



I Unconventional Conference Focuses on Innovation

A colorful “un-conference” to encourage innovation and creativity took place last month at BGU’s Marcus Family Campus. Sponsored by the Bengis Center for Entrepreneurship and Hi-Tech Management of the Guilford Glazer School of Business and Management, “Innovation 2010” attracted an interdisciplinary audience.

Based on an American model and brought to Israel by Dr. Yossi Vardi, the country’s internationally famous start-up guru, Innovation 2010 provided a platform for interaction that organizers hoped would create an atmosphere to stimulate and develop original ideas. Vardi opened the event, declaring, “This is really a celebration; it’s heart-warming to see the amount of talent, enthusiasm and initiative here.”

This was the first time an “un-conference” took place at BGU, explained Prof. Amos Drory, incumbent of the Ernest Scheller, Jr. Chair in Innovative Management and Vice-President for External Affairs. “Judging from the enthusiastic response,” he noted, “we hope to do this again.”



Blowing bubbles at the Innovation 2010, proving that creative thinking can also be fun

More than 500 participants showed up at the spirited event – some as young as 17 – to demonstrate their innovative projects, listen to new ideas, brainstorm and just do some plain hi-tech schmoozing. The interdisciplinary event attracted students and faculty from almost every field, as well as business people and representatives of various companies who took the opportunity to meet one other and have some unscripted fun.

“The idea,” explained organizer and head of the Bengis Center Prof. Dafna Schwartz, “was to bring a lot of people together so

they could interact creatively, think together and come up with new ideas.”

The agenda and contents of Innovation 2010 events are determined by the participants themselves. At the opening of the “un-conference,” more than 30 would-be innovators gave one-minute previews of what they intended to present during the day. Workshops and presentations included topics such as how to increase brain power, marketing tools for new ideas, the art of persuasion, out of the box thinking, lessons learned from failures, launching

a start-up with no money and juggling balls as a way to increase brain function and impress your kids.

“Here there are no generals; everyone is a corporal,” Vardi told the attendees, later explaining that “since in Israel everyone understands military terminology, this was a way of explaining that at this event everyone is an equal. One of the purposes of the “un-conference” is to encourage those people who feel less secure and who are a bit bashful to talk about their ideas. This is a way of empowering them.”



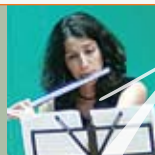
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Dr. Eric E. Whitaker Explores Opportunities for Collaboration



Dr. Eric E. Whitaker (left) and Prof. Shaul Sofer

Dr. Eric E. Whitaker, the Executive Vice President for Strategic Affiliations and the Associate Dean of Community-Based Research at the University of Chicago Medical Center (UMC), was in Israel this month to learn more about community-based medicine, including primary care and public health.

“It is frightening how parallel our work is, yours with the Bedouin and other minority populations, and ours on the South Side of Chicago,”

he said after a day-long visit to the Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS). “I have the belief and hope that we can work together to create a collaborative effort,” he said.

Whitaker spent the day learning about BGU’s unique community outreach programs, meeting with University President Prof. Rivka Carmi, herself a neonatologist and geneticist who worked in the Bedouin community for most of her professional career, and

FOHS Dean Prof. Shaul Sofer, incumbent of the Lubner Family Chair in Child Health and Development, who is also head of the pediatric critical care unit at the Soroka University Medical Center. He learned about the University’s comprehensive “Healthy City” plan for Beer-Sheva and other unique programs that target preventative care in otherwise underserved population groups.

Whitaker explained that the UCMC is “also trying to use the limited resources of a university to help a population defined by a geographic area.” He added that the South Side of Chicago includes some 1.1 million residents who have limited access to health care and who exhibit many of the illnesses that are related to their low socio-economic situation. The next step, he believes, is to bring a full delegation of healthcare professionals to BGU to explore potential areas for collaboration.

“I was very impressed by Dr. Whitaker’s past accomplishments and his vision for the community health and welfare of the residents of the South Side of Chicago,” said Carmi after their meeting. “His philosophy of using education as a tool for grassroots prevention programs is very similar to our approach and opens up a whole new realm of areas for potential cooperation between the two universities.”

Whitaker was already familiar with the pioneering work of Israeli doctors in the field of community medicine. “My first introduction to community care was through the work of Sydney Kark,” he related, explaining that Kark coined the term “community-oriented primary healthcare” to describe his work in South Africa. “I worked on something called Project Brotherhood,” he added, “but now we want to scale it up to a larger area.”

Agreement with Hungarian University Signed

An agreement on academic and cultural cooperation with the Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB) was signed by Rector Prof. Jimmy Weinblatt and CUB Rector Prof. Tamás Mészáros in March.

The purpose of the general agreement is to improve,

through collaboration, the scientific and educational level of the two institutions and to promote and intensify their friendship and mutual understanding through cooperation in education, research and academic management. The two parties will conclude more specific

agreements in the future to promote cooperation and exchange projects in particular fields.

The agreement was signed during a three-day visit to Hungary by Prof. Weinblatt and Dr. Sharon Pardo, the Director of the Centre for the

Study of European Politics and Society (CSEPS). The visit, designed to promote cooperation with Hungarian universities, was coordinated by the CSEPS and the Israeli Embassy in Hungary.

Ladislaus Laszt Ecumenical and Social Concern Award Presented to Father Patrick Desbois



President Prof. Rivka Carmi and Father Patrick Desbois

"I am not optimistic, but I am a fighter," said Father Patrick Desbois, President of the Yahad-In Unum organization in France, on receiving the Ladislaus Laszt Ecumenical and Social Concern Award at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev as part of Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Father Desbois, a French Catholic priest, has devoted his life to researching the Holocaust, fighting anti-Semitism and furthering the relations between Catholics and Jews. He is the Director of the French Conference of Bishops for relations with Judaism, Advisor to the Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyon, and Advisor to the Vatican on the Jewish religion.

But he is best known for his work uncovering mass graves of Jews who were "killed by bullets" – by special units of Einsatzgruppen who murdered Jews and political opponents

in mass shootings throughout the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

Father Desbois' life mission began as a personal journey to understand the stories of his grandfather. He became haunted by the history of the Nazis in Ukraine as a child growing up on the family farm in the Bresse region of eastern France. His paternal grandfather, who was deported to a prison camp for French soldiers on the Ukrainian side of the Polish border, told the family nothing about the experience. But he confessed to his relentlessly curious grandson, "For us it was bad; for 'others' it was worse."

Desbois and his team have interviewed more than 1,450 witnesses and uncovered mass graves throughout the region. "People said that the killings were secret," he explained in his remarks after receiving

the prize, "but there were witnesses; people who were children and teenagers then are able to point to a place and say, 'Here is where they were buried.'"

Founded in 2004, Yahad-In Unum now employs 15 people who are engaged in searching the Soviet and German archives in their quest to document the killing of the 1.5 million Jews of the region. They make some 15 trips annually to the region. But, he warns, it is a race against time, as he believes that in the next five to six years there won't be anyone left who remembers the horrific events that took place from 1941-1945.

"Our mission is to gather the maximum amount of evidence because the number of deniers is growing," he explained, noting that they use ballistic experts to document the ammunition used in the killings, findings which are cross referenced and checked against the archival material. "We don't ask people how they feel about what they saw. We ask them to point out in what direction the people went and how the killing was done."

"We cannot build a modern European state on the mass graves of Jews and gypsies who have never been [properly] buried," he added, noting that the greatest threat today are thieves who are digging up the mass graves in a search for gold and other

valuables. "Himmler used to say, 'Who remembers the killing of the Armenians?' I cannot accept that in 20 years people will say, 'Who remembers the massacre of the Jews and gypsies?'" he said.

First presented in 1985, the Award honors "religious personalities of international repute who advance the causes of tolerance, hope and vision." Speaking on behalf of the family, Professor Emeritus Moshe Dariel spoke directly to Desbois in French and noted that "his work truly embodies the values that the Prize was created to recognize."

University President Prof. Rivka Carmi praised Father Desbois for his important work and presented him with a scroll that read: "For his noteworthy devotion to fostering Christian-Jewish understanding and for his heroic efforts, as President of the organization, in revealing the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis through its courageous attempts to gather testimonies and locate hundreds of mass graves; his deep commitment to ensuring a respectful burial for the unnamed victims of the Holocaust and his renouncement of all acts of genocide around the world; and in recognition of his dedication to promoting dialogue and cooperation between the different faiths, and trust, tolerance and harmony between all members of the human race."

Blind Cyclists Pay Tribute to BGU Student Volunteers Raising Guide Dogs

Bikers, blind students and future guide dogs met for a fun encounter in March. Organized by *Can Velo* – the Tandem Bike Group dedicated to increasing public awareness about the issues facing the blind, the event brought together riders from around the country and student volunteers who raise puppies to be guide dogs. The group rode ten kilometers from Kibbutz Hazerim in the south to the Marcus Family Campus in Beer-Sheva in order to pay tribute to the student volunteers.

The group's name has a double meaning: *Can* = able, *Velo* = bicycle in biking lingo; the Hebrew word, *Can* = "yes," *Lo* = "no." So, "yes and no" also refers to the

sighted and non-sighted. The group boasts 60 enthusiastic members, including 20 blind graduates, who ride top-of-the-line Cannondale Tandem Bikes.

Fifty bicyclists took part in the event, including 15 blind graduates of the Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind who comprise the "blind half" of pairs who ride tandem. Amongst the blind participants was BGU alumna Eynav Maharabani, who earned her Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from the Glazer School for Business and Management.

The student volunteers were waiting for them at the campus, accompanied by their puppies. There was an



Student volunteers, riders and their dogs enjoy meeting one another on campus

emotional moment when the blind riders met the puppies. Some joked that they had "chosen" their future guide dog who will take the place of their current dog when he

or she "retires." The students also got to take a ride on the special tandem bikes with blindfolds and learn about the life of a guide dog after they finish their training.

Professor Otto Horch Receives Ben-Gurion Medal

At the opening session of the conference "Thirty Years of Austrian/German-Jewish Literary and Cultural Studies" in March, Prof. Dr. Hans Otto Horch, Ludwig Strauss Professor of German-Jewish Literary History at the RWTH Technical University in Aachen, Germany, was awarded the Ben-Gurion Medal in recognition of his life-long achievements and contributions in the field of German-Jewish Studies.

According to the organizer

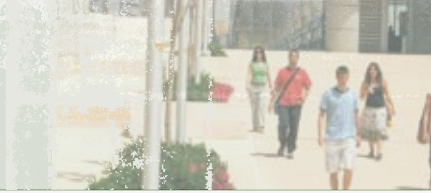
of the conference Prof. Mark Gelber, Director of BGU's Center for Austrian and German Studies and a member of the Conrad and Chinita Abrahams-Curiel Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Horch has had an exceptionally productive scholarly career marked by numerous important publications.

He noted that he is responsible for digitalizing over one hundred Jewish periodicals which appeared in German

over the last two hundred years, making this database accessible to scholars worldwide. He also established almost 20 years ago, and continues to direct, the *Conditio Judaica* series on German-Jewish literary and cultural history, which has published over 70 volumes and become the most important book series in this field.

The conference was officially sponsored by the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Center

for German-Jewish Literature and Cultural History in Jerusalem, the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp, the Austrian Cultural Forum of Tel Aviv, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Leo Baeck Institute of Jerusalem, and was organized by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in cooperation with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Leo Baeck Institute and the Institute for Jewish Studies in Antwerp.



I Prof. Smadar Cohen Wins Prestigious Rappaport Prize

Prof. Smadar Cohen has been awarded the prestigious Rappaport Prize for Excellence in Biomedical Research. The Prize is given annually to an Israeli researcher whose research has either significantly advanced or has the potential to significantly advance any medical or biomedical field.

The incumbent of the Claire and Harold Oshry Chair in Biotechnology, and head of the University's Avram and Stella Goldstein-Goren Department of Biotechnology Engineering, Cohen received the prize for the development of a

pioneering product that prevents cardiac tissue damage following acute myocardial infarction, thereby improving cardiac function and survival.

Developed together with her research partner Prof. Jonathan Leor, Director of the Neufeld Cardiac Research Institute at Tel Aviv University, the hydrogel, called BL-1040, is a resorbable liquid polymer that is administered via the coronary artery during standard catheterization and flows into the damaged heart muscle.

In August 2009, BioLineRx Ltd., the Israeli clinical



Prof. Smadar Cohen

stage drug development company, granted a license to an American company to continue to develop it in clinical trials. "I thank the committee that chose me

to receive this prestigious award which values the work of academic researchers contributing to human welfare through their research," said Cohen.

I Aharon Yadlin Receives Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement

Former Education and Culture Minister Aharon Yadlin, who has been intimately involved in the development of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev since its inception 40 years ago, was awarded the 2010 Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement and Exceptional Contribution to Society and the State.

A resident of the Negev since 1946, Aharon Yadlin has been one of the leading figures in Israeli public life for many years. His relationship with BGU began in 1968, when

he was Deputy Minister of Education and supported the idea of a university in Beer-Sheva. He later became a member of its Board of Governors and still serves as Vice-Chairman of its Executive Committee.

In 1974, as Minister of Education in Yitzhak Rabin's first government, Yadlin pushed for the newly created Institute for Higher Learning in the Negev to become a full-fledged university. "I was among those who truly believed that this must be

a unique university," he stated, adding, "We were also committed to Ben-Gurion, as founder of the country and as someone who chose to live in the Negev."

Yadlin served as a member of the Palmach in the War of Independence, and for many years as Secretary-General of the United Kibbutz Movement. As Education Minister, he was instrumental in the passing of the Ben-Gurion Law upon the former leader's passing that called for the establishment of the Ben-Gurion Heritage

Institute and a university-affiliated research center (today the Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism) and an institute for desert research, now the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research in Sede Boqer.

Yadlin was awarded an honorary doctoral degree by BGU in 1984 for his work to develop the Negev. The Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement was awarded at a ceremony on Israel's Independence Day.

Israeli Artists Explore David Ben-Gurion's Legacy



Haim Finkelstein, *Untitled*, 2009

An art exhibition dedicated to the legacy of Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion has opened on the Marcus Family Campus as part of the University's 40th anniversary celebrations. Under the title, "The 'Old Man': David Ben-Gurion and His Legacy in the Mirror of Israeli Art," the exhibit brings together works by more than 60 artists and was curated by students in the curatorial course from the Department of the Arts under

the supervision of Prof. Haim Maor.

According to Maor, the exhibit "examines the image and legacy of David Ben-Gurion as portrayed in Israeli art." He explains that many contemporary Israeli artists knew Ben-Gurion personally, and some were directly influenced by his mythological status as a person and a leader. In the exhibit Ben-Gurion is depicted by the artists in



Yaakov Hefetz, *The Nation's Leaders/Flag*, 2009

various ways and through diverse points of view.

Some of the works portray him as heroic, larger than life, while other works expose his human and vulnerable side. Many of the artists use the image of Ben-Gurion to express their criticism regarding the present Israeli reality. For example, "The Man Standing on his Head" represented in caricature, mosaic, drawing and sculpture raises questions about the gap between values of simplicity and modesty of the past, and the hedonism and consumer culture of today. Contemporary works mostly examine, by means of the image of Ben-Gurion, the way to the attainment of the Zionist dream.

The exhibition is being held on the occasion of the University's 40th anniversary. In dealing with the BGU's namesake, Maor explains "that Ben-Gurion is relevant now more than ever." While the exhibition does not pretend to answer the question "who is the 'real' Ben-Gurion?" it does present the Ben-Gurion of each of the artists participating in it.

Participating artists are: Farid Abu-Shakra, Yaacov Agam, Ariel Assau, Avishay Ayal, Micha Bar-Am, Avner Bar Hama, Yoav Ben David, Elishu Eric Boucobza, Werner Braun, Yuval Caspi, Zoya Cherkassky, Shlomo Cohen, Joseph Daddon, Neta



David Tartakover, *David Ben-Gurion*, 1979

Elkayam, Tsahi Farber, Uri Fink, Haim Finkelstein, Yair Garbuz, Moshe Gershuni, Paul Goldman, Gary Goldstein, Lahav Halevy, Yaakov Hefetz, Avner Katz, Michel Kichka, Uri Lifshitz, Moshik Lin, Pinchas Litvinovsky, Haim Maor (Moshkovitz), Ido Michaeli, Raphy Maymon, Yonatan H. Mishal, Motti Mizrahi, Guy Morad, Noam Nadav, Eyal Onne, Khader Osahah, David Perlov, Hanoch Piven, Ilya Rabinovich, Osnat Rabinovich, Dan Reisner, Beno Rothenberg, Reuven Rubin, David Rubinger, Tamir Sher, Keren Shpilsher, Shlomo Suriano, David Tartakover Dmitry Yuzefovich.

The exhibition is on display until June 8th in the Avraham Baron Gallery in the Zalman Aranne Central Library and the George Shrut Visitors Center in the Samuel and Milada Ayrton University Center. It is open to the public.

| Hand-Clapping Songs Improve Cognitive Skills

The first study of hand-clapping songs revealing a direct link between those activities and the development of important skills in children and young adults and even university students.

“We found that children in the first, second and third grades who sing these songs demonstrate skills absent in children who don’t take part in similar activities,” explains Dr. Idit Sulkin a member of the University’s Music Science Lab in the Department of the Arts. “We also found that children who spontaneously perform hand-clapping songs in the yard during recess have neater handwriting, write better and

make fewer spelling errors.”

Dr. Warren Brodsky, the music psychologist who supervised her doctoral dissertation, said Sulkin's findings lead to the presumption that “children who don’t participate in such games may be more at risk for developmental learning problems like dyslexia and dyscalculia. There’s no doubt such activities train the brain and influence development in other areas. The children’s teachers also believe that social integration is better for these children than those who don’t take part in these songs.”

As part of the study, Sulkin went to several elementary

school classrooms and engaged the children in either a board of education sanctioned music appreciation program or hand-clapping songs training – each lasting a period of 10 weeks.

“Within a very short period of time, the children who until then hadn’t taken part in such activities caught up in their cognitive abilities to those who did,” she said.

Sulkin says that no in-depth, long-term study has been conducted on the effects that hand-clapping songs have on children’s motor and cognitive skills. However, the relationship between music

and intellectual development in children has been studied extensively, prompting countless parents to obtain a “Baby Mozart” CD for their children.

She also found that hand-clapping song activity has a positive effect on adults: University students who filled out her questionnaires reported that after taking up such games, they became more focused and less tense. “These techniques are associated with childhood, and many adults treat them as a joke,” she said. “But once they start clapping, they report feeling more alert and in a better mood.”

| Students Provide a Helping Hand to the Elderly



BGU students brought some color into the lives of elderly and needy Beer-Sheva residents by giving their apartments a fresh coat of paint before Passover. The painting activity in low-income neighborhoods was part of the Open Apartments Program in the Community Action Unit

Lifetime Achievement Award for Prof. Ora Kedem

Prof. Ora Kedem, a pioneer in desalination technologies, received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual conference of the Israel Water Organization in March this year.

Kedem, who shared the 1961 Israel Prize for Natural Sciences with Prof. Aharon Katzir, began her scientific

career in the field of membrane biophysics, which later became the basis for her activity in modern desalination techniques. It was this area of research that first brought her to Beer-Sheva for a year in 1967. After retiring from the Weizmann Institute of Science she agreed to return to BGU as the founder and head of the Department of Desalination

and Water Treatment in 1995, a post she held for eight years.

The challenge at BGU, she recalls, was the application of desalination research to real-life processes. She says she was inspired by the work of American scientist Sidney Loeb, who revolutionized the field of reverse osmosis and whose discoveries are

the basis of desalination techniques until today.

The department she founded, now part of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, has achieved outstanding international recognition.

Leaders Discuss Social Policies at Ninth Annual Conference for Child Welfare

“Every kindergarten in its natural and unruly state is, in some sense, a ‘microcosm’ of the Israeli parliament,” joked Knesset Speaker Reuven (Ruby) Rivlin at the Opening Plenary Session of the Beer-Sheva Conference for Child Welfare. Now in its ninth year, the Conference is sponsored by the National Council for the Child, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the City of Beer-Sheva.

Rivlin spoke about the importance of teaching democracy to the next generation. “My hope is that next year you will add a panel dedicated to ‘Children and Democracy,’” he said, noting that only two months ago the Knesset launched a program to bring more than 70,000 children to its new visitors’ center to stress the importance of the democratic process. “We have brought children as young as four years old,” he said. “It is essential that they be exposed to the ideas of

democracy and its symbols – the rule of law and the importance of parliamentary debate, he explained. This is not about marketing, it is about promoting the values of our country.

Director of the National Council for the Child Dr. Yitzhak Kadmon noted at the conference that in addition to the five primary rights for all children as outlined historically by Zeev Jabotinsky – food, housing, healthcare, education, and clothing – he would add protection from those who would cause them harm. “Too many times over the past months we have heard about children who have been left ‘exposed,’ without protection, and abused. It is our responsibility, and that of our government, to ensure that this does not happen.”

Beer-Sheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich said he found hope in the innocence of children



Speaker of the Knesset Reuven Rivlin speaking at the opening of the Conference for Child Welfare

who still believe that they can do anything and change their world. The children and youth of today are our future of tomorrow, he said.

University President Prof. Rivka Carmi commended the

organizers of the conference for holding the event in the southern region, “where we have special problems caused by the inequalities of the distribution of resources, but where we also have unique solutions.”



Exhibition Highlights Official Medals and Awards

Significant events in the history of the region as reflected in original official documents and medals were the focus of a recent exhibition at BGU entitled “Official Awards and Orders in Eretz [the land of] Israel and [the State of] Israel.”

Drawn from the private collection of Prof. Emeritus Shaul Ladany of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, the exhibition displayed rare awards and orders, among them certificates and documents covering the period of 1840 until today. Included were official awards in Eretz Israel at the time of the Ottoman Empire, the Australian and New Zealand forces and the Yishuv (pre-State Jewish community) at the time of the British mandate.

On display was a medal presented in 1840 by the Ottoman Sultan to the troops

who liberated the Acre citadel from the Egyptian General Ibrahim Pasha; medals presented in 1918 to Anzac soldiers and British forces who conquered Eretz Israel; the medal that Dr. Haim Weizmann presented in Jerusalem in 1918 to the soldiers of the Jewish Legion of Eretz Israel; awards presented to those who participated in the tower and stockade operations; awards presented to Irgun members and prisoners; Israeli bravery awards; civil awards such as the Kaplan Prize; a Righteous Gentiles Medal from Yad Vashem; Member of the First Knesset medal presented by the Speaker of the first Knesset Joseph Shprinzak; and Syrian and Iraqi awards presented to soldiers who fought against Israel in the War of Independence.

Although Ladany is famous as a race walker, his collection



Medals from Iraq (left) and Syria awarded to soldiers who fought against Israel in 1948.

does not include official sports medals, with one exception – the sports award given in 1939 to Efra (Reuven) Dafni from Ein Gev who, together with Hannah Szenes, parachuted behind German lines in 1944.

Ladany is a survivor of Bergen-Belsen. He has devoted his life to both the sport of race walking and to the field of industrial engineering. He participated in the 1968

Mexico Olympics and survived the 1972 Munich Olympics, set the 50 mile world record, won the 100 km world championship and set records around the globe. In his field of research, he has published over 10 books and 100 scientific papers, obtained eight US patents and held academic positions such as chair of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management at BGU.

Algal Matter May Reduce Blood Pressure

A team of researchers from the Landau Family Microalgal Biotechnology Laboratory at the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR) headed by Prof. Zvi HaCohen, is studying an algal mutant that is capable of accumulating up to 15 percent (of dry weight) of a Polyunsaturated Fatty Acid (PUFA) called DGLA (in comparison to less than 0.4 percent in other algal sources).

This mutant is the only plant source of DGLA, which can be used for reducing blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels, thereby diminishing the risk for heart attacks. DGLA is also beneficial in treating chronic inflammations and blood vessel diseases.

“Omega-6 PUFA,” explains HaCohen, incumbent of the Maks and Rochelle Etingin

Chair in Desert Research and Rector-Elect of the University, “are necessary as components of brain cell membranes and are of various nutraceutical uses. DGLA is one of these PUFA, but appears in nature only as an intermediate in the biosynthesis of other compounds and does not accumulate to any appreciable concentration. Therefore, there is no natural source for DGLA

and although its positive effects are well known, very few clinical studies concerning DGLA have been conducted.”

The research team also included Director of the Landau Laboratory Prof. Sammy Boussiba; Director of the BIDR Prof. Avigad Vonshak; Dr. Inna Khozin-Goldberg; and Ph.D. student Pushkar Shrestha.

MSIH Students Travel to Ethiopia

A group of 14 fourth-year students from the Medical School for International Health (MSIH) spent their spring vacation in Ethiopia learning about medicine in the developing world by seeing it with their own eyes. Operating in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center, the MSIH is the only American-style medical school in the world that incorporates global health issues throughout all four years of medical study.

Organized by Prof. Mick Alkan from the Faculty of Health Sciences and one of the founders of the MSIH, the trip granted fourth-year students an opportunity to volunteer in different parts of the country.

“After arriving in Addis Ababa, the students were divided into small groups: some learned

about tropical dermatology and leprosy, while others took part in a pediatric rotation at a local hospital.” They were accompanied by Dr. Agi Golan, a neonatologist at the Soroka University Medical Center and a member of the Faculty of Health Sciences, who presented a number of lectures at the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa.

Annetta Madsen from St. Paul, Minnesota travelled to a university hospital in the northern province of Gondar to see a type of surgery that is found almost exclusively in Africa – surgery to correct obstetric fistula.

Obstetric fistula is an injury of childbearing caused by several days of obstructed labor without timely medical intervention to relieve the

pressure. The consequences of fistula are life shattering: The baby usually dies and the woman is left with chronic incontinence. Because of this, women are often abandoned or neglected by their husband and family, ostracized by their communities and left to rely on charity. The condition can be corrected surgically, and in recent years, several charities have been set up to bring this medical service to women and transform their lives.

“Since this is something I am interested in doing someday, this was an important opportunity to get to see the surgery and to meet these Ethiopian doctors who are in the process of setting up a fistula center,” explained Madsen.

“I thought the doctors were

really impressive in their knowledge, even though their infrastructure is poor and they need more resources. They work very hard to give the best care they can with what they have. I hope to stay in contact with them and make a more extended visit in the future.”

Nathaniel DeFelice from Sacramento, California joined local medical students in the Pediatrics Unit at University of Gondar hospital. “It was a good experience to hear about the cases over the weekend and to watch how the interns worked with the attending doctors,” he said, noting that the experience allowed him to see some extremely “interesting cases” that he would be unlikely to experience outside of Africa.

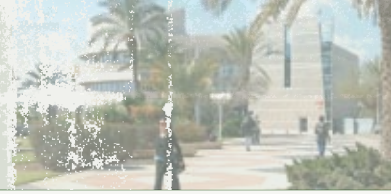
New University Gift Shop Opens



View of the new gift shop

A new gift shop opened in the lobby of the Zlotowski Student Center, offering University mementos that range from stylish polo shirts to signature ballpoint pens. The store is affectionately named “Ha’tzrif” (the hut) in Hebrew, referring to the house that David and Paula Ben-Gurion lived in after their retirement on Kibbutz Sede Boqer.

Operated jointly by the Department of Public Affairs and Academon, a nationwide chain of university bookstores, the store is open Sunday-Thursday, 10:00 am-4:00 pm.



I New Chamber Music Course Launched

It was a full house at the first recital of the University's new chamber music course.

"We prepared for seventy people," said Prof. Rivka Carmi as she looked out into the Joya Claire Sonnenfeldt Auditorium that was filled to capacity. "We never imagined that there would be so much interest," she continued, noting that clearly the need for such a course is long overdue.

Speaking at the recital, the initiator of the program Prof. Ute Deichmann explained that the project came about last year when she heard a student speaking at the Board of Governors Meeting who related that he was at BGU because he wasn't accepted into the Israeli Philharmonic. "In a second, I imagined all the musically talented students here," she recalled, and concluded that "we should try to find some of these students and create chamber music at BGU." She thanked the University for its ongoing support of the program organized under the auspices



The first of eight ensembles opened the event

of the Office of the Dean of Students and called upon more students to register, especially violists and violinists.

The evening included performances by eight chamber music ensembles comprised of 12 students and two affiliated performers. Daniel Lachish, himself a musician and the coach of the

program, explained how far the groups have come since they started six months earlier. "Many of the students hadn't played their instruments in years and were completely unfamiliar with the world of chamber music," he said. "It wasn't always easy to become accustomed to hearing things differently. It is like learning a new language."

He commended the students for their hard work and willingness to invest in their music despite being first and foremost dedicated to their academic studies. And though he described the whole performance as something of a "small miracle," it was clear that for members of the audience, it was music to their ears.

I Prof. Shlomi Dolev Elected Chairman of the IUCC

Prof. Shlomi Dolev of the Department of Computer Science, incumbent of the Rita Altura Trust Chair in Computer Sciences, and Head of the Lynne and William Frankel Center for Computer Science, was recently elected Chairman of the Governing Council for the Inter-University Computation Center (IUCC).

Dolev first joined Ben-Gurion University in 1995. He was among the founders of the Department of Computer Sciences in 2000, and served as the first head of the Department. His research focuses on the fields of self-stabilization, distributed computing, cryptography, security, communication

networks and optical computing.

The IUCC is a non-profit organization established by Israel's eight universities and is supported by the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education. The IUCC deals with communication infrastructures,

digital information services, learning technologies and grid computing infrastructures. IUCC also promotes cooperation in these areas among its member institutions, and between research institutes and organizations dealing with research and instruction, which share these common interests.

Weight Loss Diets Can Reverse Carotid Atherosclerosis

A two-year study led by researchers from the Faculty of Health Sciences found that healthy, long-term weight loss diets can significantly reverse carotid atherosclerosis, a direct risk factor for strokes and heart attacks. The study is one of the first to prove the potential of moderate weight loss as a strategy to reverse atherosclerosis – hardening of the arteries – in overweight and mildly obese people.

The study was conducted by a research team led by Dr. Iris Shai of the S. Daniel Abraham International Center for Health and Nutrition in the Department of Epidemiology, together with researchers from the Nuclear Research Center in Dimona and Soroka University Medical Center.

According to the study that was published in *Circulation*, the leading journal of the American Heart Association, the researchers used the novel imaging technique of three-dimensional ultrasound at the beginning and after two years, measuring changes in carotid artery vessel thickening of plaque to determine whether diet can reverse atherosclerosis, a process that naturally increases with age.

The team compared three diets among moderately overweight, mostly male, participants. The findings showed that there was a five

percent decrease in average carotid vessel-wall volume and a one percent decrease in carotid artery thickness after two years.

Compared to participants who experienced an increased carotid wall volume, those with decreases showed significantly greater weight loss; decreased systolic blood pressure and an increase in apolipoprotein A1, a marker of “good cholesterol.” These participants also had reduced homocysteine levels, an amino acid in the blood that is related to higher risk of stroke or heart attack.

According to Shai, “Even if we experience some partial weight regain over time, long-term adherence to weight loss diets are effective for reversing carotid atherosclerosis as long as we stick to one of the current options of healthy diet strategy. This effect is more pronounced among mildly obese persons who lose more than 5.5 kgs. [12.1 lbs.] of body weight and whose systolic blood pressure decreases by more than 7 mmHg.”

Dr. Yaakov Henkin, a cardiologist at Soroka University Medical Center, who led the carotid measurements, explains that “the importance of these results is in the understanding that over two years, changes in carotid atherosclerosis are

more strongly predicted by diet-induced changes in blood pressure than by changes in lipoprotein levels, which are commonly believed to be more important for the coronary arteries.”

The team studied 140 people (88 percent men, average age 51, Body Mass Index 30.4) who were randomly assigned to a low-carbohydrate, low fat or Mediterranean diet as part of the Dietary Intervention Randomized Controlled Trial (DIRECT) study.

The study conducted at the Nuclear Research Center required significant cooperation between staff, participants and their spouses. Workplace cafeteria managers worked with clinicians and nutritional advisers to transform the food service program and provide healthy food according to each of the low fat, low carb and Mediterranean diet regimens. Along with workplace nutritional counseling, trial participants’ spouses were educated on maintaining the diet strategy at home.

“Lifestyle projects in the workplace might be a perfect platform for long-term successful interventions. As low-fat, low-carbohydrate and Mediterranean diets all induced regression of carotid atherosclerosis, a low-carbohydrate diet seems like



Dr. Iris Shai

a safe and efficient alternative to low-fat and Mediterranean diets in reversing the atherosclerosis process,” says Dr. Dan Schwarzfuchs, the director of the medical clinic of the Nuclear Research Center where the intervention was conducted.

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Further details of the research projects described here may be obtained from: newsdesk@bgu.ac.il, Tel: 972-8-646-1753

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