

AAAS NEWS & NOTES

edited by DIANA PARSELL

Ex-Astronaut Joins Project 2061

George "Pinky" Nelson, a former astronaut who completed three Space Shuttle flights and logged more than 400 hours in space, is set to become deputy director of Project 2061, AAAS's long-term initiative to reform science education nationwide. Nelson, an astronomer, will assume the position on 1 October.

"I've been a long-time supporter of Project 2061's work. I know it well and I believe it offers the kind of comprehensive, well-developed approach to science literacy that will pay off in real results for students," he said.

Nelson is now an associate professor of astronomy and education at the University of Washington, where he has served as associate vice provost. He has been a leader in science education reform in the Seattle area.

Previously, he was a researcher in astronomy at the

Joint Institute for Laboratory Astrophysics in Boulder, Colorado, and at universities in Germany and the Netherlands.

On AAAS's National Council for Science and Technology Education, Nelson has helped guide the work of Project 2061 and has participated in its R&D activities. As deputy director, he will oversee the day-to-day operations, develop long-term strategies in R&D and outreach, and build coalitions within the scientific and education communities.

For more information on Project 2061, contact Mary Koppal, by phone at: 202-326-6643; by e-mail at: mkoppal@aaas.org.



"Pinky" Nelson

Healthy Move for Minorities

AAAS's Black Church Health Connection Project, which promotes health awareness among African-Americans by teaching basic concepts in biology and health, is expanding its outreach

to other audiences.

The Latin American Youth Center in Washington, D.C., recently received a \$10,000 grant to implement the program, funded by the National Institutes of Health. Some of next year's grants are earmarked for Hispanic participation.

AAAS project associate Edward Gonzalez said the Health Connection Project is targeting Hispanics in the present expansion because studies show that diseases such as diabetes, alcoholism, heart disease, and high blood pressure are high in both Hispanic and black communities. "We hope to implement the program in many communities—not only minority—where health concerns like these exist," he said.

AAAS's Directorate for Education and Human Resources began the Health Connection Project in 1991 as an extension of a church-based program of after school math and science activities. Concerns about disproportionately high rates of diseases in



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Anatomy lesson. Cristina Encinas uses AAAS materials in activities at D.C.'s Latin American Youth Center.

African-Americans spurred requests for practical science information that would help black adults and children better understand how their bodies work and the impact of unhealthy behaviors. AAAS developed program materials and hands-on activities, along with workshops for training local scientists and health practitioners as volunteer instructors. Today, the program has branched out to other community settings.

Carmen Duran of the Latin American Youth Center said the AAAS project will build on existing health education activities at the 25-year-old center, which serves 3000 children a year. Currently, the center has programs in teen health promotion and HIV/AIDS prevention. The AAAS project requires at least two scientists or health professionals to participate at each site where the activities are offered, so "the students also will be exposed to positive role models in the community," Duran said.

A key tool for the Hispanic outreach is a community health education handbook, *La Comunidad y La Salud*, developed by AAAS and ASPIRA, a Latino youth organization in New York City.

Community and church groups interested in implementing Health Connection programs can attend a conference, "Weaving a Safety Net: Faith Communities and Education Reform," on 2 and 3 December in Washington, D.C. The project also has just completed an informational 11-minute video.

For more information, call program manager Sandra Parker at 202-326-6682 or send an e-mail message to: sparker@aaas.org.

Election Ballots Due

Ballots for the election of AAAS president-elect, members of the Board of Directors and the Committee on Nominations, and section officers were mailed to all active AAAS members (as of the 6 September issue of *Science*). Members enrolled in second and third sections will receive a separate ballot for each section.

If you did not receive a ballot or received an incorrect one, write to: Linda McDaniel, AAAS Executive Office, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Your vote is important, so please return ballots by 15 November. Ballots postmarked after that date will not be counted.

AAAS members can nominate candidates (including themselves) for president-elect and the Board of Directors for election in the fall of 1997, for terms beginning in February 1998. For a list of this year's candidates, see the "AAAS News & Notes" section in the 28 June *Science*, and see the contents page of any recent *Science* issue for a list of current Board members.

Please send nominations with the candidate's curriculum vitae no later than 1 November to: Gretchen Seiler, AAAS Executive Office, 1200 New

York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Nominations will be considered by the AAAS Committee on Nominations at its fall 1996 meeting.

Task Force Seeks Ideas

The Task Force on Career Concerns of Young Scientists, created by the Board of Directors, urges AAAS members to submit comments on existing activities and ideas for new initiatives.

In establishing the task force, the Board took note of mounting evidence of problems in the job market for Ph.D. scientists and engineers in many fields. The panel, chaired by Daryl Chubin of the NSF Directorate for Education and Human Resources, is examining AAAS activities relating to scientific careers—such as "Science's Next Wave"—and will propose an agenda for the Association, including enhanced coordination of present activities as well as new initiatives. The task force is scheduled to report to the Board at its 13 and 14 December meeting.

If you have ideas, contact staff officer Stephen D. Nelson in the AAAS Directorate for Science and Policy Programs. Phone: 202-326-6600; fax: 202-289-4950; e-mail: snelson@aaas.org. Or write to him at: 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20005.

A Window on Washington Policy-Making

With a Ph.D. in microbiology, Wendy Yap is comfortable probing DNA recombination and transposon mechanisms of bacteria. Now, after a brief detour to earn a master's in public health, Yap welcomes "the opportunity of going from the microscopic to the macroscopic," learning the big picture of how science and public policy are made.

She is a member of the first class of year-long AAAS-EPA Environmental Fellows. The program is the newest addition to an array of AAAS Science and Engineering Fellowships that began more than two decades ago to place scientists in Congress as technical advisers, and now reaches into many corners of the federal government.

Yap and four other Fellows will work at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Center for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) learning risk-assessment methods, doing health and ecological studies, and helping EPA's Office of Research and Development to set research priorities based on risk.

AAAS also runs a 10-week summer fellowship program at EPA in which midcareer scientists and engineers work as special consultants on a variety of research projects. Michael Slimak, NCEA associate director for ecology, said mutually positive response to that program spurred creation of the year-long Environmental Fellows. "They're here to learn the policy and politics of risk assessment. We in turn learn cutting-edge stuff from them," he said. "Most haven't had prior risk assessment experience, but they're well-trained and have deep experience in certain areas."

Bruce Rodan, for example, has a medical degree and master's degrees in environmental studies and public health. But, he admitted, he's stumped when it comes to applying that

expertise to broad social issues. "As scientists we know how to acquire facts. But how do you move from scientific knowledge and uncertainty into policy and action?" he said. "That's what the federal government is all about," he added, "and I hope this experience will give me insight into how it's done." Maria Carroquino, who has a Ph.D. in environmental toxicology, has similar expectations of the fellowship: "I see science as an important background, but I'm more interested in the big picture. The ultimate goal is to use scientific information to clean up the environment, but you're too far away from that in the lab."

The program is particularly attractive, the Environmental Fellows agreed, because risk assessment—systematically sorting out all the risks associated with a particular activity and understanding how the individual factors play a role—is an important tool right now in environmental policy-making.

Ecologist Susan Bassow wants to learn ways of applying risk assessment techniques to issues



Environmental solidarity. AAAS President Jane Lubchenco, left, met Environmental Fellows Maria Carroquino, Susan Bassow, Bruce Rodan, Liza Wilson, and Wendy Yap.

of global change. "Risk assessment is a tangible way to compare risks and different mitigation strategies related to an issue," she explained. "With something as huge as climate change it's very useful to say, 'Here's a range of actions. Some are very narrow but very severe. Others

may be less severe but apply globally.' Risk assessment is a useful way of looking at the tradeoffs of those issues."

For Liza Wilson, an environmental engineer specializing in bioremediation, risk assessment is "a prioritizing tool for scientists and engineers," as well as a way to "help in conveying risk to the public in a way that's meaningful to their lives." Wilson said: "People are tired of living with the uncertainty that surrounds hazardous and toxic wastes. They're calling for scientists and engineers to bring a new approach to balancing the need to deal with hazardous waste as well as protect public health."

John Abbotts, a biochemist and a 1985–86 Congressional Fellow now working in EPA's Office of Pesticides Programs, said countervailing forces have contributed to the current interest in risk assessment. "There seems to be much public concern over toxic chemicals in general. And on the opposite side are forces that want to eliminate environmental regulation," he said, adding: "Risk assessment has become a focal point for both these groups." Slimak said the

Fellowship Application Deadline

Applicants for the following policy-oriented AAAS Science and Engineering Fellowships must be U.S. citizens and have a Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral experience, although persons with a master's degree in engineering and three years of post-degree experience will be considered. The year-long programs begin in September.

More information is available at <http://www.aaas.org/spp/dspp/stg/fellow.htm> on the AAAS Web site. To request an application, call: 202-326-6600. Or send a message: by e-mail to science_policy@aaas.org; by fax to 202-289-4950. Applications for the 1997 programs are due by 15 January.

■ **Congressional Fellows.** One year on Capitol Hill as special legislative assistants for members of Congress, committees, or support agencies.

■ **Diplomacy Fellows.** Assignments at the U.S. State Department or the U.S. Agency for International Development working on scientific and technical subjects in international affairs or development assistance.

■ **Environmental Fellows.** Year-long positions at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency doing risk assessment or 10-week summer positions as research consultants on a variety of projects.

■ **Technology Policy Fellows.** One year at RAND Critical Technologies Institute providing expertise in industrial R&D, technology transfer, international competitiveness, and related areas.

topic has been in the spotlight on Capitol Hill because of efforts to enact risk legislation as part of the Republicans' "Contract With America."

This month, the EPA-bound Fellows met with other AAAS Fellows for an intensive orientation to acquaint them with Washington ways and provide overviews of areas in which they will be working. Many of the speakers were former AAAS Fellows.

"The program has launched many careers in science and public policy," said Claudia Sturges, who manages the fellowship programs in the AAAS Directorate for Science and Policy Programs. Over the years, she said, about a third of all the Fellows have found permanent positions in Washington, and alumni are well represented in policy-making circles at all levels.

At a reception, AAAS President Jane Lubchenco, a marine ecologist, used an analogy from her discipline to convey the pervasive and lasting influence she said the Fellows have had on public policy. "Your wisdom," she told the group, "makes you keystone species—species that play dominant roles in an ecosystem and affect many other organisms."