

You may remember Susan Gittler (below left) from the last newsletter - youthful spirit, inspiring to all who know her. Here is Susan and her daughter Sophia Brooks in a canoe with their faithful friend *Beau*. Sophia's son and Susan's grandson, Nate Brooks and his wife Kristen, were featured in last year's PBS Series *Frontier House*. Show members had to live on the American Frontier, as pioneers did in 1883. The Gittler-Brooks are three generations of adventurers going strong!



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American Foundation for Aging Research
Biochemistry Department
North Carolina State University
Campus Box 7622
Raleigh, NC 27695-7622

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The newsletter of the...

American Foundation for Aging Research

AFAR

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The American Foundation for Aging Research is 501(c)3 educational and scientific charity solely dedicated to granting scholarships and fellowships to innovative young scientists utilizing cutting-edge technology to study age-related diseases.

American Foundation for Aging Research Celebrates 25-Year Anniversary in 2004!

Dear Friends and Supporters of Aging Research,

Next year will be the 25th Anniversary of the Foundation. To commemorate the anniversary we would like to award twenty-five scholarships and fellowships during 2004. Since its inception in 1979, the Foundation has encouraged young scientists to focus their research on age-related health conditions. Technological advances made in the past twenty-five years have helped address and even cure medical problems that were once fatal.

Your generous donations over the past two decades have sponsored many worthwhile student research projects each year. These very deserving students have attended colleges and universities across the country. Most have gone on to complete Ph.D. and M.D. programs and now work as professors, doctors, or in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. Without the support from individual donors around the country, these research scholarships and fellowships would not have been possible. ***We can't thank you enough!***

We recently upgraded our website to enable online scholarship and fellowship application processing. This resulted in a huge number of qualified applicants (more than ever) interested in a wide variety of aging projects. We would like to kick off our 25th Anniversary Campaign by raising \$5000 in the next few months. Contributions to this campaign would be greatly appreciated so that more research can be sponsored on behalf of the aging population. Please save the enclosed donation envelope and remember the Foundation as you plan your holiday and year-end giving. Thank you so much for your support! The Foundation staff, volunteers and I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,
Paul F. Agris
President

In This Issue...

Recent Fellowship Awardees

Antibiotics: When do we need them?

Foot Health Tips

Aging Eyesight

Family of Adventurers - Back Cover

The charm of history and its enigmatic lesson consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different.

Aldous Huxley

Fellowship Recipients

Your generous contributions throughout the year help support a wide variety of research projects conducted by young scientists. We recently asked our 2002-2003 fellowship awardees to briefly summarize their research. Here are their responses.

Doug Kojetin,
North Carolina State University 2002, 2003:

The purpose of my research is to investigate the structure-function correlations in two classes of proteins, which include calcium-binding proteins involved in neurodegenerative disorders. The classes of proteins that I am focusing on have been implicated in neural (nerve) functions and Alzheimer's disease. Studies have established that a calcium imbalance can contribute to neurodegenerative diseases associated with aging. Therefore, this research may help contribute to a better understanding of neurodegenerative diseases, ultimately, bringing us closer to developing treatments for them.

Ian Lanza,
University of Massachusetts- Amherst 2003:

The purpose of my research is to examine how muscle fatigue changes with age in humans. We are particularly interested in age-related changes in the mechanisms of fatigue, specifically the role of intramuscular energy metabolism. We will use nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy to non-invasively assess metabolic changes within the exercising muscle.



Ian Lanza

L. Marie Walsh,
University of Massachusetts-Amherst 2003:

My work is in the University's Muscle Physiology lab. We conduct research to evaluate how muscle function changes with age. Another part of my research involves understanding how blood pressure medications such as beta-blockers may change the way older individual's muscles fatigue. Information from these studies may lead to prevention and treatment of muscle fatigue. You may visit my lab's website at:
<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~irl/mplab.html>



L. Marie Walsh

Good News for Aging Eyesight

As people age, the lenses in the eyes become less flexible. The decreased flexibility of the lenses is what causes most people in their 40's and up to need reading glasses.

A new treatment for eyesight is showing promise for aging eyes. The technique involves replacing the contents of the lens in the eye with a soft polymer gel. Inserting the gel would be similar to cataract surgery. The contents of the lens would be vacuumed out via a tiny incision in the cornea and replaced with the gel. The procedure could take as little as 15 minutes.

Testing by the Australian government's multinational Vision Cooperative Research Center has been promising. More clinical trials will take place next year.

Antibiotics – When do we need them?

From www.fda.gov

Cough? Sore Throat? Runny Nose? You feel miserable and you've come to the doctor for help.

Q: I'm sick. Don't I need a prescription for an antibiotic?

A: Your doctor has examined you and determined that your illness is caused by a viral infection. Antibiotics do NOT treat viral illnesses like a cold, flu and most sore throats.

Q: If antibiotics don't treat viral illnesses like cold and flu, what do they treat?

A: Antibiotics are used to treat illnesses caused by bacteria. Examples of illnesses caused by bacteria include strep-throat, tuberculosis and many types of pneumonia.

Q: Even though my illness may be caused by a virus, what harm can it do to take an antibiotic?

A: Taking antibiotics when they aren't needed contributes to the serious problem of antibiotic resistance.

Q: What is antibiotic resistance?

A: This is when bacteria cannot be killed by antibiotics. The bacteria have become resistant. If this continues, over time some recurring infections may have to be treated with different and stronger antibiotics; this creates the very strong possibility that eventually no antibiotic will be effective in killing the bacteria.

Q: If antibiotics will not help me, what will?

A: There are many over-the-counter products available to treat the symptoms of your viral infections. These include cough suppressants, which will help control coughing and decongestants to help relieve a stuffy nose. Read the label and ask your pharmacist or doctor if you have any questions about which will work best for you. You may also ask the pharmacist for the name of a generic brand, which contains the same ingredients as the more expensive name brands.



Susan Gittler, left, is pictured with her lovely daughter Sophia Brooks. From garden parties to canoes or the wilderness, this family is ready for anything!

See back cover.



Foot Health Tips: from the American Podiatric Medical Association

We all want to be mobile and active throughout our lives. Here are some tips to keep your feet healthy.

- Properly fitted shoes are essential. Ill-fitting shoes can cause many serious foot problems.
- A shoe with a firm sole and a soft upper is best for daily activities.
- Shop for shoes in the afternoon; feet tend to swell during the day.
- Walking is the best exercise for your feet.
- Pantyhose or stockings should be free of seams
- Bathe feet in lukewarm, *not* hot water.
- Examine your feet regularly, especially if you are diabetic. Older adults should have their feet checked by a podiatrist 2x a year.