

Impact

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A semimonthly newsletter for and about UTMB employees

2000 arrives *without a glitch at UTMB*

First baby



Photo courtesy of The Daily News

Benigna Franco gave birth to the first baby of the millennium at UTMB. Nine-pound, 5-ounce Cristian Axsel was born at 12:31 a.m. on Jan. 1. Cristian is the third child for Benigna and her husband, Adrian.

New Year's Eve was a busy night on the maternity wards at UTMB as medical staff rushed about, wondering which of the moms in labor would bear the millennial baby. As it turned out, Benigna Franco gave birth to a son, Cristian Axsel, who weighed a whopping 9 pounds and 5 ounces, at 12:31 a.m. on New Year's morning.

Things weren't so harried at the UTMB Y2K command center on the seventh floor of John Sealy Annex, and that was just fine by everyone involved. As midnight rolled around, reports came in from the utilities team, computer personnel and nurses stations that operations throughout the hospital were up and running normally. There were no cheers, no champagne, just sighs of relief as calls were recorded and functions monitored.

A smooth transition to the new century had been predicted by UTMB's preparedness team, but the changeover was not taken lightly. "Hope for the best, plan for the worst" was the rallying cry behind preparations that began in 1996. Throughout the campus and clinics beyond, equipment bearing imbedded chip technology was thoroughly tested and replaced or upgraded as needed. Detailed plans for implementation and follow-up were created by departments campus-wide.

In the end the work paid off. Dr. Joan Richardson, hospital medical director and UTMB's institutional emergency preparedness officer, said afterward, "Things went very well without a hitch. We are very grateful to (Information Services Leader) Ralph Farr and Shelly Witter and their team for leading the effort. We are grateful to them for their hard work and perseverance."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Town Meetings

The next Town Meeting is Tuesday, Jan. 18, noon-1 p.m. in Levin Hall.



Future Town Meetings are:

- Tuesday, Feb. 29
- Wednesday, March 29
- Tuesday, April 18
- Tuesday, May 23
- Tuesday, June 27



Birth of a dreamer

Honoring the spirit of peace and equality, the UTMB Affirmative Action Office and the university's Student National Medical Association will host the 14th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. birthday celebration Friday, Jan. 14.

This event will officially begin with a luncheon from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. in the Levin Hall dining room. Entertainment includes the Manna Band. A preprogram reception will be at 5:30 p.m. in the Levin Hall foyer. The program will start at 6 p.m. featuring a variety of musical and cultural performances, a keynote address and an awards presentation. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Service Award recognizes members of the UTMB community for their personal commitment, actions and leadership to promote equality and diversity.

For more information about the celebration, contact Verlinda Collins in the Affirmative Action Office at ext. 21463.

Upcoming

J. Charles Jennette has been named the 1999-2000 Paul Brindley Distinguished Visiting Professor of Pathology. Jennette is professor and chair of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Jennette's area of interest centers on kidney disease. Jennette has more than 400 publications including 162 journal articles, 66 book chapters and 11 books.

- Jan. 18: A microscopic slide presentation to the Pathology Residents; "Light Microscopy Is Not Enough to Diagnose Vasculitis or Glomerulonephritis."
- Jan. 19: The annual Brindley Lecture at 5:30 p.m. in the north auditorium of Levin Hall; "Vasculitis: The Evaluation of Nomenclature and Diagnosis; Naming Is Not Knowing."
- Jan. 20: A lecture to medical students; "The Teleology of Inflammation and Healing."

The Paul Brindley Distinguished Professorship and Scholarship Fund was established by Mrs. Anne Brindley.



From left, U.S. Rep. Nick Lampson, Dr. John D. Stobo, Deborah Seale, Dr. Gary Kessling and Dr. Oscar Boultinghouse.

Telehealth gets \$572,000 in federal funds

Congressman Nick Lampson visited UTMB on Dec. 16 to announce the allotment of \$572,000 in federal funds for its telehealth programs. The Center for Telehealth and Distance Education allows UTMB to improve access to medical services in Texas' underserved areas by providing off-site patient encounters and televised medical instruction.

The grant funds, provided by the Health Resources and Services Administration, will be used to supplement current telemedicine programs at the university and implement new ones. "The Center for Telehealth and Distance Education is very consistent with what UTMB is all about," said Dr. John D. Stobo, UTMB president, during a check presentation ceremony in Levin Hall with Lampson and the center's Interim Director Deborah Seale. "We are committed to making Texas the healthiest state in the nation, and to do that we must reach outside Galveston. These funds help us to continue to do just that."

The largest portion of the grant, \$272,000, will fund a new oral telehealth education project. Through it, the center will utilize the latest technology, known as "virtual reality," allowing health professionals to practice on lifelike manikins before moving on to real patients. Cameras located overhead, as well as sensors in the manikin and dental instruments, collect data on student performance. The information is processed and stored by computer with the patient's medical and dental history, X-rays and examination notes. The center is targeting the rural area along the Texas-Mexico border for increased and improved oral health services using "virtual reality."

The center will use \$250,000 as start-up finances to de-

velop its regional telehealth center concept. As a regional center, UTMB will serve as the focal point for advancing cost-effective technologies throughout a geographic area. The center will conduct research and evaluation activities, as well as ongoing technology assessments to determine the appropriate application of telehealth technologies.

"As a nationally recognized leader in telemedicine, UTMB has a responsibility to share its knowledge and experience with others," Seale said. "This funding will allow us to begin building a repository of telehealth experience that will be shared with health care providers and provider organizations in Texas and beyond." One million dollars in annual funding will be raised to take the concept to full operation within the next two years.

UTMB has partnered with Lamar and Stephen F. Austin State universities for its Telemedicine Linkages for Special Needs Children project. The center, along with the other universities, links with six Texas school districts to provide distance education and telemedicine services for school nurses, teachers, administrators and families caring for children with special needs. The grant provides \$50,000 for the continuation of the project.

Lampson congratulated UTMB on the center's past accomplishments and its vision for the future. "This center is an impressive activity," he said. "You are able to reach out to those you otherwise would not be able to reach. That is why it is so exciting working with the people at UTMB. They are always dreaming of ways to make things better, and always enthusiastic about finding ways to make those dreams a reality."—John Tyler

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Witter is the UTMB systems analyst who spearheaded the Y2K efforts. She said the successful outcome was the culmination of university-wide efforts. "Things went even better than our best-case scenario because of the university community pulling together and doing what they needed to do," she said. "It was exciting to see people from all parts of the institution at the

command center if they were needed. Everyone had a role to play and they did it so well."

So thanks to the concerted effort of hundreds of employees, the dawn of the new millennium brought business as usual to UTMB's hospitals, clinics, schools and offices. For everyone on campus New Year's morning, the birth of Y2K's first baby was excitement enough.—Doris White

briefs

Exhibit to feature works by Ted Ellis

The Moody Medical Library will showcase the colorful paintings of League City artist Ted Ellis in its next art exhibit. "Born in the Spirit" will be on view throughout January.

This exhibit represents a return engagement to the library for Ellis. He first displayed his works with a number of other artists in February 1997 during the celebration of African-American History Month. He returned for a one-man show entitled "On Our Journey" last January.

Since his last showing at the Library, Ellis created the 1999 Black History Poster for Disney at Epcot Center in Florida. He also was selected by the NAACP to be a judge for its national art competition. His poster, "Keep the Dream Alive," was presented to sponsors of the regional branch of the United Negro College Fund. Throughout 1999, Ellis also used his art for charitable purposes.

"Born in the Spirit" may be viewed during regular library hours: Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.–midnight; Saturday, 10 a.m.–7 p.m.; and Sunday, noon–midnight. The Moody Medical Library is at Ninth and Market streets.

Fire Alarm Response Report on line

UTMB's Fire Alarm Response Report, an important and required element of our campus fire safety program, is now available on line. Please visit and bookmark the site at <http://www2.utmb.edu/fireresp/FireRespwhf.htm>. The on-line form—which is typically submitted following a campus fire drill or fire—is an easy-to-use alternative to printed forms. The report can be submitted on line, or faxed to ext. 70517, as before.

The site also will be accessible by links on the web

Aerospace training program reaches larger orbit

UTMB's two-year residency program in aerospace medicine has achieved full accreditation from the Council for Graduate Medical Education. That approval marks the latest step in the substantial growth of this training program, which began as a two-year fellowship in 1993 and achieved provisional accreditation as a residency program in 1997.

The new approval opens doors for the program's graduates, because it ensures that they will now be allowed to sit for the national board exams that certify doctors as specialists in aerospace medicine, a subspecialty that involves caring for people in space flight as well as for pilots involved in civilian air travel.

"Employers today are beginning to insist on board certification," says Dr. Jeff Davis, director of the program. "This accreditation speaks to the solidness of the UTMB training and positions its students to be among the most qualified in the nation."

The UTMB residency is one of only two civilian programs in the United States offering training in aerospace medicine. UTMB's training program is the only one having a direct partnership with NASA. The university also offers a combined residency program with internal medicine, which was recently approved by

both the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Preventive Medicine. The combined program, co-directed by Davis and Dr. Tom Blackwell, is the only one of its kind in the nation.

Students in the aerospace program can take either a space medicine track, which trains them to work for NASA as a flight surgeon (who helps protect astronauts from the harsh environment of space flight), or an aviation medicine track, which prepares them to practice medicine that will benefit civilian and commercial pilots.

"The focus in either case is on running preventive medicine programs for large and diverse populations," says Davis, himself a former NASA flight surgeon.

Eight physicians have graduated from UTMB's aerospace medicine training program since its inception, and all of them have gone on to work for NASA or a NASA contractor. Current program residents include a doctor sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration, one from the National Space Development Agency of Japan (the Japanese equivalent of NASA), and an active U.S. astronaut.—Alana Mikkelsen

toolbox, from the Nursing Service home page, from the Health and Safety Services web page and from other UTMB web sites. For more information, contact Jack Tarpley at Health and Safety Services: jtarpoley@UTMB.edu or call ext. 70515.

Call for presentations under way

The University of Texas System Information Technology and Distance Education Conference will be hosted by UTMB on May 16–18. The theme

for this year's meeting is "Share the Experience." A web site has been established to give prospective attendees continuous, current information on the program, registration, accommodations, special events and vendors.

Proposals for presentations are currently being accepted that focus on the theme of "sharing." Prospective presenters are asked to consider their experiences with information technology and distance learning and to prepare a presentation that will allow the presenter to share his or her experiences peers from across the state and foster a dialogue among the audience members.

Specific requirements of the presentation may be found on the conference web site and proposals must be submitted on line through the web site.

All proposals will be reviewed by a peer review panel and evaluated with regard to innovation, completeness, and relevance to the theme. There will be limited slots for presentations. Decisions on proposals will be made by March 15. All presenters must register and pay conference fees. The deadline for proposals is Feb. 1.

Further information can be viewed on the web site: <http://www.utmb.edu/titc/> or by contacting a member of the Program Committee: Brett Kirkpatrick at bkirkpat@utmb.edu; Larry Wygant at lwygant@utmb.edu; Rodger Marion at rmarion@utmb.edu.



Multiple agencies from the Galveston-Houston area conducted an emergency disaster drill last month to test response capabilities. In conjunction with federal, city and county agencies, UTMB participated to test its decontamination procedures, as well as to satisfy requirements that periodic disaster drills be conducted. The "disaster" was the collision of two ships in the Houston Ship Channel, one of which carried the chemical styrene. Six persons were contaminated with a dangerous compound created by the mix of styrene and water. The mock patients—actors from The Strand Theater—arrived at the ER by helicopter and ambulance, as well as by personal automobiles for decontamination. These victims were not allowed to enter the hospital until they had been thoroughly decontaminated to prevent chemical exposure of other patients and of the emergency facilities. A debriefing was held later that day to discuss UTMB's strengths and weaknesses.

'Health Adventures'

UTMB joins middle school to introduce students to health care opportunities

UTMB has partnered with Galveston ISD and Communities in Schools to establish a new program called Health Adventures. All of the partners hope Health Adventures will motivate children to continue their education by introducing them to opportunities available in the health care professions.

Fifteen eighth-grade students from Austin Middle School have begun to visit the university one Saturday each month during the school year, building relationships with UTMB employees and students while gaining insight into the world of health care. While at UTMB, students team up with an employee or student "mentor" who helps them with math and science instruction and serves as a positive role model for the student. Saturday "adventures" will include activities presented by various UTMB departments and areas such as the rehabilitation services, pulmonary care and facilities planning. The participation of the eighth-grade science teacher Tim Jusick will help make sure the lessons and activities at UTMB are relevant to what they are learning at school. The curriculum is designed to help students make the connection between math and science education and the real world of work. In addition, the goals of the program are to decrease truancy, decrease the drop-out rate and promote healthy lifestyles.

Students were given a pretest prior to entering the program to determine their ability to handle stress, their level of social skills and their knowledge in areas such as nutrition and exercise. A post-test in May will be used to evaluate the impact of the program on student knowledge in these areas as well as their knowledge of job opportunities in the health care industry.

"We want to have a positive impact on as many of these children as we can," said Katie Matlack-Winslade, UTMB's director for workforce development. "If we can get them to think about what they need to do educationally to pursue a career in the medical field, maybe it will influence their decision making as they reach the high school level."



Rebecca Meyers, School of Nursing student and mentor for Health Adventures, shows Austin Middle School student John French how difficult life can be for someone in need of crutches to walk. UTMB joined forces with Galveston I.S.D. and Communities in Schools for Health Adventures, a program designed to introduce middle school students to the opportunities that exist within health care professions.

Ken Booth, GISD's director of secondary education, agreed. "Primarily we are looking to expand students' horizons," he said. "Hopefully this will motivate them to look in areas they might not have considered for their life's work. The program will build our students a stronger foundation as they enter high school, and help them make course choices."

Matlack-Winslade said the real results of Health Adventures would not be known for years: "We are going to follow these students for ten years to determine what they do with this new knowledge. If we can encourage just one child to continue their education-or, ideally, to pursue a career in the medical field-this program will be a huge success."

Matlack-Winslade hopes to use Health Adventures as a model for future use at different grade levels. She plans to offer a similar program for high school students in the near future, as well as expand it to the sixth-grade level. —John Tyler

Dr. David A. Chiriboga, (Department of Health Promotion and Gerontology) was recently selected as a peer reviewer and vice chair for one of the six newly established chartered study sections of the Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. From Dec. 6-8, Chiriboga attended the first review session in Washington, DC.

Dr. John P. Heggors (Department of Surgery) has been designated as a certified wound specialist by the American Academy of Wound Management.

Diana D. Puccetti (Rehabilitation Services) has been named to the Texas Occupational Therapy Association's roster of merit, which recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the profession. Only 19 occupational therapists have ever been honored with the award during the association's 63-year history. Puccetti is the director of Rehabilitation Services and also serves as a Galveston City Council member.

Dr. Angela Shepherd (Family Medicine) is one of 50 physicians nationwide participating in the 1999-2000 National Institute for Program Director Development fellowship program sponsored by the Association of Family Practice Residency Directors. Shepherd will attend three weekend instructional and networking sessions and will complete two projects.

Mysteries of aging unfold

These UTMB researchers used baker's yeast to pick apart the obscure function of a gene that, when mutated, decreases the average life span of cells.

Similar mutations in human beings cause Werner's syndrome, a rare genetic disease in which people age prematurely. The Prakash team's discovery—reported in the December 17, 1999, issue of the journal *Science*—seems to point to at least part of the reason why: The mutations slow down cells' ability to copy DNA, the genetic blueprint. And that slowdown opens the door for DNA-cutting enzymes to swoop in, causing pieces of DNA to get lost or rearranged. Loss and disruption of DNA has been associated with accelerated aging in the past, but until now, scientists had few details of how it happened.

Appearing from left to right: Louise and Satya Prakash, professors in the Sealy Center for Molecular Science, and their colleagues Sung-Lim Yu, Sung-Keun Lee and Robert Johnson.

