



## Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation

**Embargoed until Thursday, April 30, 2009**  
April 27, 2009

Contact: Judi Shellenberger (315) 258-0090  
Cell Phone (315) 730-6353

### FOUR RECEIVE 2009 LIFE SCIENCES AWARDS

*Maryland High School AP Biology Student, Educator at Delaware Charter School, Associate Professor at University of Florida, and North Carolina AP Chemistry Student Receive Monetary Awards*

**April 30, 2009, Washington, D.C. – \$5,000 Life Sciences Biology Student Award** - A senior at Centennial High School in Ellicott City, MD, Henry Zheng, has been conducting research at The Johns Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory since his sophomore year. Under the supervision of Dr. Jeffery Lesho, Biomedical Engineering Group, Henry has worked on his computational neuroscience project that improves the performance of an arm prosthesis. He has received many awards and recognition for this research including the international 2008 FUSION conference in Köln, Germany and in 2009 from coast to coast—Seattle to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Zheng was chosen as the second recipient of the ***Biology Student Award***, sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The Foundation and U.S. Chamber have formed a public-private partnership to sponsor four ***Life Sciences Awards*** to recognize Americans judged to exemplify excellence in life sciences. The competition was open to researchers/scientists, educators and AP high school students around the country working in the field of life sciences.

***\$10,000 Life Sciences Educator Award*** - In 2008, *U.S. News and World Report* ranked The Charter School of Wilmington, Delaware, 41<sup>st</sup> among high schools nationwide. The reason is because of teachers such as Mrs. Beenu Gupta, Biology teacher at The Charter School, the second recipient of the ***Educator Award***. Mrs. Gupta's room is dubbed the "Disneyland of Biology." Students have been known to sing and dance as they dive into Molecular Biology. Mrs. Gupta said: "I have always been passionate about learning and teaching, so I decided to be a high school teacher, where I could provide a solid foundation for college-bound students. My goal has always been to make learning fun, and a life-long experience."

***\$25,000 Distinguished Chairmen's Life Science Award*** - Bryon Petersen, Ph.D., Associate Professor at the University of Florida, is recognized worldwide as a foremost authority in hepatic stem cells and their role in Liver Pathobiology. He is currently conducting research in stem cell biology and how it relates to the patho-physiology of the liver. This research showed that bone marrow derived cells could become functioning hepatocytes, and several clinical trials have been attempted based upon his discovery.

– M O R E –

In addition, Dr. Petersen is investigating the usefulness of gene/stem cell therapy in the treatment of certain inherited metabolic diseases of the liver—Crigler-Najjar Syndrome (C-NS) and Glycogen Storage Disease (GSD). Children with C-NS are unable to eliminate bilirubin from their bodies and, therefore, must undergo daily 12-hour exposure to special blue lights, just to survive. Without daily treatments, a child would suffer brain damage, muscle and nerve damage and death due to bilirubin toxicity. Children with GCS suffer in a different way, having to eat/drink a corn-starch meal every four hours to maintain their blood glucose levels. If they don't, they become hypoglycemic and will fall into a coma and die. His studies combine two high-profile fields—stem cells and gene therapy—that will hopefully cure these children of their disease, not just treat them.

***\$5,000 Life Sciences Chemistry Student Award*** – Justin Grzyb is a senior at Westchester Country Day School, High Point, North Carolina. Since a freshman in high school, Justin has been spending his summers at Johns Hopkins University. As a sophomore, he spent the summer under the supervision of Professor Tim Weihs, Department of Materials Science and Engineering. He spent his time endlessly reading research papers and learning about technology surrounding NanoFoil, a reactive thin film composed of alternating, nano-scaled layers of Nickel and Aluminum. The next summer he was given his own project—find a way to create uniform, curved particles of NanoFoil, and then measure the reaction velocity of these particles inside a vacuum. After a summer of trials and tribulations, he was successful. His work was acknowledged in two different research papers, and he is the co-inventor on a provisional patent for creating microscopic particles of NanoFoil.

This Fall, Justin plans to attend Cornell University School of Engineering to pursue a degree in chemical engineering and taking part in the Air Force ROTC program. He was recently nominated as a Rawlings Cornell Research Scholar, which will allow him to spend the next four years working on his own undergraduate research project.

The Foundation was established by Congress in 1992 to encourage and promote new discoveries, and this mission is accomplished through the sponsorship of programs such as the ***Life Sciences Awards***. The U.S. Chamber strongly supports American industry dedicated to protecting human health through testing, manufacturing and marketing of biomedical products. With these goals in mind, the Foundation and the Chamber forged its public-private partnership.

On Thursday, April 30, the Foundation and the Chamber will present the four awards at a luncheon award ceremony from 12:00-1:30 p.m. All events will be held at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Headquarters, 1615 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. A Panel Discussion on **Progressing Forward Through Science: Facilitating Innovation for Greater Health** will be held earlier in the day beginning at 9:30 a.m.

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is an independent Federal government agency established by Congress in 1992 to “encourage and support research, study and labor designed to produce new discoveries in all fields of endeavor for the benefit of mankind.” The Foundation has created ***Frontiers of Discovery—Work in Progress and Discover the Future*** programs that honor “cutting edge” innovations; innovative ideas of America’s youth; and teachers who dedicate their lives to students despite great personal hardships. For more information, please visit: [www.columbusfdn.org](http://www.columbusfdn.org) or contact Judi Shellenberger at (315) 258-0090.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world’s largest business federation, representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region. More than 96 percent of the Chamber’s members are small businesses with 100 or fewer employees, 70 percent of which have 10 or fewer employees. Yet, virtually all of the nation’s largest companies are also active members. We are particularly cognizant of the problems of smaller businesses, as well as issues facing the business community at large.       # # #