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SOCIETY FOR NEUROSCIENCE ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF SCIENCE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH AWARDS

Awards recognize efforts in public outreach and neuroscience education, encourage pursuit of science journalism

CHICAGO — The Society for Neuroscience (SfN) announced the winners of the science education and outreach awards at Neuroscience 2009, SfN's annual meeting and the world's largest source of emerging news on brain science and health.

“Recognizing educational outreach efforts with the science education awards is critical for engaging the public about the scientific quest for knowledge and for exciting the next generation of scientists,” said Thomas J. Carew, PhD, president of SfN. “We are also honored to support up-and-coming science writers, who will be essential for conveying science information to the public.”

Science Educator Award: Janet M. Dubinsky, PhD, University of Minnesota, Department of Neuroscience
Dubinsky is a professor in the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Minnesota and actively promotes public education in the field. She is currently the chair of the school's Brain Awareness Week, Brain Bee, and Outreach Committee of the Graduate Program in Neuroscience, and cultivates neuroscience interest among middle and high school students. One of Dubinsky's most significant accomplishments was the creation of BrainU in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota. BrainU brings neuroscience to underserved schools, excites students about science, and helps school teachers include neuroscience topics in their curricula. Since its inception, BrainU has reached 107 teachers and thousands of students.

SfN founded the Science Educator Award in 2003 to recognize an outstanding neuroscientist who has made significant contributions in promoting public education and awareness about the field. The award is supported by Sanofi-aventis and includes \$5,000 and complimentary registration, lodging, and transportation to SfN's annual meeting.

Next Generation Award

Pre/Postdoctoral: Kimberly Maguschak and Michael Black, PhD, SfN Atlanta Chapter

Junior Faculty: Cynthia A. Smeraski, PhD, Colorado State University, SfN Front Range Chapter

Established in 2007, the Next Generation Award recognizes individuals nominated by SfN chapters who are making significant efforts in public communication, outreach, and education about neuroscience. The award honors an outstanding individual or team at both the predoctoral/postdoctoral level and the junior faculty level with a \$300 honorarium and a \$750 travel award to attend SfN's annual meeting. Additionally, the chapters to which the recipients belong receive \$2,000 to be used to continue outreach efforts in the coming year.

Maguschak and Black served as coordinators for SfN Atlanta Chapter's Brain Awareness outreach visits from 2006-2009 and have helped to bring neuroscience education to over 27,000 students in K-12 classrooms. Their efforts in organizing outreach efforts have brought together volunteers from local colleges and universities to provide personalized programs for Atlanta-area schools. They have also captured the attention of local legislators and were successful in their efforts to have the Governor of Georgia declare March as Brain Awareness Month across the state.

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Smeraski helped to create the Neuroscience Outreach Program to celebrate Brain Awareness Week with local junior high school science teachers. The program is aimed at a young teenage audience and utilizes volunteers from Colorado State University, with the goal of helping teens recognize the importance of science principles in their everyday lives. Smeraski currently directs the recruits and trains postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and undergraduates to speak to a secondary school audience and effectively articulate neuroscience principles.

Student Journalism Award

Undergraduate: Justin Chakma, University of Toronto

Graduate: Emily Laut, Johns Hopkins University

SfN's Science Journalism Award encourages the pursuit of a career in science or medical journalism by helping students attend the Society's annual meeting. Two awards are granted, one to an undergraduate student and one to a graduate student who are studying or pursuing science writing. The recipients receive complimentary meeting registration and \$750 to defray expenses; an orientation on navigating and reporting the meeting as a journalist; and an on-site mentor from a leading science or medical publication.

Chakma is currently a student of neuroscience and economics at the University of Toronto. He has published several reports in well-known journals such as Nature and Nature Biotechnology. Laut recently earned her graduate degree in Science Writing from The Johns Hopkins University. She has written articles for EARTH Magazine and The Johns Hopkins Magazine and is currently a freelance science journalist and grant writer. Both recipients display a passion for reporting on neuroscience and are eager to continue strengthening their science writing careers.

The Society for Neuroscience is an organization of more than 39,000 researchers and clinicians who study the brain and nervous system.

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