

NWABR's 25th Anniversary Gala Builds Community

By Troy Chapman

Have you ever stopped to think about the role biomedical research has played in your life? Maybe it's a treatment you, your loved one or even your pet received that helped improve you or their quality of life, or, perhaps, even saved a life. These stories are what motivate Northwest Association for Biomedical Research (NWABR) to promote trust in biomedical research, and we have been doing so for twenty-five years. On June 20th at the Museum of History and Industry we celebrated that accomplishment at our 25th Anniversary Gala. Gala guests enjoyed the company of their peers, spoke with



Guests visiting Student Bio Expo Award Winners

students who won awards at the Bio Expo, celebrated the accomplishments of respected leaders in the biomedical research community, became acquainted with NWABR's new team and, of course, enjoyed the food! However important the dinner and desserts were to everyone, this message was central: We, NWABR staff, are here to serve our members and community because we believe in the importance of biomedical science.



Guests sit down to dine at the gala.

The first message offered to guests at the gala was that NWABR is committed to serving its members. Over the past year, NWABR's board, comprising representatives from member institutions, evaluated the strategic direction of NWABR and endorsed this commitment. NWABR identified the core programs that have had the greatest impact on our community, including our popular student-education and public-outreach programs and our educational conferences. NWABR didn't stop there, though. In order to serve our members better, we had to learn about their needs, and we

set out on a fact-finding mission throughout last fall and winter. One of our discoveries from these meetings will come to fruition this coming fall, as we build a network for security and crisis communication professionals and aim to host a conference focused on crisis preparedness and security protocols.

The second message our gala guests heard was NWABR's renewed focus on serving as a voice for public trust in biomedical research. Our Executive Director, Ken Gordon, struck a humorous note to deliver this



NWABR's Executive Director, Ken Gordon, addresses the audience

message, but couched it with significant facts. Gordon discussed the state of science in the United States and highlighted polls by the Pew Research Center demonstrating a steady decline of public trust in science. He noted that this applies to science of all kinds, including climate science, evolution and biomedical research, and includes attacks against critical thinking. NWABR's job and focus are to reverse that trend and to bring along all parties that are willing to speak up for science. One outcome of this is an inclusive NWABR capable of bringing

together various perspectives in order to increase the of the biomedical community's voice.

Other evening highlights included a discussion facilitated by Juan Cotto from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. Cotto asked guests to discuss the ethical implications of a fictitious research proposal, and highlighted the work of Institutional Review Board's (IRB's) who review research proposals. Cotto explained the need for public involvement in oversight committees and encouraged guests to become involved. Guests also heard from Bergen McMurray, cofounder of HiveBio Community Lab. McMurray's keynote speech described the founding of HiveBio, a do-it-yourself lab for Seattle's citizen-scientist community, and told the story of her cofounder Katriona Guthrie-Honea. Guests learned that Guthrie-Honea had been an award winner at NWABR's Student Bio Expo, which Guthrie-Honea cited as the largest motivating factor in her decision to pursue a career in science. McMurray explained the significance of NWABR programs by citing the butterfly effect, in which one seemingly small intervention can lead to a much larger impact. In McMurray's case, the butterfly effect led her to meet Guthrie-Honea and cofound HiveBio.

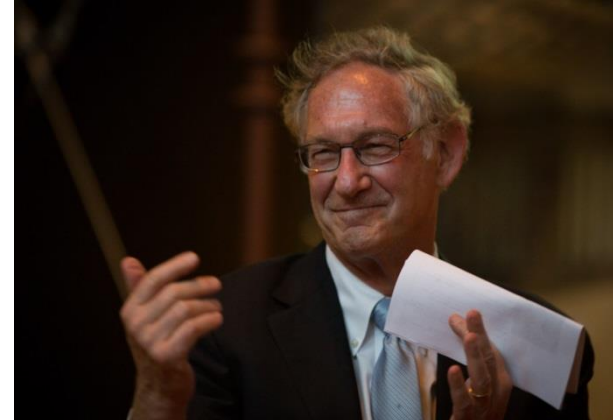


Juan Cotto, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, leads the audience through an Institutional Review Board scenario



Bergen McMurray, Co-founder HiveBio Community Lab

NWABR presented two awards to leaders in the biomedical community. We created the Buster and Nancy D. Alvord award, and presented the inaugural award to Nancy D. Alvord—a prominent Seattle philanthropist. The Buster and Nancy D. Alvord award will be given annually to individuals who demonstrate a commitment to biomedical science and the civic fabric of their community. Nancy Alvord was received with a standing ovation and gracefully accepted the award with a simple and heartfelt “thank you.” Next, NWABR presented the Dr. Alvin J. Thompson Award to Dr. Larry Corey of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. Dr. Corey reflected on his career and discussed the possibilities and progress of biomedical discovery.



Nancy D. Alvord accepts the Buster and Nancy D. Alvord Award and Dr. Larry Corey accepts the Dr. Alvin J. Thompson Award

At the gala, I performed Master of Ceremony duties, and shared our values and motivation. I explained to guests that NWABR believes in the future of biomedical discovery and the work of our members. We believe in biomedical research’s ability to improve the health and well-being of society. We understand that the value of scientific research is not always fully appreciated, and it is our job to educate the public about the importance of ethical biomedical research. That is why stories about life saving treatments are so crucial to what we do.

For example, a few months ago I attended a Washington Branch of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science trade show. At the show, I met Brian Anderson of Allentown, Inc., who told me the [story of his young daughter](#), Liviya. At seven years old, Liviya was suffering from a rare blood condition, aplastic anemia, which is characterized by bone marrow failure. She was perilously close to losing her life. However, she was saved by doctors who used specialized treatments derived from research conducted on horses and rabbits. There are countless stories like Liviya’s to be told, and we are here to ensure that these stories do not go unnoticed.

In the end, we will all be affected by the complex field of biomedicine, whether a loved one, a pet, or we ourselves are treated for an ailment. This is what motivates NWABR staff. NWABR wants to see medical advancement continue for the betterment of society, and with a strong membership, committed staff and generous supporters; we can continue to promote trust in biomedical research in order to secure the future of scientific discovery for coming generations.