

Community Update

MARCH 2009

Staying in Touch

GREETINGS AND WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF THE GNL COMMUNITY UPDATE. We hope to use this new tool to keep you, the members of our Community Advisory Board (CAB), abreast of GNL activities and announcements. The success of the GNL would not be possible without the trust and support of the community, and we pledge to continue to promote that public participation and transparency regarding UTMB's biocontainment research programs. This e-newsletter is designed to serve as an outlet for any questions, comments or topics you'd like discussed regarding the GNL. We look forward to providing you with an update on the exciting things happening at the GNL.

A message from CLC Chairman Rabbi Jimmy Kessler

Since our appointment in 2002, the Community Liaison Committee (<http://www.utmb.edu/gnl/community/clc.shtml>) has been meeting with members of the administration and staff of the GNL on a monthly basis. In an open and candid manner, we have discussed the operations of the GNL, issues of future activities in the lab and all events that might have been considered "incidents." Incidents, as we and the GNL have agreed, are occurrences in any part of the lab that might be considered by us lay-folk as a potential risk to those involved as well as to the community outside the lab. I am pleased to report that we are very satisfied and assured that the few events that have occurred have been promptly reported to the Committee; the response by the GNL and UTMB has been rapid, professional and in a manner consistent with the highest levels of concern for the safety of those involved as well as the community, and clearly with a commitment to preventing similar occurrences. Our committee is very impressed with the commitment of all those involved with operating the GNL and clearly feel our community is very safe in the presence of this significant research facility. Do know that each of us is always available to the members of the community for comments and for questions. Our CLC membership currently consists of myself, Joe Jaworski, R. Bowen Loftin, Rosie Morales, Victor Pierson, and Gwen Wagner.

SUCCESSFUL DEDICATION

UTMB formally dedicated the GNL on Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2008—on schedule and only two months after Hurricane Ike made landfall. Many of you joined roughly 1,000 community members, university employees and supporters, and elected officials at the ceremony keynoted by U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, a Galveston native who noted that the laboratory is "destined to make medical history." Colleen McHugh, chairwoman of the health affairs committee for the University of Texas System Board of Regents, formally dedicated the new laboratory. Dr. Kenneth I. Shine, then UT System interim chancellor, Dr. David L. Callender, UTMB president, Dr. Stanley M. Lemon, director of the Institute for Human Infections and Immunity, and Dr. Carole A. Heilman, director of the Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases also spoke at the ceremony, as did our Community Liaison Committee Chairman Rabbi Jimmy Kessler. Sen. Hutchinson concluded the ceremony by saying, "This is a good news day for America. This laboratory is very important to national defense and the security of our people."



Sen. Hutchison is joined by the GNL Director Dr. Stanley M. Lemon and UTMB President Dr. David L. Callender on GNL dedication day.

NIAID DIRECTOR VISITS THE GNL

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Director Dr. Anthony S. Fauci paid a personal visit to the GNL Jan. 14th. As you know, the GNL is one of two National Biocontainment Laboratories constructed with funding awarded in October 2003 by NIAID. Dr. Fauci's visit proved to be a great opportunity to showcase the research capabilities of the GNL, to which the NIAID has contributed directly, and to emphasize the breadth of infectious disease and immunology expertise residing among UTMB faculty associated with the IHII and the GNL. Dr. Fauci graciously took questions from scientists and community members and underscored the importance of the work set to take place within the facility, calling GNL researchers the "the nation's SWAT team" on the front lines of assuring the nation's public health.



While touring the new maximum containment labs in the GNL, Dr. Fauci tried on a BSL4 suit. Leading this demonstration of UTMB's lab safety training program (pictured) were Dr. Mike Holbrook, Dr. Jim LeDuc, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Tom Ksiazek and Dr. Stan Lemon.

OUR MISSION

The GNL, as magnificent as the facility is, is just the starting point of a journey of discovery whose ultimate aim is to make the world a safer place. The scientists who work here have a well-defined mission—to investigate infectious agents responsible for newly emerging diseases, and find new ways to mitigate the threat of such diseases, whether they arise naturally or as a result of deliberate acts. In addition to increasing our understanding of the world's most potent pathogens and aiding in efforts to develop vaccines against them, the GNL will be a resource for the international community of infectious disease scientists. It will become a global resource for training the next generation of infectious disease scientists. Closer to home, it will contribute to the development of biomedical sciences and related industry in this corner of Texas, and significantly fuel the local economy.

ESTEEMED RESEARCHER JOINS GNL TEAM

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Thomas Ksiazek to the Galveston and UTMB communities. Tom joined the GNL team a few months ago from his previous post as chief of the Special Pathogens Branch at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, where he coordinated outbreak and control responses to especially dangerous pathogens such as Ebola, Marburg and SARS. Dr. Ksiazek is an internationally renowned expert in viral hemorrhagic fevers, and his recruitment further strengthens UTMB's position as the global leader in the field. Here, he will serve as the director of UTMB's National Biodefense Training Center (NBTC) and facilitate research in the containment laboratories of the GNL. The NBTC, funded through federal monies secured by U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, will enhance UTMB's existing internationally recognized biosafety training program and serve as the hub of instruction for the nation's emerging infectious disease and biodefense researchers. We are honored to welcome this distinguished scientist to the community.

GNL Website

One of the easiest ways to stay up to date on the latest GNL news and events is through our website—www.utmb.edu/gnl. As faculty, staff and research teams continue to move into the GNL, we continue to update the website. Watch footage from our dedication, read the latest clips and even check out your very own CAB page on the site. You may also access important biosafety and informational links at the local, state and federal levels, send us a comment via the "contact us" button, and find answers to the questions we're asked most frequently. We hope you'll check it out!

GNL Brochure

As your many business and social networks take you throughout the community, state and beyond, we hope you will share the important work taking place at UTMB's GNL. We have developed a brief and informative digital brochure that highlights UTMB's history of infectious disease research, GNL research areas, resources and capabilities. We are happy to provide copies of the brochure upon request for you or any groups you may be involved in. Please contact Alisha Prather at adprathe@utmb.edu.

GNL Town Hall meeting in the works!

Please plan to join us—**Monday, June 8, 2009 at 5:00pm in Levin Hall**—for a community meeting focused on the GNL. We look forward to sharing a progress update on work taking place within the facility as well as showcase numerous safety measures, plans and practices as we head into hurricane season. We hope you will join us and invite your friends, too!