

SCIENCE&TECHNOLOGY

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THE BATTALION

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SALLIE TURNER/THE BATTALION

Dr. Shirley Jackson, a theoretical physicist, served as chair of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission from 1995 until 1999. She is now the president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She said that "there was early isolation and disbelief on some people's part" in reaction to her pursuing a science career as an African-American woman. Jackson spoke Wednesday in Rudder Theater as part of Women in Discovery Month.

More tales from Research Week

BY SCOTT JENKINS
The Battalion

At age 12, Texas A&M University-Galveston graduate student Asha Samuel saw her first manatee, sparking her ongoing interest in marine mammals. Her curiosity never floundered. The graduate wildlife and fisheries sciences major is now doing research aimed at characterizing the different types of fats in dolphin blubber to learn more about their lives, feeding habits and deaths.

Inspiration for decisions in life can come from many sources. At the Texas A&M Research Week poster session, which ends Friday at the Rudder Exhibit Hall, student researchers showcase more than just their research projects. They also express their unique experiences.

Another researcher exploring wildlife and environmental issues, rangeland ecology graduate student Julia Liao, found that her early interest in wildlife evolved into an interest in botany, and is now looking at the impact of the encroachment of

woodlands into grassland areas.

And while some study wildlife health, others look at human health issues.

A job as a laboratory technician at a Maryland military laboratory started the wheels turning on senior genetics major Stacie Green's project, which has investigated the patterns of different sub-types of HIV in Africa and ways to test for them when fresh blood samples are not available.

Junior biology major Xiomara Henriquez has always been interested in medicine and has parlayed that enthusiasm into her work — investigating the deleterious effects of the element arsenic on DNA. In addition to being fulfilling work, "Research helps to reinforce much of what we learn in class," she said.

Senior biochemistry major Brian Watkins, in his third year of a project using chickens to study the roles of melatonin receptors in circadian rhythms, echoed other researchers when commenting about his research. Watkins knew he was cut out for his work when he realized that the study was actually his own. "I realized, 'Hey, this project is all me,'" he said.

3

is the magic number

BY DAVE AMBER
The Battalion

During all the numerous talks and seminars, lunches and receptions this week marking Women in Discovery Month, Women's Week and Texas A&M Research Week, for one of those hours there is only one number to remember — three. As in chromosome 3.

Dr. Susan L. Naylor is a professor of cellular and structural biology at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. She is also Director of Informatics and Genomics of Chromosome 3 for the Human Genome Project. Her team, currently mapping human chromosome 3, is discovering links between the chromosome and cancer, among other diseases.

There are 23 chromosomes in the human genome. Chromosome 3, the third-largest chromosome in the group, represents 7 percent of the human genome, or roughly between 3,500-7,000 genes. That means 210 million base pairs, or 210 megabases of DNA.

Scientists such as Naylor have been working to map, or sequence, the complete genetic map of those 23 chromosomes

for two decades. But the race to sequence the entire genome is heating up. Naylor's group, The Human Genome Project, is racing to map the human genetic structure against several other projects, including its key competitor, Maryland-based Celera Genomics, Inc.

Understanding the structure of chromosome 3 will allow greater understanding of genetics of cancer, Naylor said.

Chromosome 3 contains six genes related to tumor suppression. Lung and other cancers work to destroy parts of those tumor suppressing sections. She said that understanding the chromosome's sequence may help to replace what is missing.

Naylor said that her team's sequencing work is helping to push the project toward a 2002 completion date.

"For the entire genome, we are at 50 percent of the rough draft," she said. "By the end of spring, about 95 percent of the rough draft should be complete. Then, until 2002, we will be filling in till it's complete."

As part of the Women in Discovery month celebration, Naylor will give an overview of the Human Genome Project and how her research fits into the project's big picture. She speaks at 10 a.m. in Rudder Theater.

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