

Former UCSD Aids Researcher to Speak at Asian Heritage Awards May 22; Professors/Instructor Nominated for Awards

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A member of the team that discovered HIV and a former AIDS researcher at the University of California, San Diego will be the keynote speaker at the fourth annual Asian Heritage Awards, and three UCSD professors and one UCSD instructor are among award nominees.

The event will be held at 11:30 a.m. May 22 at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego.

Keynote speaker Flossie Wong-Staal, one of the world's foremost authorities in the field of virology, did postgraduate work in molecular biology at UCSD and beginning in 1990, continued AIDS research at UCSD, working specifically in gene therapy, one of the most technologically sophisticated areas in medical research. In the 1970s, Wong-Staal worked in the field of retroviruses at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md., with researcher Robert Gallo, credited as the co-discoverer of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. Currently, Wong-Staal is focusing on finding new treatments for hepatitis C virus and cancer at Immusol, a biotech company she co-founded.

UCSD professors nominated for awards and their categories include: Ajit Varki, science/technology/research, and Christine Chung and Choll Kim, medicine and health. UCSD instructor and career development teacher Rebecca Smith has been nominated in the education category.

A professor of medicine and cellular and molecular medicine in UCSD's Department of Medicine, Varki is known internationally for his research on the biology of sialic acids as it relates to aspects of human evolution and currently serves as coordinator for the multidisciplinary UCSD Project for Explaining the Origins of Humans. Varki also is co-director of the Glycobiology Research and Training Center and associate dean for Physician-Scientist Training. He is a member of the Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, and has served as chief editor of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*.

Chung is an assistant professor of radiology at UCSD and works closely with Graeme Bydder, who is credited with inventing the MRI. Together, they conduct research which is later applied clinically, using the UCSD Medical Center's T magnet, the most powerful MRI in the world. This enables Chung and colleagues to view the deep layer of cartilage, detect breast cancer earlier, select candidates for successful liver transplant, and diagnose the healing of tendon to bone. This cutting edge technology points to possibilities of visualizing early disease processes such as arthritis, cirrhosis, cancer, and atherosclerosis.

Kim is an assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery at the UCSD Medical Center and director of the UCSD Spine Fellowship Program. Kim specializes in computer-assisted minimally invasive spine surgery using image guidance and navigation technologies. He is the founder of the Society for Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery. In addition to the treatment of degenerative conditions, such as disk herniations and spinal stenosis, he has special interest in spinal tumors, spinal infections, and osteoporotic spine fractures.

Smith combines careers as artist, teacher, career counselor, and TV host. She has taught career development at UCSD since 1992, and also at USD and the Community College District and has served as outreach coordinator for the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce. She teaches bead making and tapestry weaving at the UCSD Crafts Center and her tapestries have won numerous awards, including the Handweavers Guild of America Award and the American Tapestry Alliance Award for best tapestry. She cohosts *Career Advantage*, which airs nationally through the Public Broadcasting Service.

Award winners in 11 categories will be announced at the May 22 luncheon. The Asian Heritage Awards were started in May, 2004, by *ASIA*, *The Journal of Culture & Commerce* publishers Rosalynn Carmen and Leonard Novarro to recognize the achievements, accomplishments and community service by individuals of Asian and Pacific Islander decent, and to serve as a vehicle to bring diverse elements of the community together.

For further information on the Asian Heritage Awards, visit the website at www.asianheritageawards.com or call (619) 521-8008.

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