

## Change Has Been in the Air: Check Out the Results

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

A number of upper-level changes have taken place at the UT Health Science Center recently in the areas of general administration, education, research and clinical practice.

### General Administration

#### Human Resources



Mary Maher

Mary Maher, most recently the Executive Director of Human Resources at the University of Houston, joined the UT Health Science Center at Houston Jan. 23 as Chief Human Resources Officer. Her academic background is in counseling psychology. Previous employment in HR has been at the University of Michigan, Scripps Health in California, and the University of California at San Diego Medical Center, among others.

"I am confident that Ms. Maher's skills will enable Human Resources to continue to support the three-pronged mission of the university by hiring and retaining the very best employees to under gird all the work we do here at

the UT Health Science Center," said Kevin Dillon, executive vice president for Finance and Administration, to whom Maher reports.

"One of my jobs," Maher said, "is marketing the organization to itself — helping employees understand the organization, its visions and how their contributions breathe life into who we are and who we are becoming. It is wonderful to be back in a health-care environment, where we work to change people's lives."

#### Office of Cultural and Institutional Diversity

Ron Johnson, D.D.S., has been named the Chief Diversity Officer. He and his staff — Yolanda Davis, diversity coordinator, Debra Samuels, education coordinator, and Jewel Collins, senior executive assistant — oversee educational, research and community issues as they relate to diversity at the UT Health Science Center.

Johnson, working with Craig Johnson, Ph.D., and John



Ron Johnson, D.D.S.

"Chris" McKee, Ph.D., has developed an Early Alert, Early Intervention program through a \$300,000 Minority Education and Research grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Each first-year student completes a Personal Background and Preparation Survey at orientation. The survey, based on several factors, will determine if any student is at risk for academic problems.

At the student's request, two confidential reports can be generated automatically from the survey — one for the student, one for the advisor. The reports will help with faculty advising, and a study skills workshop will provide time management and test-taking skills for students.

As part of the program, Johnson and his colleagues, including Camille Lloyd, Ph.D., head of the UT Student Counseling Service, have created a faculty guide that includes alphabetized information on academic and non-academic services and resources that are available to students.

"This program can be used to help all UT students," Johnson said. "The survey is confidential. It is outside of academic or administrative control."

The operational functions (investigations, training, tracking and trending, etc.) of the former Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity have been transferred to the Department of Human Resources.

#### Governmental Relations

Sabrina Midkiff has been named Chief Governmental Relations Officer for the health science center. Midkiff first joined the health science center full time as a governmental relations consultant in March 2005, to assist with briefings to the 79th Texas Legislature.



Sabrina Midkiff

"Dr. Willerson and I will continue to work closely with Sabrina to offer the health science center's perspective to elected officials at various levels of government," said Michael McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president and chief operating officer. "Sabrina's many years of work in the governmental relations field will be of great benefit to the university."

*continued on page 3*

## Pandemic Flu Disaster Response Program Funded

By David Bates, Public Affairs

A new pandemic influenza preparedness and response program based at the UT Health Science Center at Houston, which builds on current preparedness research at the institution, is earmarked to receive \$5.7 million in federal funds from the Department of Defense FY2006 budget.

The new "Texas Science, Humanitarian Intervention, Education and Leadership in Disasters" (TexSHIELD) is a multi-disciplinary program whose researchers conduct basic and clinical research on public health

interventions focusing on potential pandemic influenza prevention and response.

"TexSHIELD will help fill the critical need in this country to develop an educational, training and technical capacity that facilitates the global involvement of American doctors, nurses and other allied health professionals in our response to emergencies around the world such as the recent tsunami, flu epidemics and the possibility of bioterrorism," said S. Ward Casscells, M.D., vice president for biotechnology at the health science center and direc-

tor of TexSHIELD. "The tenets of military medicine, international disaster relief and the new technologies of military planning can be assisted by civilian medical teams dedicated to this purpose."

The Center for Biosecurity and Public Health Preparedness at the UT School of Public Health, directed by Scott R. Lillibridge, M.D., will provide the training and planning component of TexSHIELD.

"Dr. Lillibridge has proved that preparedness can be taught as part of an integrated

curriculum: readiness, rescue, resuscitation, repairs and rehabilitation," said Casscells, who also is the John Edward Tyson Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Public Health. "Now, TexSHIELD will develop tools to provide answers to prevent or lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic."

Casscells' team has been working on influenza research for more than seven years and is a leader in influenza biology, clinical practice and policy.

*continued on page 2*

## Public Health: Help Out, Learn More at Upcoming Events

Two events relating to disaster preparedness programs are coming up in the near and not-too-distant future. One is sponsored by various areas of the health science center. The other is co-sponsored by UT System.

▪ "Volunteer Opportunities in Public Health": An essential element of emergency preparedness is training doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals before a disaster or mass casualty event. A team of professionals who have trained and practiced together can function more efficiently and provide a higher level of care than those who arrive haphazardly after a tragedy has occurred. Learn to use your skills and knowledge to give disaster assistance, noon-1 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 21, Medical School Building, Room B.100.

Representatives from the Harris County Medical Reserve Corps, Texas Medical Rangers, and the Texas National Guard will describe their roles in emergencies and

disasters, as well as the level of commitment required for individuals wishing to join each organization. The seminar is sponsored by the Medical School Department of Emergency Medicine, the School of Public Health Center for Biosecurity and Public Health Preparedness, and the Department of Environmental Health & Safety. Contacts: Richard Bradley, M.D., (713) 566-5397; Robert Emery, Dr.P.H., (713) 500-8100.

▪ "Bugs, Drugs and Vaccines: Securing Our Future," a symposium sponsored by The Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas and The University of Texas System. The event will take place Wednesday, April 5, and Thursday, April 6, at Moody Gardens Hotel in Galveston. For more information, visit <http://www.utsystem.edu/hea/securingourfuture/>.

### Inside:

- Worker Safety ..... Page 2
- Correction ..... Page 2
- WalkAmerica ..... Page 2
- Miracle Near Beechnut ..... Page 3
- Calendar ..... Page 4
- Stars ..... Page 4

### Taking a Chance on Gambling

As basketball's "Final Four" approaches, the Office of Legal Affairs and Institutional Compliance reminds employees of one particularly timely and important rule: Gambling is prohibited on health science center premises.

The UT Health Science Center *Handbook of Operating Procedures* (HOOP) and UT System Board of Regents Rules prohibit participating in pools, lotteries or other games of chance while on university premises. Violation of these rules may result in disciplinary action including termination.

HOOP Policy 5.13 states that employees are expected to acquaint themselves with all rules, procedures and standards of conduct established by the Board of Regents of The University *continued on page 4*



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of TEXAS  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER  
AT HOUSTON