The Double Helix Medal, initiated by Jim Watson, recognizes exceptional individuals who have dedicated their lives to advancing research or improving the health of people everywhere. Building on the monumental discovery of the double helix structure of DNA, scientists are developing ways to battle cancer and neurodegenerating diseases including asthma, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, and other genetic diseases.

More than 400 guests enjoyed presentations by Phil Donahue, Meredith Vieira, Deborah Norville, and Jim Watson, and informative video clips produced by NBC Universal. Students and faculty member Philip Sharp for his lifelong contributions to biomedical research leading to a deeper understanding of cancer.

Presented to Muhammad Ali for his public campaign against Parkinson’s disease; to Suzanne and Bob Wright (NBC Universal) for their work in bringing attention to autism through Autism Speaks; and to President and former Cold Spring Harbor faculty member Phillip Sharp for his lifelong contributions to biomedical research leading to a deeper understanding of cancer, and other debilitating diseases including autism, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, and other genetic diseases.

The Double Helix Medal Dinner was co-chaired by Laboratory President Tom Sklar, David Rubenstein, and Mark Zukerberg of NBC Universal President, Jeff Zucker. Together with numerous other previous sponsors and supporters, they raised over $2.5 million to fund genetic disease research.

What would be the use of doing science, making an amazing discovery, and never telling anyone about it? A new program at the Laboratory—Professor for a Day (PFD)—introduces high school students from throughout Long Island to the world of scientific research. It provides an opportunity for students to present their work to the scientific community, and never telling anyone about it? A new program at the Laboratory—Professor for a Day (PFD)—introduces high school students from throughout Long Island to the world of scientific research. It provides an opportunity for students to present their work to the scientific community, and never telling anyone about it?
New program gives Long Island High School students a taste of what it's like to be a professional scientist

What would be the use of doing science, making an amazing discovery, and never telling anyone about it? A new program at the Laboratory—Professor for a Day (PFD)—introduces high school students from throughout Long Island to how scientists tell each other, and eventually the world, about their research.

The program was created by Jason Williams, who is currently a laboratory technician at CSHL. “Long Island leads the country with its concentration of outstanding high school science research talent, but students who do this work rarely get the chance to see what happens when research is presented to the professional scientific community,” says Jason. “Students typically only have an opportunity to present their work in a competitive setting at science fairs, or in classrooms, where they are being asked to emulate the style of professional scientific presentations without ever having witnessed one. The Professor for a Day program lets them see how research is presented in the setting of what might one day be their peers,” he adds.

Cold Spring Harbor is a perfect place for the PFD program. Thousands of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and professors from all over the world come to the Laboratory each year to present their research and learn what other scientists are doing in their field. These meetings are the birthplace and proving grounds of the latest ideas, discoveries, and collaborations that have helped shape the landscape of biological and biomedical research. By immersing high school students in this world, they are given a unique opportunity to see how science progresses after the experiments are completed.

To date, sessions of the PFD program have been held during three recent CSHL Meetings (Channels, Receptors & Synapses, The Cell Cycle, and the 71st Symposium). Invitations to the first session were sent to several winners of the Long Island Science and Engineering Fair.

The students arrive the morning of the meeting for breakfast and orientation. Next, they sit in on the talks of the first session of the meeting. After lunch, the students attend the meeting’s poster session, where they have the opportunity for one on one interactions with presenting scientists. The students are also given the opportunity to chat with a special guest speaker during a private session that is organized for the PFD group. Topics of discussion have centered on how to fashion a plan for college that will prepare them for pursuing science as a career.

The real praise for the program comes from the students who have already participated in it:

Nandini Venkateswaran of Herricks High School said, “The Professor for a Day program was great. To witness science in action—including the energetic exchange of ideas, hypotheses, and experiments—was eye-opening for me. The fact that scientists stood up there refuting previous research and then proposing newfound solutions and theories was fascinating. I am better equipped and prepared to undertake my research project this summer!”

Vivian Chang of Half Hollow Hills High School West remarked, “The advice about how to choose a mentor and being persistent in your research will be very helpful. My favorite part of the day was the poster session. We could wander to whichever projects we were curious about. The presenters were really great about answering my questions and explaining their research to me.”

Although a direct cause and effect relationship has not been established, after attending the first PFD session, Alison Liu and Mary Martha Douglas of Manhasset High School went on to win the “Top Team Prize” (for their analysis of learning and memory in sleep-deprived fruit flies) at the 2006 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair! According to Alison herself, “The program at Cold Spring Harbor definitely added to our presentation at the Intel fair. Walking around and listening to the scientists present their work helped strengthen our own presentation.”

More information about the Professor for a Day program, application forms, and the criteria for the nomination and selection of participants are available at http://meetings.cshl.edu/mpd.htm.