

Faculty & Friends

3rd Annual Double Helix Medals



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For the third year, Double Helix Medals have been awarded by Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory to extraordinary individuals who have raised awareness of the importance of genetics research. The four recipients, honored at a gala dinner last November, exemplify the Laboratory's aim to highlight the multiplicity of ways in which such efforts can be mobilized "to improve the health of people everywhere."

The dinner held in honor of the awardees raised \$3.6 million for CSHL. It will fortify and expand groundbreaking research and education programs, including projects to develop next-generation technologies with which to study the genome.



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Two of the awardees are very closely identified in the public mind with efforts to understand the human genome: **James D. Watson, Ph.D.**, and **J. Craig Venter, Ph.D.** Both were honored for their contributions to Scientific Research, specifically, for their advocacy of the public health importance of "personalized genomes." **Sherry Lansing** was honored for Humanitarianism, while **Marilyn Simons, Ph.D.**, and **James Simons, Ph.D.**, were honored for Corporate Leadership.

Dr. Watson and Dr. Venter, both of whom played pivotal roles in the multi-year, multinational effort to sequence the human genome, are among a handful of individuals who have had their entire genome sequenced. The Double Helix Medal commemorates the decision each has made to make his sequence available for scientific use and public viewing on the Internet. Dr. Watson, now Chancellor Emeritus of CSHL, won a Nobel Prize along with Francis Crick in 1962 for their description of the structure of DNA. Dr. Venter, who heads the J. Craig Venter Institute, in addition to playing a critical role in the sequencing of the first-draft human genome in 2001, has led teams that have published the sequences of more than 50 genomes, including those of the fruit fly, mouse and rat.

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Double Helix awardee Sherry Lansing, one of the most powerful executives in Hollywood for almost 25 years, was the first woman to run a major film studio. She is a noted fundraiser for the American Cancer Society, the American Red Cross and her own Sherry Lansing Foundation. She most recently helped to spearhead "Stand Up to Cancer," a nationally televised benefit that aired in September 2008.

Dr. Marilyn Simons and her husband, Dr. James Simons, who runs the private investment firm Renaissance Technologies LLC, are co-founders of the Simons Foundation, a charitable organization founded in 1994 to fund basic research and educational programs in mathematics and the physical and life sciences. With \$38 million committed so far, the Simons Foundation expects to provide \$100 million in grants in 2009 to autism researchers at more than 30 institutions, including CSHL.

The award dinner was very generously underwritten by Mr. and Mrs. David M. Rubenstein, who were among the Chairs of the event. Others included: The Hon. and Mrs. Alan J. Blinken; Mr. and Mrs. Alan C. Greenberg; Dr. Arthur D. Levinson; Mr. and Mrs. Herbert J. Siegel; and Mr. and Mrs. Erwin P. Staller. The Laboratory thanks each of them and dozens of other dear friends whose support made the evening one to remember.



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- 1 Fran Biondi and his wife, Trustee Jamie C. Nicholls
- 2 James D. Watson, Ph.D. and J. Craig Venter, Ph.D.
- 3 Marilyn Simons, Ph.D. and James Simons, Ph.D.
- 4 Pres. Bruce Stillman, Ph.D., Sherry Lansing, and Herb Siegel
- 5 David H. Koch (c), flanked by his wife, Julia Koch (r), and Sherry Lansing