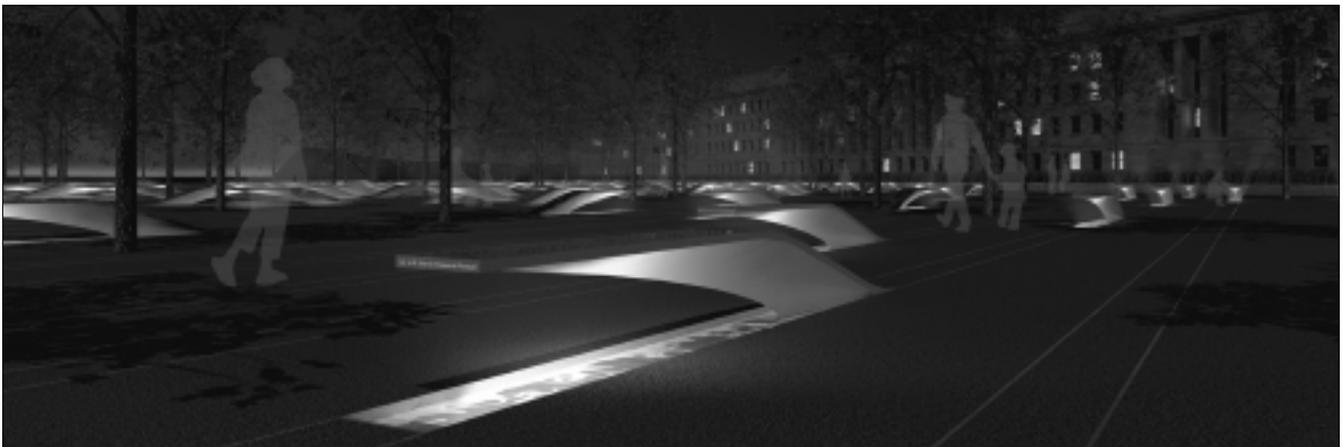


## Connecting with Schepp Scholars Dedicated to Building a Better World

In this issue of *Schepp Connections*, we are focusing on the work of Schepp Scholars who are committed to building a better future—both in this country and abroad—in areas ranging from healthcare and the economy to human rights and world peace. Keith Kaseman, for example, along with his partner, is designing the Pentagon Memorial, in remembrance of those who died there on September 11—a monument that will help the future remember the tragedies of the past and, hopefully, learn to avoid them. [n](#)



Artist renderings of the Pentagon Memorial depict a daytime overview (top), and a nighttime view (bottom). Schepp Scholar Keith Kaseman and Julie Beckman's design was selected from over 1,100 entries.

## Building the Pentagon Memorial

SCHEPP SCHOLAR KEITH KASEMAN AND HIS PARTNER, JULIE BECKMAN, WIN DESIGN COMPETITION FOR PENTAGON 9/11 MEMORIAL

BY TRUSTEE BANNING REPPLIER

On February 27, 2003, Keith Kaseman and Julie Beckman learned that from a total of 1,126 entries submitted to the Pentagon Memorial Competition, theirs had won.

“We were incredibly shocked,” Keith wrote to Edythe Bobrow, “and filled with a sense of overwhelming honor. We originally entered the competition very quietly, working at night after our day jobs and not telling anyone what we were up to. We just felt a natural obligation to contribute something positive to the conversation and decided to send in an idea. The range and depth of emotions that we experienced in New York during that first year after September 11 drove our hearts into the project and to be honest, we were content with the simple fact that we made the deadline for submission. We thought that would be the end of the trail for us with respect to the Pentagon Memorial.”

But the competition jury, comprised of two former Secretaries of Defense, two family members who had lost loved ones that day, and



Barbara McLendon, Julie Beckman, Keith Kaseman, and Edythe Bobrow

seven distinguished design professionals, thought otherwise. After being among the six finalists to make it to Phase Two of the competition, they eventually emerged as the winners.

“Not only had we won the competition,” Keith wrote, “we learned that we would have to speak at a press conference from inside the Pentagon a few days later. Let me just say that both Julie and I thought we knew what it meant to be nervous—but realized we had no idea what ‘nervous’ was.”

Standing in the Pentagon Press Room, Keith and Julie explained their idea for the Memorial to the world. Since that day, their lives have not been the same—thanks to intense media coverage, hundreds of

emails and phone calls, commuting between New York and Washington, D.C., then quitting their jobs to launch their own office and moving to D.C. fulltime.

Keith and Julie are extensively involved with the project on every level, working to ensure that the Memorial is built with the highest possible quality. On May 19, 2004, they came to New York and presented their work to a meeting of the Foundation trustees as an expression of his “deep gratitude for all the help and encouragement I’ve received.”

*Keith Kaseman was born in Big Spring, Texas and grew up in Minot, North Dakota. After earning his BS from Arizona State University in 1995, he worked in California then moved to the Czech Republic as project designer and architect for the first reprogrammed industrial loft in Prague. In 1998, he entered Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture and was granted Schepp scholarships for the following two years while he completed his degree. n*

### Leopold Schepp Foundation Awards summary 1925–2004

Student Category	# of Awards	\$ Awarded
Endeavors (1925-1932) High School Youth	3,922	\$ 784,400
College/university	17,557	20,643,250
Research/post doctoral	151	1,636,815
May 19, 2004	<b>21,630</b>	<b>\$ 23,064,465</b>

# Building Stronger Bodies and Hope for the Future

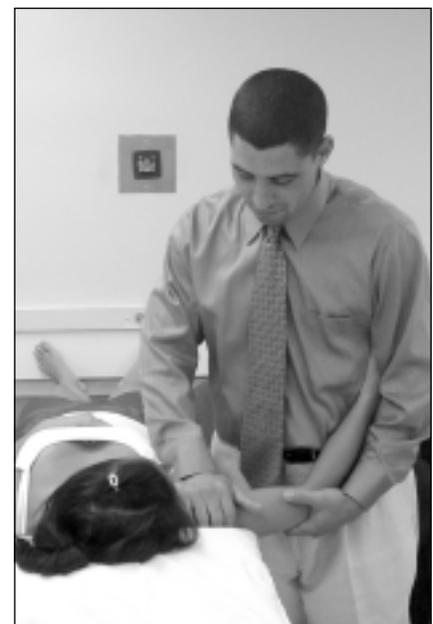
BY SCHEPP SCHOLAR RAY ROMAN

Ever since I was a freshman, at the University of California-Irvine, I have known that by having the necessary tools to build stronger, more efficient bodies while maintaining proper function and body mechanics, I could help people reach their full, functional potential. Through this I would be able to contribute to “Building a Better World.” My first goal was to become a Certified Athletic Trainer and a Physical Therapist. I recently received my certification as an athletic trainer and I will be graduating from Chapman University in 2006 with my Doctorate degree in Physical Therapy. Combining both of these medical fields will allow me to treat a variety of patients from children to young adults, college athletes to Olympic athletes and, geriatric patients. I have recently decided to start a Foundation, called “Netz-4-Life.” The main mission of this Foundation is to give back to our youngsters their dreams and aspirations. I want to go around to poverty-stricken neighborhoods where kids do not have the same opportunities as others and give them a sense of hope. I want to go to their local parks and basketball courts and hang up basketball nets for these kids to show them that people do care about them and that they should be rewarded for “putting the ball in the hoop,” which symbolically represents making the right choices in life or learning from our mistakes. The

main goal of this Foundation is to give kids hope and a sense of love and affection and the realization that they, too, can succeed and contribute.

I have realized over the years that the best gift in the world is having the ability to help others. When we leave this wonderful world, the only thing we leave behind is a “dash.” This “dash” represents our entire life, with the date we were born in front of it and the date we passed away after it. Therefore, the only thing we truly leave behind is our memories and how we have affected others and changed the world for the better. There is some hatred in this world which is sadly overrepresented in the media as opposed to the loving and caring which tends to get overlooked. A smile can go a long way and so can a frown. I have been raised to never look down upon anyone and always remember that tomorrow is another chance to make a change in my life as well as in someone else’s life. Whether it is buying a kid you do not know an ice cream because he does not have enough money or helping an elderly lady with her bags, these are the little things that people remember the most. The ability to express the love one has for life in his/her work is such a beautiful thing. I am adamant about becoming a physical therapist because I feel I will be able to not only affect people’s func-

tional health but also affect their outlook on life. I feel that I have been blessed throughout my life, especially with people who truly care about me. My family has been there for me every step of the way, helping me to reach for my dreams. I also need to thank the Leopold Schepp Foundation from the bottom of my heart because they too have helped me both physically, mentally, and financially through the tough trials in my life in and out of school. They have believed in me when sometimes I did not believe in myself. I am truly thankful and appreciative to the Foundation for helping me realize my potential and for the fact that I, too, can contribute to building a better world. n



Ray Roman

## Retired? Who, me?

BY FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (AND NEW TRUSTEE) EDYTHE BOBROW

It's too soon to comment at any length about my retirement but I am very content. During the first week of September, I came to grips with the realization that this was not the usual summer vacation and that I was no longer expected in the office. I looked around the living room and my eyes lit on to two elaborate boxes of chocolates—a gift to me from my husband who, over the years, had heard me say how one day I would just loll around the house and eat “bon-bons.” And so, I opened the first box and began the selection process. Then the telephone rang and ever since I have been on the move.

I have touched base with long lost relatives and friends who are forgiving about my previous lack of communication. I have pulled books and folders off of shelves and have stacked them on chairs, the floor, the couch, and the counter tops in my home office and have labeled each pile with identification notes such as “Schepp Connections,” “Retirement Plans,” and “Condominium”—(soon after my neighbors learned that I planned to retire, I handily won election to the presidency of the condominium in which we live—no one else would



Edythe Bobrow in 1976, shortly after beginning work at the Foundation.

even consider taking on the role). Stacks also include six books in the *Dummies* series—*Windows 98*, *Word 2002*, *America Online*, etc. I have every intention of reading the contents of all the items just mentioned and, upon completion, I will file everything back where it was before.

In October, my husband and I got on the campaign trail and participated in an out of state voter registration drive. I am back on the Meals On Wheels standby delivery route. One day I even phoned Suzanne Guard to inquire if I could have my job back.

But best of all and most thrilling is my new status—*trustee*. The Board of Trustees has honored me by changing the Foundation's bylaws to allow for 22 trustees and subsequently electing me to join them. I am proud and happy and look forward to continuing as an active and official participant in the Leopold Schepp Foundation, staying in touch with alumni, and remaining in the learning mode that sets in whenever the opportunity to meet a new candidate presents itself. It is that pulse of the future that truly resounds.

So much for retirement. n

## Getting to Know SuzanneClair Guard—our New Executive Director

BY TRUSTEE BRUNO QUINSON

“Schepp scholars are simply amazing,” said SuzanneClair

Guard, the new Executive Director of the Schepp Foundation, during

an interview in early October in her office. Before coming to Schepp,

Suzanne had been Director of Financial Aid at Barnard College for 30 years.

Edythe Bobrow first contacted Suzanne to discuss a Schepp Scholar who was attending Barnard. This student had a complicated situation that was jeopardizing her eligibility to retain her Schepp scholarship. Edythe was pleased with how the problem was handled and a few years later called Suzanne to make a luncheon date at the Harvard Club. Unbeknownst to Suzanne, Edythe had decided to retire and she thought Suzanne might be a good fit to fill her position at the Foundation. "When we had lunch, we spoke mainly about our families and very little about the Schepp Foundation," Suzanne exclaimed with a smile as she remembered that first meeting. "Edythe and I seem to cherish our families above all else and we enjoyed talking about them."

A few months after that delightful lunch, Edythe called to invite Suzanne to meet Barbara McLendon, President of the Board of Trustees. This encounter dealt only with Schepp and soon after Suzanne was invited again to meet a number of trustees. At the end of that meeting, she was offered the position to head the Schepp Foundation. Everything happened so fast that Suzanne, who had never thought of leaving Barnard, was faced with a major decision. After talking it over with Tuck Stephenson, her husband of 31 years, who is a Wall Street executive, she took the plunge and accepted the position. She was sold by Edythe's insistence that at Schepp there exists a sense of family—the scholars, the trustees, and the staff.

Suzanne and Tuck have no children but they are the godparents of 5 children. Suzanne grew up on a ranch in Arizona and graduated from the University of Arizona. Her 85 year old father, the patriarchal center of the family, still goes on 5 day horseback trips, plays golf and travels throughout the world. Suzanne's father, step-mother, and entire family are extremely active. They have an annual holiday tournament at the family ranch. Each year, the two core teams are the same with added visitors and neighbors, and the competition is intense. The activities are tennis, golf, ping pong, pictionary, bowling, pool, croquet, and gin rummy. There are



Suzanne Clair Guard

banners, special t-shirts, chants, and scoreboards with the two captains meeting regularly to 'argue' the rules and scoring. It is great fun and the source of much laughter.

In her free time, Suzanne likes to read and loves to travel. She is passionate about Africa and hopes to return there many times. She is now planning a 10-day horseback trip across the Serengeti in May 2005, after the end of the rainy season. It's a propitious time to travel there because food is plentiful during the rainy season and the well-fed

animals will not be interested in devouring her horse.

Suzanne is greatly missed at Barnard. After a search of 8 months, they still have not been able to find someone to take her place. Suzanne has been devoting evenings to Barnard to help out until her office is fully staffed again. She misses the proximity of the office to her home as well as her many friends at Barnard. She used to walk to work with her dog, Timba, a Samoyed. He was with her in the office everyday. Suzanne believed that he had a therapeutic affect on students and their parents who were agitated or confrontational. They would usually see Timba, smile and start talking about the dog and forget their anger.

Now Suzanne is getting used to taking the subway every day (without Timba). Her trip takes anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes. One evening she was complaining about commuting to Tuck, who quipped with a loving smile, "Welcome to the real world."

Suzanne plans to spend her first year at the Foundation learning the current policies and procedures. She hopes to streamline the application process through the use of technology. She has already purchased a fax machine, installed high speed internet, and communicates regularly through email. "I do not want to lose the very special and individualized attention that each Scholar has learned to expect through the years. Hopefully, technology will eventually allow more time to work with the scholars. I already feel the warm bond that exists among the trustees and with the scholars and I feel honored to be part of the Foundation's very important mission." n

## Building a Better Future for People with Disabilities

BY SCHEPP SCHOLAR DOUGLAS COOPER

I am one month into my first year of law school at Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, NH. My plans for the future are progressing, albeit slowly and tediously. Right now I am taking foundation courses in legal writing, tort law, contract law, and civil procedure. One of my objectives for my legal career is to advocate for the disadvantaged. This is the first step, if you will.

Despite having Cerebral Palsy, I'm an Eagle Scout, a Special Olympian (dressage riding), and a cum laude

graduate of Saint Anselm College. I would not have achieved any of those goals without guidance from my parents, scout leaders, coaches, teachers, and professors. Having received the benefits of many wonderful role models, I want to be a role model myself. My experience as an Eagle Scout has taught me the value of service to the community. I feel that since I have been a beneficiary, I ought to be a benefactor.

That is where I want my study of law to take me. I hope to be a

role model for people with disabilities or with other obstacles to overcome. In my undergraduate years, I participated in several urban ministry trips. Those trips taught me the value of helping others help themselves.

I can help others help themselves and be a role model whether or not I am a lawyer. The knowledge that I gain in law school will equip me to effect positive change in society and to be the best role model that I can be. <sup>n</sup>

## Bringing Healthcare to the Underserved

BY SCHEPP SCHOLAR LARISSA JENNINGS

Currently, I am beginning my second year in a Master's in Health Science program in the Department of International Health at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. This semester, I will be working in Bangladesh with a neonatal health project as part of my internship requirement. It is a four-

month assignment with *Project to Advance the Health of Newborns and Mothers*, a collaborative project of JHSPH, *Save the Children USA*, Centre for Health and Population Research, and the government of Bangladesh. My assignment includes data collection and analysis for the purposes of policy and planning. It will culminate with a Master's thesis this Spring 2005, prior to graduation in May.

After graduation, I plan to continue in my studies through a doctoral program in population and family health. I am eager to continue with my studies and engage in public health leadership and research in the upcoming years.

Specifically, my interests are in health systems research and evaluation with particular focus on mater-

nal and child health issues in developing countries and underserved communities in the U.S. I am interested in initiatives aiming to improve quality and access to health care for children and women, including infants and newborns. Oftentimes, this requires evaluation and analysis of current programs and policies, as well as conducting research to develop new projects.

Over the next several years, I would like to direct community-based maternal and child health projects and contribute substantially to current research and policy-planning in the field. This includes working with local governments, national or international organizations, and non-profit groups. Ultimately, my goal is to return to academia as a professor in population and family health. <sup>n</sup>



Larissa Jennings

## Getting Down to Business with the Environment

BY SCHEPP SCHOLAR SISSEL WAAGE

I want to begin by briefly telling you my career trajectory. I started my career in the early 1990s, focusing on rural economic development and human rights. It was only after work and research in northern Norway, in former whaling communities, that I really began to understand the obvious—that it was the environment that made these areas tick. Environment was the basis of people’s livelihoods and context in which human rights struggles were played out.

I became involved in environmental conservation programs in the enclave communities surrounded by Lake Malawi National Park in southern Africa and in former logging communities in the Pacific Northwest. The immense role that companies play in shaping the environment of these communities and the options that they face became increasingly clear. Corporate-owned trawlers in Lake Malawi were affecting fish populations, as was community harvesting of juvenile fish. And corporate-owned timber mills were the core of economic life in the

Pacific Northwestern rural communities in which I worked.

Very few people and groups in the early and mid-1990s were focused on working with companies on integrating environmental and human rights issues into strategy and operations through new practices and solutions. Therefore, I shifted my focus to “market-based” initiatives and eventually began to work with large businesses on the integration of environmental and social justice into corporate business models.

There are many challenges that we face in the world today—from climate change through biodiversity loss and egregious human rights abuses. There is also increasing acknowledgment of the issues in academic, non-profit, and business communities. And there continue to be many sad and difficult things happening in the world. But this is where we are. It is what we are facing. So the question becomes how do we address it?

This is the context in which the organization I currently work for, The Natural Step, emerged—to look



Sissel Waage

difficult and sad situations in the face; to acknowledge what is happening; and say this is the reality in which we live today; to still be inspired; and to develop solutions and new pathways forward.

The cases in a book that I recently edited, *Ants, Galileo, and Gandhi: Designing the Future of Business through Nature, Genius, and Compassion* (Greenleaf Publishing, 2003) show that there are solutions emerging and that we can shift away from being reactive. I feel great excitement about the immensely creative opportunities for moving toward the future. n

## Trustee Anne Coffin fills a need in New York’s art world

BY SCHEPP SCHOLAR FRANCESCO FIONDELLA

**O**n the Wednesday after the presidential elections, I went to Chelsea to meet with Schepp Trustee Anne Coffin, who is the founder of the International Print Center New York, a nonprofit

gallery dedicated to printmaking. The city had settled into an odd repose, given the furious windstorm of politicking during the previous weeks. But all was abuzz at the IPCNY as the center put the final

touches on a new exhibition, set to open the following night.

“It’s New York City Print Week, our busiest time of the year,” Coffin tells

*(continues on next page)*

me, over the whine of a cordless drill. She is well dressed, gracious and unflappable, in spite of the frenzy around her. We walk around the small gallery space, treading carefully around the scatter of boxes, tools, and plexiglas covers that will encase some of the exhibit's works. "We still need to print the labels to go next to the prints!" she says, laughing at herself. The prints are a parade of colors and styles and sizes, over 40 in all.

"The artists are not printmakers exclusively. Printmaking is just a part of their work," Coffin says, in a more serious tone. "Many artists that we think of as primarily painters—Jasper Johns or Terry Winters, for example—work back and forth from painting to prints or whatever their other mediums are. They may draw, then make a painting, then a print, then a video, and so on," she continues, her hands animating her ideas. "So it's all part of this continuum of developing their visual language. People tend to think of printmaking as isolated from that process, but it isn't. It's integral to their work, part of their artistic life."

It is exactly this part of artistic life that Coffin felt was oddly underrep-

resented in New York City, even though the city has excellent printmaking facilities, studios, and plenty of homegrown expertise. Because of the high rents in the city, commercial galleries lack the motivation to show prints which don't sell for a lot of money. "The prints tend to end up in the back room, even those by artists that are represented by the gallery."

Coffin saw a disconnect between the lines of supply and demand in the world of prints—between the work being produced and a public wanting to see it. Fortunately, others agreed with her. So in 2000, she started the IPCNY, helped by grants from various foundations and individuals and proceeds from a benefit auction held at Sotheby's. The center's annual operating budget is about \$225,000. It remains the only non-profit organization dedicated solely to prints in New York, and acts as a clearinghouse for printmaking information. Visitors can find out where other print exhibitions are showing in the city, when workshops begin and which libraries have the best resources.

The gallery is in its fifth season and is chugging along strongly. The current juried exhibition, which runs until Dec. 23, is the fourteenth since the IPCNY's inception. It received 1,200 submissions. Most of the prints come from workshops, though many are from individual artists. "They come from all over the country and from abroad to some extent." The IPCNY doesn't charge submission fees.

She estimates that about half of the artists whose prints are showcased are in the earlier stages of careers. "Many young artists see this as a way to break through." She

pauses. "In a way, we give opportunities to artists much like the Schepp Foundation gives opportunities to young scholars. The selection process is completely merit-based. All the prints are chosen on basis of their aesthetic and technical excellence. Nothing to do with how well-known the artists are, or which workshop they did."

Coffin's relationship with the Schepp Foundation started in the mid-1980s, when she served as the New York representative of Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. Back then, the Schepp Foundation gave post-graduate fellowships, and every year I Tatti would put forth a few candidates. "That's how I met Edythe," says Coffin, referring to Schepp's indefatigable executive director, Edythe Bobrow, who recently retired. Before her job at I Tatti, Coffin worked in journalism for ten years, both in the U.S and in the U.K. Nowadays, it's all prints, all the time. She spends the bulk of her week at the IPCNY, and when the current show folds up, Coffin and her two employees will be busy putting together next season's fifth-year anniversary show, which will be designed to travel to museums around the country. ▢

#### Information:

International Print Center  
526 W. 26th Street  
New York, NY  
[www.IPCNY.org](http://www.IPCNY.org)

#### Gallery hours:

Tues–Sat 11 AM to 6 PM

*Francesco Fiondella writes for The Wall Street Journal.*



Anne Coffin

## Remembering Margaret Ogden

Margaret Ogden was elected trustee on May 20, 1970, and served until her health began to fail in 1999. Her death on December 17, 2003, saddened all of us. We do, however, have the fondest of memories of Miss Ogden and record them here. She was an extremely active and cheerful participant in the deliberations of the scholarship committees and her analysis of the students she met and the cases she read were direct and compassionate.

Margaret Ogden's career as a securities analyst specializing in aviation securities with the firm of Scudder, Stevens & Clark, Investment Counsel, from 1933 to 1968, was recognized by the trustees

and she was a perceptive member of the Finance Committee for the many years she remained active on the board.

Miss Ogden's interests were broad and varied. She was educated at Smith College, where she majored in economics, graduating cum laude in 1928. She sponsored many of the college's alumnae activities, including the annual pecan sale at Christmas time. She personally sold and delivered pounds of these pecans to the homes of her friends and fellow trustees and to the Foundation's office where her efforts were happily appreciated by the staff members. She was a president of the Cosmopolitan Club, treasurer of the Women's City Club, a member

of Saint James Church and the New York Altar Guild, and took great interest in her large family of brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and more than 23 grand nieces and nephews. The Foundation takes great pride in recognizing and remembering a remarkable woman.



## Making the World Safer

BY SCHEPP SCHOLAR DARBY PARLIAMENT

Since returning to the U.S. after spending eight months in Syria studying Arabic and researching the post-conflict reconstruction of Lebanon, I have been working at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC, focusing on chemical and biological weapons nonproliferation and security issues. Much of my work deals with the former Soviet Union, whose colossal unconventional weapons programs left a perilous legacy of unsecured weapons stockpiles and highly skilled biowarfare scientists. After the collapse of the

Soviet Union, Moscow halted its biological weapons programs and began converting much of this infrastructure to peaceful, civilian applications. Many of the key bioweaponeers, however, have struggled over the past decade to find engaging and lucrative scientific work for non-military purposes. Consequently, thousands of one-time weapons experts remain vulnerable and attractive targets for others seeking their knowledge and expertise to develop weapons of mass destruction.

I traveled to Russia this October as part of a CSIS-organized “brain-

drain prevention” workshop. The idea of this training seminar is to provide former biological weapons makers with the business, legal, and marketing skills to develop commercial relationships with Western biopharmaceutical companies. While the thought of working with people who 15 years ago were weaponizing plague, anthrax and small pox is somewhat scary, it's far more disturbing to think about what happens if those scientists resume their old activities, selling out to the highest bidder. The reality is that most of the people working on the old Soviet

*(continues on next page)*

programs started off as legitimate scientists. Being among the brightest in their fields, they were coerced into working on secret programs, and were generally not privy to the full extent of those programs.

Over 150 of these ex-bio-weaponeers attended the workshop, learning firsthand from a group of U.S. bio-industry insiders how to do business with the West. During this time, I helped facilitate private meetings where the scientists highlighted their most commercially promising research to U.S. industry representatives. We hope to get U.S. companies to understand the un-

tapped potential just sitting around over there.

My current focus on chemical and biological weapons issues is but one aspect of my passion for international security, development and conflict resolution, and further builds on my work and study experiences in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Central America and Europe. Having spent much of the past eight years abroad, I am enjoying my tenure at CSIS, which is one of Washington's pre-eminent centers dedicated to providing non-partisan policy insights and solutions to a wide range of international issues.

Along with some of the world's leading foreign policy experts, we have a talented core of highly professional junior staff who really enhance the work and educational experience.

Having been accepted into the U.S. Foreign Service as a political officer for the State Department, my next career move could have me posted back overseas. Working as a diplomat would be a vastly different experience from my previous independent travels, but I am honored by the opportunity to represent my country overseas, and the chance to really play an integral role in strengthening our relations with the rest of the world. n

## Remembering Dr. Benjamin Phillips

In Ben's file is a handwritten memorandum, dated February 23, 1980, from Ed Hodges, current honorary trustee. Ed wrote: "I would like to nominate Dr. B.J. Phillips as a Board member of Schepp. Ben was the No.1 scientist for Union Carbide before he retired two years ago. He is a gentleman as well as a scholar . . . I can assure you he would be a productive worker."

Ed has been proven more than right.

Ben's prestigious career at Union Carbide began in 1941 and ended in his retirement in 1978. He held a variety of positions including Director of Research, Manager of Chemical Research, and Manager of Corporate Research. In 1972 he was appointed a Senior Research Fellow, the highest position on the Corporation's technical ladder.

Ben was married to Marian LeCuyer Phillips. They had four daughters and seven grandchildren.

Ben Phillips was elected trustee on October 15, 1980 and honorary trustee in May, 2002. His long association here was memorable. He was a regular interviewer, committee member, researcher and writer. We are all proud of the booklet he created on the life of Mr. Schepp and include it in our mailings. Dr. Phillips was instrumental in the creation of the Long Range Planning Committee and was thoughtful in setting forth a number of recommendations regarding scholarship guidelines and award parameters. He was enthusiastic about the development of the "Schepp Connections" and was diligent in his support of that project.

We will remember Ben, too, for the lovely water color he painted of the Fredericka Schepp. It hangs on the wall in the outer office and is a refreshing addition to our eclectic group of paintings.

All of us here enjoyed his great sense of humor and looked forward to the numerous jokes he told and poems he recited and paid heed to his views on current issues. We will miss him very much.



# Building Community Partnerships to Fight HIV

BY SHEPP SCHOLAR MAUREEN MILLER, PhD

For the past few years, there has been considerable discussion in both the popular and medical press concerning the racial/ethnic health disparities that have been consistently documented in the United States. In response to the growing national outcry, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH 2010) in 1999, and Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, Tommy Thompson, created the Council on Health Disparities in 2004 to coordinate and unify actions on disparity issues. Despite these initiatives, no real mechanisms or policy activities aimed at bringing health equity to the American public have been fully instituted. This lack of progress in effecting change is strikingly apparent with the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Black Americans are becoming HIV-infected at rates comparable to those seen in parts of the developing world and at rates three to four times higher than members of other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. Moreover, recent and dramatic increases in HIV incidence rates have been documented for young Black men who have sex with men (MSM) and for Black women. These data suggest that a new wave of HIV infection is in the process of being introduced into communities that have been at the epicenter of the U.S. HIV epidemic since it began over 20 years ago. Currently, the

highest HIV incidence and prevalence in the U.S. are found in urban neighborhoods that have experienced extreme neglect and decay over the last four decades. Bedford Stuyvesant, a low-income, Black, inner-city community in Brooklyn, NY, is a case in point.

I began working in Bedford Stuyvesant in 2000 in response to an article in *The New York Times* which observed that the infant mortality rate in Bed Stuy was twice as high as the national average. *The Times* attributed this statistic to a litany of health issues, including a high prevalence of HIV infection. The more time I spent in Bed Stuy, the clearer it became that health disparities experienced by the residents and the HIV transmission dynamics fueling the epidemic had to be understood and addressed at the community level. Community-based efforts provide numerous direct and indirect benefits in HIV prevention research, including free testing for infectious pathogens, community specific statistics, and the ability to identify the context of HIV transmission, which in turn suggests directions for preventing HIV transmission. However, the multiple challenges to working in the community and establishing a community-based research center quickly became apparent. Two immediate barriers presented themselves: community resistance to the project and the lack of a viable, physical infrastructure in which to house a research center.

Many Bed Stuy residents are well aware of the historical research abuses perpetrated on Black Americans in the U.S. Additionally, neighborhood revitalization efforts were deemed to be in conflict with HIV/AIDS prevention efforts: an 'HIV neighborhood' reputation was to be avoided at all costs. To address these concerns, it was necessary to develop and maintain good relationships with as many community members as possible and to convince people that the research would be conducted to explicitly improve community health. Our research team makes ongoing efforts to reinforce community commitment to the research, through regular attendance at community sponsored events in a variety of forums (e.g., health fairs, community board meetings, public celebrations) and through the active use of public relations tools (e.g., newsletters, websites, open houses). The importance of building partnerships in the community cannot be underestimated. The search to find suitable office space was a long one in this underserved neighborhood. The staff looked at property after property, but ultimately, it was Bed Stuy residents who identified and helped negotiate a lease for the community-based research center.

In March 2002 *Bed Stuy West Community Studies* opened its doors. The mission of *Bed Stuy West* ([www.bedstuywest.org](http://www.bedstuywest.org)) is to conduct rigorous community-based research

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that informs the theory, practice, and policy of disease prevention. Our multidisciplinary approach considers not only the behavioral context of disease transmission, but also the social, economic and biological factors that contribute to the epidemic spread of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, breast and prostate cancer, diabetes and asthma among Black Americans. *Bed Stuy West* is uniquely positioned to serve as an important informational resource for health care professionals, educators and policy makers who endeavor to meet the health needs of the community. Four research studies funded by the National Institutes of Health are currently being conducted at *Bed Stuy West*, preparatory to community level HIV and other preventive interventions.

The success of *Bed Stuy West* may have been against the odds, since the funding mechanisms available to conduct community-based research do not provide the resources required to establish and maintain a community presence. It is only through the tireless efforts of a highly committed research team that we can accomplish both the HIV prevention research, for which we are funded by the government, and the maintenance of community partnerships, for which we are not funded, but without which we would be unable to conduct meaningful research. Data consistently show that the HIV epidemics in many of America's inner cities are similar to those found in developing countries. Although the U.S. government acknowledges and has committed funding to help stem the epidemic in developing countries, it has failed

to acknowledge that HIV is not only an international problem, but one that has become an insidious, growing, and hidden problem in the U.S.

Delysha D'Mellow, the Field Site Coordinator at *Bed Stuy West*, and I recently visited the National Institutes of Health, Office of the Director, where we lobbied to increase awareness of HIV in the U.S. While there, we provided first-hand evidence that it is much more expensive to intervene in the U.S. context, because of higher costs for labor, real estate, and infrastructure development. However, just because it is more expensive to intervene in the U.S. doesn't mean we can simply turn our backs on the problem. Therefore, we need to earmark and target funding that allows flexibility in start up and maintenance activities for community-based initiatives, as well as provide funding and partnership mechanisms to incorporate the health concerns of community members. This approach would be the next meaningful step in addressing the racial/ethnic health disparities that currently plague the richest nation in the world.

A recently published report on health disparities in NYC found that residents of New York's poorest neighborhoods, including Bedford Stuyvesant, had a life expectancy rate eight years lower than people living in the wealthiest neighborhoods. Not very much has changed in this community during the four years that I have worked there, except our ability to document the dire effects of health disparities. Clearly, we have a long way to go. <sup>n</sup>