and offers a full range of services at competitive prices including print

and online design services, posters, photography, digital scanning, and much more.

The upcoming Aug. 31 retirement of longtime Graphic Communications director Henny van Dijk provided an opportunity to combine the award-winning talents of both offices into one unit.

"There is a positive synergy to housing the creative editorial and graphic talents represented by these two programs in one location within the Medical School. I have no doubt that the accessibility and expanded capabilities of the new office will benefit our faculty, staff and students in many ways," said Bryant Boutwell, Dr.P.H., associate dean for Community Affairs. ★



Darla Brown, director of Medical School's new Office of Communications.

Founders' Fun Fest Continues the Tradition

Founders' Fun Fest, the oldest UT Health Science Center tradition, will be in its 26th year this October when it takes place Friday, Oct. 7, 2-6 p.m., at the Texas Medical Center's Edwin Hornberger Conference Center. It will have been 26 years since the original chili cook-off competition was started by the health science center's second president, Roger Bulger, M.D., to bring together members of the then-fledgling university.

Looking back, competitors from the Medical School, School of Public Health and Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences cooked and stewed in a no-longer existing park just east of the Houston Main Building. The competition has evolved through the years to become a social gathering and cook-off competition for the six schools, the Harris County Psychiatric Center staff and general administration.

Mark your calendars now for this special event. For updates on what is planned for this year's event and interesting stories from throughout the previous years, visit the Founders' Fun Fest Web site at <http://www.uthouston.edu/community/funfest>. ★



Help make some memories like these from 2003 at Founders' Fun Fest 2005, coming Friday, Oct. 7. Right: Chief Operating Officer Mike McKinney, M.D., celebrated at his first Fun Fest with the Pirates of the Curry-Beans chili cook-off team and, above, fancy footwork of the line dancing variety ruled the day on the dance floor. File photos



Landry Named Director of U.S. Head Start Committee

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has appointed Susan Landry, Ph.D., director of the State Center for Early Childhood Development at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, chairman of the newly formed Secretary's Advisory Committee on Head Start Accountability and Education Performance Measures.

The committee will help assess progress in developing and implementing the Head Start National Reporting System (a school readiness rating system for early childhood education) and make recommendations for integrating the system with other broader, ongoing assessments of Head Start.

Landry, chief of developmental pediatrics and the Michael Matthew Knight Professor, will lead the 10-member committee for the next two years. The first meeting was held June 15 in Washington, D.C.

In December 2002, Texas Gov. Rick Perry chose Landry's Center for Improving Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) to help implement the governor's Early Start Initiatives.

— *Melanie Hillis*

UT Health News You Can Use

New Center a Collaboration of UT Physicians, Outpatient Imaging Affiliates

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston has joined with a private firm to establish a freestanding outpatient diagnostic imaging center in Houston.

UT Imaging-Houston, the joint venture formed between UT Physicians, the medical practice of The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, and Outpatient Imaging Affiliates (OIA) of Nashville, Tenn., will give the university its first ownership interest in an imaging facility.

The center will provide such services as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computed tomography (CT) scans when it opens later this year. The center will be located near the intersection of West Loop 610 and Bellaire Boulevard.

"This is an exciting development. UT Imaging-Houston will expand our faculty's scope of clinical practice and make their specialized expertise more widely available to Houston-area patients and physicians," said Susan John, M.D., head of the Department of Diagnostic and Interventional Imaging at the medical school. "The imaging center also will help us better serve our patients and fellow physicians in the Medical School's clinical practice."

Oh, My Aching Back

"The joke in the health and safety field is that 'ergonomics' is the Latin term for 'expensive furniture,'" said Robert Emery, Dr.P.H., executive director of environmental health and safety for the UT Health Science Center. But that doesn't have to be so. Check out these inexpensive ergonomic solutions to physical problems:

- Workers standing and collating papers on a tabletop put themselves at risk for back strain. Raise the table by stacking books under the table legs and stooping is eliminated.
- A woman of short stature was having leg pains. Emery assessed her work area, noticed her feet didn't touch the floor while sitting, and he gave her a small box to comfortably place her feet on.
- Lab workers were having trouble wheeling around a heavy, shoulder-high metal lab cart. Turns out the cart's wheels were much too small. Large wheels made pushing the cart much easier. "Sometimes the solution is to engineer out the problem if you can," Emery said.

—*HealthLeader*

Radio Music Theatre Offers Free Night of Comedy

During September, Radio Music Theatre is offering free nights of comedy for faculty, staff and students of UT Health Science Center. The special offer is for any available performance of the production of "Just Shut Up and Drive" at 8:30 p.m., Thursdays, or 10:30 p.m., Saturdays.

To take advantage of this offer:

- call the box office, (713) 522-7722, 11

a.m.-7 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday;

- give your name, number in your party and the date you wish to attend;
- say you are with the UT Health Science Center at Houston and your party will be admitted free.

Reservations required; seating is limited. For additional information, call Elease Jenkins, (713) 500-3035. ★



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DEADLINES

Submit information to be considered for publication in *The Leader* by the 15th of the month one month prior to the desired time of publication. Requests for feature articles require a longer lead time and will receive strategic consideration. Send electronic information in Word format (*no PDFs or posters*) and digital photos as unedited, high-resolution images at 300 dpi or better. E-mail to Pamela.Lewis@uth.tmc.edu. Include a contact name, phone number and e-mail address. Mail hard copy to *The Leader*, c/o Pamela Lewis, Office of Public Affairs, University Center Tower, 1200, or fax to (713) 500-3037. For information regarding *The Leader*, call Pamela Lewis at (713) 500-3040.

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CALENDAR

AUGUST 15 – SEPTEMBER 14

Please submit calendar items for the **September 15** issue of *The Leader*, which covers **September 15-October 14**, to Pamela.Lewis@uth.tmc.edu, by **August 17**.

August

★ **31** — Clinical Research Curriculum Orientation, **4 p.m.**, Medical School Building, Room 2.135, offers an outline of the core training program — the Clinical Research Curriculum. Topics include getting started in clinical research and insights into the opportunities for young clinical investigators. For a complete schedule of upcoming courses in the Clinical Research Curriculum, visit <http://ped1.med.uth.tmc.edu/neo/center-crca.htm>. Contact: Ida.

Hernandez@uth.tmc.edu, (713) 500-6708.

★ **31** — Intro to Epidemiology Research, **5-6:30 p.m.**, Medical School Building, Room 2.135, provides a basis for understanding the concepts and methodological skills necessary for designing and interpreting observational studies. These include validity (random error, bias and confounding), measures of disease occurrence and impact, measures of association, reliability, causal inference, and critically reviewing evidence. Contact: Ida. Hernandez@uth.tmc.edu, (713) 500-6708.

September

★ **5** — Labor Day Holiday, full closure.

★ ★ ★ NewsBriefs ★ ★ ★

Circulating Stem Cells Play Lung Repair Role

Circulating stem cells play a minor role in repairing lung damage, according to a team of scientists who used male and female chromosomal differences to analyze the repair process in lung transplant patients.

Reporting in the July 27th edition of the journal *Transplantation*, lead author Dani Zander, M.D., of the UT Medical School at Houston, and colleagues at the University of Florida College of Medicine found that less than 1 percent of a certain type of reparative lung stem cell originated in the bone marrow of the transplant recipient.

"It's possible in the future that circulating stem cells could be augmented to play a greater role in lung repair — and people are looking at ways to do that. We found that the bulk of stem cell contribution to the repair process belongs to those stem cells normally found in the lungs rather than to circulating stem cells," said Zander, who is professor and vice chair of pathology and laboratory medicine. For more information, visit http://www.uthouston.edu/Media/newsreleases/nr2005/lung_stemcell.html.

Adult Stem Cell Therapy Reaches Major Milestone

Physicians of the Texas Heart Institute at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, including James T. Willerson, M.D., president of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, announced a significant new finding in their clinical trial of adult stem cells to treat patients with severe heart failure. The doctors initiated a study four years ago with colleagues at the Pro-Cardiaco Hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The research begun in Brazil has allowed the Texas Heart Institute at St. Luke's to have the first FDA-approved clinical trial of adult stem cells — taken from the patient's own bone marrow — for the treatment of severe heart failure.

Researchers analyzed the heart of a patient who underwent stem cell treatment in the study conducted in Brazil and who subsequently died of unrelated causes. They found, following the stem cell treatment, the patient had marked improvement in heart function and blood flow to the heart.

"We believe this is the first time in the world that we've had the opportunity to examine a human heart following treatment for severe heart failure in which stem cells taken from a patient's own bone marrow are injected directly into injured but still viable portions of the heart muscle. We believe this is an unequivocal demonstration of marked improvement in blood flow," said Willerson, who is also president-elect and medical director of the Texas Heart Institute at St. Luke's. For more information, visit <http://www.texasheartinstitute.org/stemcell7-05.html>.

★ ★ ★ Stars ★ ★ ★

Staff

★ Pharmacist Vivian Abobo, who works under contract with McKesson, at the UT Harris County Psychiatric Center, was presented with the McKesson Medical Management Award for Clinical Excellence and Innovation at the company's annual meeting. McKesson senior management was impressed with many of the programs implemented at HCPC, including the patient monitoring guidelines, drug therapy monitoring, empiric antibiotic monitoring guidelines and other programs implemented to improve patient care.