

### **ASHG Is Going to New Orleans...to Meet and Make a Difference!**

The 2006 Annual Meeting of our Society will take place in New Orleans on October 9–13. Following extensive discussion, the Board of Directors made the decision not to relocate the meeting because they believe that going to New Orleans is the right thing to do. In concert with this decision, the Program Committee has developed the scientific sessions under the theme of “Regeneration.” During the first week of March, Elaine Strass, ASHG Executive Director, and other meetings personnel took a comprehensive tour of the city and meeting sites.

Their visit affirmed that New Orleans will provide a beautiful and freshly renovated site for our meeting. The convention center, hotels, and restaurants—as well as the transportation infrastructure—are prepared to handle conference gatherings such as ours. Importantly, the visit reinforced the decision of the Board of Directors that our presence provides us a unique opportunity to support the city and its redevelopment efforts. The discussion of the situation in New Orleans resulted in a reflection on the impact the Society has made in previous years on the cities in which the Annual Meeting is hosted. The Society’s entire educational outreach effort actually started in response to legislative actions in Louisiana 13 years ago, and the ASHG meeting in 2001 essentially reopened San Diego for business after 9/11. We have the opportunity to make a difference again.

A central challenge for the citizens of New Orleans is the need for school improvement, since Hurricane Katrina-ravaged city infrastructure includes educational facilities and resources. Unfortunately, little of the aid that has arrived in New Orleans has addressed the need of schools for the population that has returned. ASHG has been working with state and regional science education officials to develop a strategic plan for ASHG-sponsored outreach and assistance for the area. Together, we are proud to announce three initiatives that will foster interaction between scientists and teachers and sustained inquiry-based science education. We hope our members will be as excited as we are about these efforts and will join us by supporting these projects now and at the Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

### **Educational Workshops**

Each year, ASHG organizes a high school teacher-student workshop on the day before the conference offi-

cially begins. This year will be no exception. At the convention center on Monday, October 9, the Information & Education Committee will host ~250 students and their teachers from New Orleans and surrounding parishes. In addition, this year we will also host an inaugural workshop for undergraduate educators from the area. As we move forward, ASHG has plans to develop our outreach in human genetics into undergraduate venues as well.

### **Project DESTINY**

ASHG is also working with local science coordinators and the University of North Carolina’s (UNC’s) DESTINY Project to organize a special 2-wk event throughout the area damaged by the hurricanes. DESTINY is UNC’s fleet of traveling science laboratories. The buses and vans are equipped with materials for students to perform inquiry-based, hands-on science experiments related to genetics and molecular biology. The fleet of traveling laboratories will be ready to begin work on October 9 at the convention center, to coincide with the high school workshop and the opening of the ASHG Annual Meeting. After traveling in the area, they will work in the affected region to establish a permanent professional-development center highly influenced by advances in biotechnology. To learn more about DESTINY, please see their Web site (<http://www.destiny.unc.edu/>).

### **Science Resources and Book Drive**

The school system in New Orleans and surrounding parishes is now being run by the State of Louisiana. Other area schools have been replaced by charter schools. Regardless of where a student has returned to school, the buildings are shells of their former selves. Students and teachers lack the necessary resources for effective science education. They require books, materials, and equipment. In an effort to address this principal concern of science educators in the region, we are working with Scholastic Books and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press to organize a book and equipment drive. In conjunction with the school officials, we have compiled a list of useful books and laboratory equipment for teachers and students. Some examples are published on our New Orleans Outreach page (<http://www.GenEdNet.org/NewOrleans/>). By partnering with these publishers and other companies, we have garnered a substantial discount for these materials. We will continue to develop additional collaborations.

### **T-Shirts for a Cause**

A special-edition T-shirt, featuring the cover of the AJHG January 2006 issue, will be available for sale. Shirts will be sold for \$20, with \$5 from each sale serving as a donation to our New Orleans outreach efforts. Conference attendees are encouraged to preorder the shirts with their meeting registration.

We hope all ASHG members and friends will consider joining in the "Regeneration" of New Orleans by donating to this important cause. To assist members in their planning for participation in this opportunity, sample support levels are posted on the GenEdNet site shown above, so that individuals, small groups, laboratories, or even entire departments will be able to collect funds for specific items. To encourage the success of this en-

deavor, the ASHG Board of Directors approved up to \$20,000 of matching funds for these efforts. All donations can be submitted online through the secure Web site dedicated to this effort.

Questions, comments, or additional ideas for ASHG efforts in New Orleans can be submitted by e-mail to [GenEdNet@ashg.org](mailto:GenEdNet@ashg.org). For the most up-to-date information on New Orleans, please visit the official New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau Web site (<http://www.neworleanscvb.com/>). For further meeting information, please visit the ASHG Web site (<http://www.ashg.org/>) and click on Annual Meeting.

Be a part of the future of New Orleans and attend the ASHG meeting there this autumn!

JOANN A. BOUGHMAN  
Executive Vice President  
American Society of Human Genetics