

A campus newspaper for faculty, staff and students at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

## Advice Abounded at the Committee on the Status of Women's Annual Banquet

### Former Houston Health Director Named CSW's Distinguished Professional Woman

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

Executive leadership, faculty, A&P and classified staff — women and men — gathered in early December for the 2004 Distinguished Professional Woman's Award Banquet of the Committee on the Status of Women at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

Mary desVignes-Kendrick, M.D., former director of the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services, received that prestigious award, joining the ranks of those such as former mayors, astronauts, deans and more who have been so honored.

Following her retirement from city employ, she joined the faculty of the School of Public Health as professor of management, policy and community health practice.

DesVignes-Kendrick also serves as deputy director of the school's Center for Biosecurity and Public Health Preparedness. In that role, she works with Scott R. Lillibridge, M.D., center director, to develop and conduct training, research and consultation for the public health workforce in areas including first response, risk communications, border health

security and emergency preparedness.

Guy Parcel, Ph.D., dean of the School of Public Health, nominated desVignes-Kendrick for the award and introduced her at the banquet. He spoke of the challenges she encountered in the fourth largest city in the U.S. as, during her 12-year tenure at the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, she dealt with public health issues including disease outbreaks, food-borne illnesses, prenatal care, infant mortality, infant immunizations, restaurant inspections, tracking sexually transmitted diseases,

AIDS, Hepatitis C, West Nile Virus, biosecurity and the anthrax scare in 2001.

During the middle of the anthrax scare,

Parcel said, "I ran into Mary in the airport. As we talked, she kept getting phone calls about the scare. She turned to me at one point and said, 'You know, sometimes when a white substance looks like sugar, it actually *is* sugar.'"

DesVignes-Kendrick "is a distinguished professional woman who has had a phenomenal career," said Parcel, detailing varieties of service, including the presidency of the National Association of County and City Health Officials and service

on the board of the United Way of Houston Texas /Gulf Coast. "In addition," said Parcel, "she has raised a family with her husband."

She exemplifies a public health professional, Parcel said, and she is a role model for professional women. "I am glad to have her as one of our alumni and I am delighted to have her on the faculty of the School of Public Health."

Upon accepting her award from Parcel, desVignes-Kendrick said she was "deeply honored and truly touched" to have been selected for the award — "I couldn't think of a more strongly reinforcing way to be welcomed into the school." She thanked the many people at the School of Public Health who made and continue to make it easy to acclimate to the school's policies, procedures and environs.

And, she admitted that she had already used the award to her advantage with family members who were giving her a hard time in the car. "I turned to them and said, 'Excuse me, but I am a distinguished professional woman!'" ★



Mary desVignes-Kendrick, M.D., makes a humorous point in her acceptance speech for the Distinguished Professional Woman of the Year Award from the Committee on the Status of Women. Photo by Ester Fant

## Mentoring Award Winners Say Balance, Perseverance Are Key

By Erika E. Durham, Public Affairs

In the early 1970s Nancy Murray was doing it all, or at least trying to.

Murray, who now holds a doctorate in public health and is an assistant professor of behavioral sciences at the UT School of Public Health at Houston, was a mother of small children while in graduate school at the University of Southern California. She was teaching classes, studying for a doctorate and doing all the things that come with mothering.

The balancing act alone was hard enough, but with little to no understanding from her male colleagues and supervisors, it became unbearable. After all, as they saw it, she didn't belong in the classroom anyway when her "real responsibilities" were at home. Murray dropped out of the doctoral program at USC and didn't return to school for another 20 years.

In December, Murray was one of three recipients of the 2004 President's Award for Mentoring Women, presented at the annual

banquet of the UT Health Science Center's Committee on the Status of Women. The

honoree in the faculty category admits she could have benefited from a mentor in those

days. Not necessarily a woman, she said, but someone who understood women. "Maybe I wouldn't have dropped out."

Thirty years later the tables have turned and Murray has been able to demonstrate understanding and consideration for the women in her department when their children are ill or they must tend to family affairs.

Murray's story is just one example of why the committee honors people within the UT Health Science Center who take the time to mentor women.

The A&P staff member honored with the award during the Dec. 8 banquet was Paula Knudson, special advisor for Research Involving Human Subjects.

Sandra Hanneman, Ph.D., director of the Center for Nursing Research at the UT School of Nursing at Houston, said she remembers when Knudson was the only woman in a leadership role on the Committee for the

*continued on page 3*



Nancy Murray, Dr. PH., faculty member with the Center for Health Promotion and Prevention Research, goes over paperwork with two of her protégés, (left) Monique Barber, research assistant, and Jackie Mitchell, senior staff assistant. Murray was the faculty member awarded for her work in mentoring women. Photo by Erika E. Durham

## First UT Health & Wellness Fair Great Way to Start New Year

By Dustin Childers, Public Affairs

C'mon up to the Medical School Fitness Center Wednesday, Jan. 19, to access free health screenings and health information at the first UT Health & Wellness Fair. The fair will take place, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., MS Building, 8th floor.

Take part in dental, vision, skin cancer and

glucose screenings, as well as EKGs and other offerings. Booths will be staffed by health science center personnel, all tops in their fields. A number of experts from Memorial Herman Healthcare System will do heel-bone density screenings and body-fat testing and will give information on breast cancer prevention,

among other health issues affecting men and women. Power massages, snacks and door prizes will be available, too.

"This health and wellness fair is a good opportunity for our employees to start the year right by taking some time to ask a few questions about their health without taking

personal time off, or having to pay for it," says Sherry Wilson, director, Employee Assistance and WorkLife Programs. The fair is part of the new UT Health Science Center workplace of choice initiative, which seeks to foster a more satisfying work environment for all personnel.

*continued on page 2*

### Inside:

Meet ... Nancy Tang ..... Page 2

Dental Branch Centennial Year ..... Page 3

UT Physicians TMC Clinic Changes ..... Page 4

### Join the Evolution!

### We're on the Way to a Workplace of Choice

The UT Health Science Center at Houston is turning into a place where faculty, staff and students really want to come to work each day. The continuing Workplace of Choice initiative will help the university recruit and retain more of the best and brightest to carry out our mission of world class research, teaching and patient care. Check out the positive happenings at the health science center on the new Workplace of Choice Web site, <http://www.uthouston.edu/worklife/woc/index.html> and learn how you can join the evolution!



THE UNIVERSITY  
of TEXAS  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER  
AT HOUSTON