



Focus

JULY 2001

A research park grows in Brooklyn



Experts agree that biotechnology is the wave of the future. "We are on the threshold of a new era in biotechnology that will dramatically change our lives," says President John C. LaRosa. He predicts that biotechnology will be to this century what information technology was to the last—a new source of economic investment, growth, and jobs.

New York, with its abundance of medical schools, hospitals, and financial institutions, would seem to be the ideal place to develop a biotechnology industry, but it has not happened due to the scarcity of affordable commercial space. Manhattan is simply too expensive. That is why all eyes are now trained on a new frontier—and it lies in Brooklyn.

Attracting investors

SUNY Downstate has launched the most ambitious applied research enterprise the borough has ever seen. Plans are being drawn for an advanced biotechnology research park in the area bordered by Clarkson, Winthrop, New York, and Nostrand Avenues. We hope to attract both mature biotech companies and new investors, including our own faculty who wish to develop products based on their research at Downstate.

Our plan is to provide affordable space as well as access to our faculty researchers, medical library, and other specialized

facilities—in short, everything new biomedical companies need to grow.

Getting started

In a major coup for Downstate, ImClone Systems, Inc., Manhattan's largest biotech company, is starting a new division here to develop small-molecule drugs that fight cancer and rheumatoid arthritis. To make room for additional companies, Downstate is building a \$20 million biotechnology incubator facility in a converted warehouse located near the Dialysis Center on Parkside Avenue. It will include modular wet and dry laboratories and office spaces, plus common areas to allow biotech companies to share costly equipment and other resources.

Dr. Eva Cramer, vice president for biotechnology and scientific affairs, along with senior administrative heads Ivan Lisnitzer, John Allen, John O'Hara, Barbara Virgil, and Martha Thomas, were instrumental in spearheading the incubator project. Once the incubator is ready to be occupied, which we expect to occur in phases, Fernando Martinez will be responsible for managing the facility.

Translating basic research into new products

Several of our faculty researchers will be renting space in the incubator facility. Henri

Tiedge, Ph.D., and Ellen Hsu, Ph.D., associate professors of physiology and pharmacology, are starting a company to develop a new diagnostic tool for breast cancer. It is based on the discovery by Dr. Tiedge and his researchers that an RNA molecule specific to nerve cells is also manufactured in cancerous cells in the breast. As this molecule is absent in normal breast tissue, a molecular test for breast cancer is being developed to complement conventional detection methods such as mammography.

Pathology Professor Randall Barbour plans to manufacture an imaging device that uses laser beams to illuminate the breast and detect tumors. Built on research started 15 years ago, this apparatus will be safer and more economical and portable than mammography equipment. The technology can even be miniaturized to a wearable size.

Dr. Alfred Stracher, distinguished professor and chairman of biochemistry, has long been interested in therapies to treat neuromuscular and neurodegenerative diseases. His company is developing a drug delivery system that targets drugs toward muscle and nerve tissue to treat such disorders as muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

Another faculty member, M.A.Q. Siddiqui, chairman of anatomy and cell

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ALONG CLARKSON AVENUE

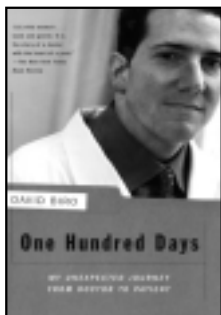
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DR. FURCHGOTT

On June 4th, Dr. Robert Wong and other members of the Physiology and Pharmacology Department, invited family members, close friends, and colleagues to celebrate Dr. Robert Furchgott's 85th birthday. On the same day, the department officially dedicated the Robert F. Furchgott Library in Room 6-1 of the Basic Sciences Building. The library will serve as a conference and study room for graduate students and faculty and showcase the distinguished professor's major awards, including the Nobel Proclamation and Medal and the Lasker Award, as well as several scientific documents.



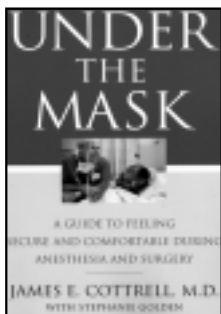
President John LaRosa and Dr. Robert Wong, chairman of physiology and pharmacology, join Dr. Robert Furchgott at the dedication of the department library in his name.

BOOKMARKS



The May 24 issue of *New England Journal of Medicine* describes *Principles and Practice of Geriatric Surgery* as "an impressive, well-produced book...that deserves to do well." Edited by Michael E Zenilman, M.D., chairman of surgery at Downstate, and Drs. Ronnie Rosenthal (an alumna) and Mark R. Katlic, the book addresses the issues involved in choosing surgery as a treatment option for elderly patients. In addition to surgical topics, it describes the effects of normal aging on organ systems and includes a section on ethical considerations. As the editors note in their preface, the time is approaching when most surgeons will need to become geriatric surgeons.

In *One Hundred Days: My Unexpected Journey from Doctor to Patient*, David Biro, M.D., a member of our Dermatology Department, describes his difficult journey from bursting good health to illness and gradual recovery. He also relates the important discoveries he made about what it's like for a physician to become a patient. Diagnosed at the age of 31 with paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinemia, a rare stem cell disorder, Dr. Biro believed a bone marrow transplant might save him. But when he consulted two top experts in the field, they delivered strongly opposing views. Whose advice should he follow? Dr. Biro decided to go ahead with the transplant operation, and his disease is now in remission. The loving support of family and friends went a long way toward helping him return to his former role of caregiver instead of patient.



After hearing a friend describe her panic and confusion before undergoing surgery, Dr. James Cottrell, chairman of anesthesiology, decided to write a guide to help alleviate patients' fears. Co-authored with Stephanie Golden, *Under the Mask: A Guide to Feeling Secure and Comfortable during Anesthesia and Surgery* describes, in layman's terms, some common surgical procedures, the risks involved, and a patient's rights in the decision-making process. The book explains the role of the anesthesiologist during surgery and after in helping patients manage pain.

HONORING DOWNSTATE'S FINEST

At the recent annual meeting of the State University Police Chiefs Association, several members of our University Police Department were recognized for their outstanding accomplishments last year.

Officer Jacqueline Murray and Investigator Joseph Rodriguez received an award for professionalism for their role in stemming the bleeding—and possibly saving the life—of a seriously injured pedestrian. Another honoree, Officer Robert Lewis, was given an award for heroism for his response to a serious fire in the Education Building. Disregarding his own safety, he searched the room for possible victims and helped to extinguish the flames and vent the area.



William Bowler, interim chief of University Police (l.) and deputy chief Godfrey Brobbey (r.) congratulate Joseph Rodriguez, Robert Lewis, and Jacqueline Murray for their outstanding accomplishments.

Congratulations

Jocelyn Alleyne, R.N., M.S., senior associate administrator for Women and Children's Services, was elected president of the Trinidad and Tabago Nurses Association.

Edison Bond, patient care coordinator, and **Luther Clark, M.D.**, chief of cardiology, were honored by State Senator Marty Markowitz at the annual Black Men of Distinction Awards.

Gady Har-El, M.D., professor of otolaryngology, received the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his outstanding volunteer services to the academy.

Mahmood Hussain, Ph.D., associate professor of anatomy and cell biology and of pediatrics, has been elected president of the New York Lipid and Vascular Biology Research Club for 2001-2002.

Rose Jackman, M.P.H., administrator of physiology and pharmacology, received an Alumni Achievement Award from the Hunter College Urban Public Health Program in recognition of her contributions to community health education. In October, she and **Nancy Victor, M.H.S., M.P.A.**, director of business planning and co-director of the Healthy Downstate Program, will co-present a paper at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association. The paper is titled "An academic medical center work site employee-led health promotion and weight-loss program: Addressing overweight and obesity among fellow employees."

Michael Lucchesi, M.D., chairman of emergency medicine, spoke out against gun violence at the Million Mom March in Crown Heights on Mother's Day.

Joyce Sabari, Ph.D., chairperson of occupational therapy, led a course while fellow OT faculty **Margaret Kaplan, M.A.**, and **Victoria Titiloye, Ph.D.**, presented poster sessions at the annual meeting of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

M.A.Q. Siddiqui, M.D., chairman of anatomy and cell biology, has been invited to speak at the World Congress of the International Society for Heart Research, to be held in Winnipeg in July. In October he will attend the Fourth International Congress on Coronary Artery Disease in Prague as a member of the Scientific Committee.

Alan R. Shalita, M.D., chairman of dermatology, was elected to the Board of Directors of the American Skin Association for another three-year term.

ASHE INSTITUTE ATTRACTS MAJOR GRANTS

The Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health has been awarded \$1.2 million by the National Cancer Institute to spearhead an innovative breast cancer project. The four-year program will train hair stylists in Brooklyn beauty salons to provide breast health education for their customers.

In the past, through the Black Pearls program, health educators visited local salons to teach women what they need to know about breast cancer detection, asthma, diabetes, and heart health. While that work continues, the aim of the new program is to develop a curriculum and video to train stylists to be the educators. "By training stylists, we will foster sustained health advocacy in underserved communities," says the Institute's director Ruth Browne.

Another important grant, in excess of \$20,000 from the William H. Donner Foundation, will allow four local high school students to join the Health Science Academy. In addition to participating in science courses taught by Downstate faculty, the students will form a team to investigate the effects of biofeedback on the brain and its possible benefits in helping children with learning disabilities.



Dr. Ruth Browne congratulates Dr. Stanley Fisher, chairman of pediatrics, and baseball Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, this year's Leadership Award recipients at the annual Sports Ball benefit for the Arthur Ashe Institute.

Spring Fling



Four happy participants at this year's Spring Fling, held for the first time at the Brooklyn Museum.

Make Way for Child's Play

Since 1973, the Child Life Program has been a model for serving the needs of chronically ill children who require frequent hospitalization. In June it celebrated the opening of a new and improved Child Life Center on the fourth floor of University Hospital. Thanks to a grant from the St. Giles Foundation, the Center has a new playroom and a library/computer room, named for Angela A. Bennett, M.D., a Downstate alumna, professor of pediatrics, and chairperson of the Child Life advisory board.

Also on hand at the ribbon-cutting were Ruth Plimpton, founder of the Child Life Program, Michael Horvath, son of the late Fay Anton, a longtime program supporter, and Richard Arkwright, president of the Giles Foundation. More videos and music CDs, as well as cash donations, are greatly needed. If you would like to help, please call program director Laurel Whitaker (270-2176).



Invited guests at the ribbon-cutting for the new Child Life Center include Michael Horvath (far left), Dr. Angela Bennett, (to his right) Ruth Plimpton (center), and Richard Arkwright (partly shown at rear).

Jazz for Livin'

In May, at a benefit concert for prostate cancer outreach at Downstate, jazz great Dewey Redman told the appreciative audience, "If my performance can get some of the brothers to just get a blood test, it may save someone's life."

The tenor saxophonist, who has played with the likes of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Elvin Jones, and Keith Jarrett, knows the importance of early detection because it saved his own life. Four years ago, when he was told that he had prostate cancer, it came as a total surprise because he had no telltale symptoms. This silent killer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among African American men.

Now in remission, Mr. Redman goes around telling as many people as he can, "Early detection is the key to beating prostate cancer." Free screenings for prostate cancer were offered by the Urology Department before and after the concert.



Legendary saxophonist Dewey Redman (with President John LaRosa as sideman) plays at a benefit for prostate cancer awareness.

Once Upon a Shoebox

Hospitalized youngsters who are too ill to venture far from bed can now make their own magic. In May, Frances Futterman and other members of the local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women visited young patients at N.S. 42, bearing shoeboxes filled with fun. Each box contains enough small treasures—such as craft supplies, baseball cards, books, toys, and stuffed animals—to keep a child entertained for hours.

"Once Upon a Shoebox is a wonderful project," says Laurel Whitaker, director of the Child Life Program. "Thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Futterman and her organization, bed-bound children now have the opportunity to dream and to create."

Town Hall Meetings

Are you concerned about any issues facing the hospital? Dr. John A. Fallon, senior vice president for clinical affairs, will be on hand to answer employees' questions at a series of forums held in the cafeteria on these dates:

Wednesday, July 25

Tour II: 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., and 1–2 p.m.

Tour III: 7–8 p.m.; and 8–9 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug 1

Tour I: 1–2 a.m.; and 2–3 a.m.



Nurse educators Maria Yomtov and Betty Jung, with Orintia Johnson of the Asthma Center of Excellence, enjoy the beauty of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden while also providing health education at opening day of Walk NY, a city program co-sponsored by SUNY Downstate to promote heart health.



During her recent visit to Downstate, the First Lady of Guyana, (r.) is shown the hospital's services for newborns by Dr. Paul Toubas, director of neonatology.



Nurse's aide Graciela Williams (l.), oncology nurse Bettina Willis, R.N., and Physiology and Pharmacology administrator Rose Jackman (r.) pose with a friendly clown on Cancer Survivors Day. This celebration of life, held in the Grove, drew hundreds of campus and community members.

Searching for Doctor Right



With so many doctors to choose from in New York, how do you find the best ones for the job? To find out, *New York* magazine sent questionnaires to roughly 20,000 local doctors, nurses, and hospital administrators, asking them "To whom would you send a member of your family?" The preliminary survey results, which appear in the June issue of the magazine, include the names of many of our top physicians, listed below. (Only those who indicated UHB as their primary hospital affiliation were identified with Downstate.) A more complete listing will be published in Castle Connelly's *Top Doctors: New York Metro Area*, due this fall.

Stephen Ajl • pediatrics
Hilary Baldwin • dermatology
John Boyce • obstetrics and gynecology
Luther T. Clark • cardiology
Steven Cohn • internal medicine
Eli Friedman • nephrology
Ellen Ginzler • rheumatology
Richard Golub • colon and rectal surgery
Stanley Gordon • orthopedic surgery
Gady Har-El • otolaryngology
Alan S. Josephson • allergy and immunology
Sheldon Landesman • infectious disease
Richard Macchia • urology
Thomas H. Milhorat • neurological surgery
Dov Nudel • pediatric cardiology
Max Ramenofsky • pediatric surgery
Madu Rao • pediatric pulmonology
Marvin Rotman • radiation oncology
Alan Shalita • dermatology
Bruce G. Sommer • surgery
George A. Vas • neurology
Miriam Vincent • family practice
Peter Weiden • psychiatry
Arthur H. Wolintz • ophthalmology



Dr. Howard Crystal (far left), State Assemblymember Rhoda Jacobs, Alvin Berk, and Serena Ferguson, R.N., gather at the new Center for Health Services at Midwood during a health fair jointly sponsored by SUNY Downstate and Ms. Jacob's office.

A research park grows in Brooklyn *(continued from page 1)*

biology, is investigating a means of inhibiting the signaling mechanism that activates certain cardiovascular disorders. Based on his research at Downstate, Dr. Siddiqui has discovered an agent that affords protection against damage to the heart. His company will research the physiological and pharmacological effects of this inhibitor to establish the groundwork for clinical trials.

Educational and economic benefits

The incubator project will be a great asset in recruiting top faculty researchers and students to Downstate. It also will strengthen our biomedical engineering education and research collaboration with Polytechnic University.

Having a research park in their own backyard will spur interest in biotech careers among local high school students. We hope to offer a course in biotechnology to secondary school teachers to help them encourage their students' scientific interests. Both graduate and medical student internships, as well as a program for technicians who wish to learn modern biotechnical methods, are planned. Downstate will offer entrepreneurial training to help researchers turn their scientific discoveries into commercial products.

Long a source of educational and economic opportunity for the people of Brooklyn, Downstate is poised to become an instrument of revitalization for the borough. The expected influx of new biomedical companies—as well as new stores, supermarkets, and restaurants—will be a boon to the economy, creating new jobs and opportunities for local vendors. By working with merchants to beautify our community, we can help make it a more attractive place to live, study, and work.

Close ups

A NOTE TO OUR READERS: "Close ups" is a continuing series of profiles of SUNY Downstate members who have made special contributions to our campus. If you know a faculty member, co-worker, or student who deserves recognition, please contact the editor by phone (ext. 1793) or by e-mail (dyoudelman@downstate.edu).

Spencer Nabors has achieved several important firsts in his young career, and now he's about to do it for Downstate. This fall, when he enters his third year of medical school, Mr. Nabors will begin a two-year term as regional director of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), the nation's oldest and largest medical student organization for people of color. This is the first time that one of our medical students has been elected to this post. As head of Region IX, Mr. Nabors will represent students at 17 medical schools and 12 undergraduate institutions throughout New York and New Jersey.

"This has been a good year for me—and for Downstate," he says with satisfaction. As outgoing co-president of the Daniel Hale Williams Society, the SUNY Downstate chapter of SNMA, Mr. Nabors had the honor of hosting the first SNMA Premed Forum ever held on our campus. More than 200 undergraduates from colleges throughout the region came to Downstate to learn about medical school admission.

Mr. Nabors also helped members organize a Thanksgiving food drive, participated in diabetes awareness and smoking cessation campaigns, community lectures on asthma, AIDS prevention, and teen violence, and assisted the Urology Department at its annual Prostate Cancer Awareness Day screenings. "The prostate screening project has become a model protocol for the entire SNMA organization," he says.

Mr. Nabors admits that he has a talent for organizing because of his passion for social service. Growing up in East New York as the youngest of five children, he was involved in grass roots organizing from an early age. At 14 he formed a local youth organization, the Marcus Garvey Leadership Group, which still exists today.

A gifted student, Mr. Nabors attended Hunter High School and later NYU, graduating with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry and philosophy and a master's in biochemistry and clinical ethics. His interest in combining science and ethical studies derives from a deeply held belief that social conscience should be the hallmark of a physician's practice. "Every doctor should be involved in community service and be a teacher every day," he says.

After finishing graduate school, Mr. Nabors wanted to return to his previous level of community involvement. At Downstate, he found what he was looking for—a way to combine social activism and medical training.

"Coming to Downstate was very much a homecoming," he recalls. "From my first interview here, I felt a connection to the institution. It is everything I expected—and more."



Spencer Nabors and Dr. Gerald Deas, director of health education communications, display service awards they received from the Daniel Hale Williams Society.

Focus

is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement for the faculty, staff, and students of SUNY Downstate.

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