

Forum in Focus



ENTHUSIASTICALLY PROMOTING THE
TEXAS BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE



THROUGH COMMUNITY RELATIONS,
VOLUNTEER SERVICE, AND FUNDRAISING

President's Letter



Dear Friends of The Forum,

The 2022 – 2023 Texas Biomedical Forum (The Forum) board of trustees is comprised of an amazing group of women. Since taking office, these incredible women have hit the ground running and have been successfully recruiting new members (our largest membership

number to date), planning and energizing Forum events, fundraising and raising awareness of the Texas Biomedical Research Institute (Texas Biomed). Our board is truly a working board without administrative help and every single woman on the board of trustees has understood the assignment and is continuously working to fulfill their jobs to the best of their abilities! I have been able to work with a DREAM TEAM and I am so very grateful for each and every person on The Forum board and for my incredible advisors – **Jerilyn Blanchard, Melissa Morgan, Lisa Sechler and Karen Lee Zachry.**

Rebecca Nathan, VP Membership, her assistant **Avril Byrne**, and membership records, **Katie Fravell**, have recruited a record number of members with over 310 members to date. They have also worked hard to bring back the printed directory and they should be in members' mailboxes shortly. Thank you to all of our members for your generous support of the Forum and we hope that you enjoy the directory!

Our Gala team, **Gloria Steves Dilley, Triana Grossman, Jayme Russell, Elaine Vornsand, and Christina Ketabchi** have sold out all of our tables for our Birds of a Feather Flock Together Gala on May 6th. The gala team has gone above and beyond in ensuring that this gala is going to be one of the best nights of the year. They have been working nonstop to secure raffle items, sponsorships and underwriting so that they can put on an incredible party. The gala is going to be a night that you are not going to want to miss, and we cannot wait to celebrate with you on May 6th!

Joannah Pickett, Grants, is on track to surpass her ambitious goal for Grants and we are thrilled to have 100% board participation in support of this initiative. This statistic greatly helps our applications for local foundation funding.

Additionally, we had great success with two holiday grant gift campaigns – a Christmas ornament and a Forum Valentine. We would love for every member and friend to keep honoring your loved ones with a fully tax-deductible donation made in their name.

Since our last newsletter, we have been fortunate to host two amazing special events, the success of which is due to the hard work of our Special Event Chairs, **Adrianna Grossman** and **Carolina Roberts Lewis**. This dynamic duo oversaw our Holiday Party and Fireside Chat on November 30th and hosted a very successful second annual Galentine's Onze tournament on February 3rd. The Onze tournament was a blast for everyone that attended! Many special thanks to Balloons Boutique SA for their gorgeous balloon donation, Sara Jessop for spinning some incredible tunes, Julian Gold, Lin Marché and Ana Montoya of AnArte Gallery for helping with our raffle and prize donations, and also to the Kelly Wade Jewelers team for hosting a pop-up that donated a portion of the proceeds to The Forum. We cannot wait to continue this fun event!

On March 1st, Lecture Luncheon Chair, **Kristin Tips**, and her assistant, **Allegra Hawkins**, organized the Spring Lecture Luncheon at the Argyle. At the luncheon, **Kate Rogers**, Science Education Awards (SEA) Chair, awarded recipients with our SEA scholarship offerings. We also cannot wait for the 2nd Annual Forum and Founder's Council Clay Shoot Classic coming up on March 30th. Amazing thanks to **Lauren Biegler** and **Ashley Quintanilla** for their efforts in making the Clay Shoot Classic even more spectacular. I cannot wait to see how they take this fundraising event to new heights in its second year. Clay Shoot Classic spectator tickets and sponsorships and lecture luncheon table reservations are available to purchase on The Forum's website.

The entire board loves to hear the monthly report from **Callie Price**, Historian, as she delights the board with reports of The Forum's glamorous and illustrious past at every board meeting. Callie is also documenting and compiling our history of the last 53 years. If you have any mementos or memories that you would like to share of your past Forum experience, we would love to include those in our records.

Behind the scenes, **Amelita Mauzé** (Immediate Past President/Nominating Chair), **Muffin Moorman** (Parliamentarian), **Emily Sytsma** (Recording Secretary), **Bonnie Muecke** (Treasurer), and **Ana Leah Montemayor**

(Past President Liaison) keep The Forum well organized and prepared for everything throughout the year. And major kudos go to **Sarah Hager** (Corresponding Secretary) and her Communications Team, **Nicola McLaughlin, Lauren Hawa, Eva Holliday, Scotty Macdaniel, Claire McNab, and Margaret Yancy** as they continue to keep The Forum in the spotlight with incredible emails social media content, our amazing newsletters and all printed materials throughout the year. All of these women are very busy! And, as always, we are grateful for **Akudo Anyanwu** and **Larry Schlessinger** at Texas Biomed for the support and resources that they provide The Forum.

In closing, THANK YOU! Thank you to the incredible board of trustees and advisors and thank you to each and every member and friend of The Forum who has attended our events, supported our grants initiatives, purchased a raffle ticket, Valentine or ornament, or sponsored the Gala and Clay Shoot Classic. The success of The Forum is due to each and every one of you! We look forward to continuing to celebrate everyone's efforts at our upcoming events. Hope to see you soon at the Spring Lecture Luncheon and Science Education Awards, the Clay Shoot Classic and The Forum's Birds of a Feather Flock Together Gala!

Excitedly,
Emilie Herrmann Petty

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2023 – 2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rebecca Nathan, *President*

Sarah Hager, *President-Elect/VP Lecture Luncheon*

Bonnie Muecke, *VP / Gala Chair*

Jayme Russell, *VP / Gala Chair*

Adrianna Grossman, *VP / Membership*

Christina Ketabchi, *Treasurer*

Avril Byrne, *Assistant Treasurer*

Carolina Lewis, *Forum Grants*

Emily Sytsma, *Parliamentarian*

Elaine Vornsand, *Corresponding Secretary*

Lauren Hawa, *Recording Secretary*

Emilie Petty, *Past President*

Past President's Letter



Dear Friends of The Forum,

It was a privilege to chair the Nominating Committee as we slated the 2023 – 2024 Executive Board. My sincerest thanks to **Amanda Bezner, Lauren Biegler, Ashley Friedman, Audra Kerr, Nicole McClane** and **Joannah Pickett** for the thoughtful consideration given to all of the candidates.

I continue to be amazed by the talented pool of women who willingly give their time and energy to our board of Trustees. The future of the Forum is bright in the hands of its next leaders!

Gratefully,
Amelita Mauzé





Postdoctoral researcher Lakmini Premadasa, PhD, is studying how THC:CBD affects HIV infection.

2023 Texas Biomed Graduate Fellowship, supported by the Douglass Foundation

Jan Simper is a graduate student in the UT Health San Antonio Medical Scientist Training Program, where he is working on an MD and a PhD in microbiology and immunology. He is interested in understanding how people become sick and studying treatments for infectious diseases to help advance medicine forward. For the next three years, he will be training and conducting research in Dr. Larry Schlesinger’s lab at Texas Biomed. Specifically, he will study a family of receptors in lung macrophages, which are a type of immune cell; their role in protecting against tuberculosis infection; and potential host-directed therapies.

2023 Cowles Postdoctoral Fellowship, supported by the Cowles family

Mohadesh Soleimanpour-moghadam, PhD, is a mathematician specializing in machine learning and signal processing. She will complete a postdoctoral fellowship in Dr. Diako Ebrahimi’s lab to further advance her research and training in quantitative biology. Specifically, Dr. Soleimanpour-moghadam will develop advanced signal processing algorithms to understand the role of viral infection in cancer. At least 20% of cancers have a viral origin, yet little is known about the underlying molecular and cellular processes involved. Her research over the next two years will aim to disentangle these processes by analyzing large datasets of more than 20,000 cancer patient biopsies.

2023 Texas Biomed Postdoctoral Fellow Awards

Chrissy Leopold Wager, PhD, is a postdoctoral researcher in Dr. Larry Schlesinger’s lab investigating the immune system’s response to tuberculosis infection and “master regulators” of inflammation. She and colleagues have identified a master regulator – a protein called cyclic AMP response element binding protein (CREB) that is activated in immune cells during *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (M.tb.) infection. She hypothesizes that CREB regulates multiple immune cell pathways that control bacterial growth and dictate the outcome of infection. Dr. Leopold Wager will seek to clarify the precise immune cells, pathways and mechanisms involved, which could help identify potential targets for host-directed therapies for tuberculosis. Lakmini Premadasa, PhD, is a postdoctoral researcher in Dr. Mahesh Mohan’s lab investigating the effect of THC:CBD administration during HIV/SIV infection. (SIV is the nonhuman primate equivalent of HIV.) Thanks to combination anti-retroviral therapy (cART), people with HIV are living longer. However, cART side effects can include hepatotoxicity, leading to liver injury. People living with HIV have a higher risk of developing non-alcoholic fatty liver disease or cholestatic liver disease. Dr. Premadasa will study if THC:CBD administration can reverse liver toxicity induced by HIV/SIV and cART and slow disease

progression in nonhuman primate models of HIV. She will also study if the drug semaglutide reduces fatty liver disease induced by high-fat diet. Notably, her project will analyze on the genetic level the interplay between HIV, cART and high-fat diets on the liver, and the treatment effects of THC:CBD and semaglutide.

2023 Texas Biomed Staff Scientist Awards

Winka Le Clec’h, PhD, and Frederic Chevalier, PhD, are staff scientists in Dr. Tim Anderson’s lab studying parasitic flatworms called schistosomes. The parasites are responsible for an estimated 200 million infections and 200,000 deaths each year. They have a complicated life cycle that involves a larval stage, called sporocysts, growing in freshwater snails, which then produce new larvae that can infect humans. While sporocysts are critical for parasite transmission, they are understudied because they are intertwined with snail tissues and therefore difficult to access. Building on a previous parasite genetic study, Dr. Le Clec’h, Dr. Chevalier and their colleagues will use single-cell sequencing to further investigate the cell types and genes linked to production of human-infective larvae. They will build out a complete atlas of sporocyst cell types and gene expression profiles, with the ultimate goal of identifying targets to disrupt larvae production and block transmission.

Chengjin Ye, PhD, is a staff scientist in Dr. Luis Martinez-Sobrido’s lab working on a live attenuated COVID-19 vaccine that works against multiple variants. The existing vaccines have significantly slowed the pace of the pandemic, but have dropped in effectiveness especially against more recent Omicron variants. A live attenuated vaccine, which contains a weakened, non-harmful version of the virus, could elicit a more robust, long-lasting immune response. Live attenuated vaccines are used for other illnesses including smallpox, chickenpox and yellow fever. Dr. Ye and colleagues will develop a live attenuated vaccine that expresses both the spike protein of the original Washington strain and the Omicron BA.1 strain, and test how safe, stable and effective it is protecting against multiple variants.

2023 Texas Biomedical Forum Faculty Awards

Assistant Professor Smita Kulkarni, PhD, will investigate the role of long noncoding RNAs (lncRNAs) in how the virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, replicates, and in the body’s immune response. RNA is best known for providing the instructions for making proteins, which then carry out tasks inside the body. But a large part of active RNA does not actually code for proteins. These are called long noncoding RNAs, and are known to help regulate protein-coding genes, immune responses and play prominent roles in health and disease. Dr. Kulkarni hypothesizes that lncRNAs also play a key role in SARS-CoV-2 infection, particularly in early

viral replication and immune responses. To study this, she and her team will use lung cells in petri dishes and investigate what happens when certain lncRNAs are blocked. They will also analyze lncRNAs expressed at high levels in the lungs from patients with severe COVID-19 and see what happens when selected lncRNAs are turned off. These insights could then be used for developing more effective treatments and vaccines.

Professor Luis Martinez-Sobrido, PhD, aims to clarify what proteins and amino acids are responsible for making SARS-CoV-2 variants more or less infectious. Better understanding of precise differences will help guide development of superior vaccines and more effective antiviral treatments. Specifically, he and his team will generate variants with different spike proteins using the lab’s reverse genetics system, and compare how the variants behave in cultured cells and in a mouse model. They will then generate variants that have the same spike protein, but different backbones, to clarify what genetic components contribute to changes in how well the virus replicates, spreads and causes disease.

Associate Professor Ian Cheeseman, PhD, will identify critical factors regulating how malaria parasites withstand heat shock. Malaria infection usually involves a person experiencing repeating cycles of high fever. Dr. Cheeseman and collaborators at UT Health San Antonio have identified a transcription factor, which is a molecule that controls the rate DNA is transcribed into RNA, that appears to play an important role in regulating how malaria parasites respond to the host’s fever. Dr. Cheeseman and his collaborators will use advanced sequencing techniques to drill down on the precise molecular mechanisms involved in that response. This is critical to understand how malaria parasites survive spikes in temperature to establish infection. The goal is to find a new drug target unique to the parasite to control and treat malaria.



Staff Scientists Winka Le Clec’h, PhD, and Frederic Chevalier, PhD, are seeking ways to block transmission of schistosome larvae, the parasitic worms that cause schistosomiasis.

TEN SCIENTISTS AT TEXAS BIOMED HAVE RECEIVED A COMBINED \$600,000 TO SUPPORT RESEARCH PROJECTS IN 2023

Ten scientists at Texas Biomed have received a combined \$600,000 to support research projects in 2023. The internal awards are funded by the Texas Biomedical Forum, Douglass Foundation and Cowles Family, and support researchers at all career stages, from graduate students through faculty.

“We are extremely grateful to our steadfast donors for supporting our scientists and our mission every year,” says Joanne Turner, PhD, Texas Biomed Executive Vice President for Research. “These competitive internal awards help advance our trainees’ careers and fund seed grants for research projects that can later be leveraged for larger, federal grant proposals.”

Forum Announcements

SENDING LOVE

Joannah Pickett

To engage our 300+ strong Forum members in support of our raising money for seed grants at the Texas Biomedical Research Institute, we decided to do our own pilot test around Valentine's Day.

While raising awareness in our community about Seed Grants, we invited gifts to be made to the Forum Grant program of \$50 or more in honor of someone else. When a gift of \$50 was made, we then sent a personalized Valentine to the honored friend or family member. If a gift was made for \$100 or more, the personalized Valentine's card came with an acrylic heart paperweight, bearing the Forum logo.

We shared the message with all of our Valentine's donors that one of the best gifts we can give someone we love is the gift of health, care, and hope. The gifts in honor of others support the research seed grants for the scientists at the Texas Biomedical Research Center where scientists

work in labs to find cures or solutions to the most pressing health conditions and diseases our world faces today. The discoveries and outcomes from their labs bring care, health, and hope to those in our community and world.

While the work of these scientists is very clinical, they are truly working on and for hope, and the gifts made through our Valentine's Grant effort will carry forward that same hope and help it grow for so many others.

Through this first-time and fun initiative, more than 50 Valentines were sent, raising \$4,000 for Seed Grants. In addition to the funds raised, we shared the impact of the Seed Grants generated through the work of the Forum.



SPRING LECTURE LUNCHEON & SCIENCE EDUCATION AWARDS

The Forum's members and guests enjoyed a warm, early spring day on the lawn of the Argyle for our Spring Lecture Luncheon and Science Education Awards on Wednesday, March 1st, 2023. **Dr. Marcel Daadi, Ph.D.** kicked off the event with a presentation on the progress in stem cell treatment regarding Parkinson's Disease. His presentation concluded with a lively question and answer session.

Following the presentation, the Forum recognized and awarded funds to seven incredibly talented students from Bexar County. The Science Education Awards are generously funded by The Forum and the V.H. McNutt Memorial Foundation.

The winners were selected with support from the Minnie Piper Stevens Foundation who helped in reviewing the more than 137 applications that were received. A successful applicant must be a senior graduating from a Bexar County or contiguous county High School, must have a GPA of 3.5 or better and must intend to pursue a

college curriculum directed towards a degree in science. **Kate Rogers** presented the Science Education Awards. The following scholars received a \$2,500 award: Peyton A. Braun of Communication Arts High School; Jaden Conner Deegan of Virginia A. Stacey High School; Miguel Jose Heredia of Randolph High School; Ana Cristina Rodriguez of Churchill High School; Isabel Sanchez-Gonzalez of Roosevelt High School. Emelia Castillo of Young Women's Leadership Academy received a \$3,500 award and Karlee Nedra English of Communications Arts High School received a \$4,000 award.

Many thanks to **Kristin Tips**, Vice President Lecture Luncheon; **Allegra Hawkins**, Lecture Luncheon Assistant; **Kate Rogers**, Science Education Awards; **Dr. Larry Schlessinger**, **Dr. Marcel Daadi**, **Akudo Anyanwu** and **Donna Musselman** with Texas Biomed; **Valerie Guenther** and **Abigail Kampmann** of the V.H. McNutt Memorial Foundation; and everyone else who contributed to such a successful Spring Lecture Luncheon and Science Education Awards presentation.

INSPIRATIONS FROM THE PAST

Callie Price

"There is plenty to like about being in the Forum, the only all-woman support group for a major research institution in the world," said Mrs. Don E. Farrimond (Maxine), to open her letter to the membership in 1984, as president of the Forum. Just as in our earlier days, the Forum still hosts lecture luncheons, tours of the Texas Biomedical Research Institute, a beautiful spring Gala, and many other special events to raise money and awareness of the incredible work and scientific breakthroughs at Texas Biomed.

In 1984 and 1985, the two lecture luncheon themes still resonate today—"Memory: Our Potential to Use It" and "Estrogen, Progesterone, Calcium and You". The first topic, featured Dr. Forrest R. Ratliff, the director of Thinking

Dynamics, and he said that "the mental faculty to recall what has been learned and retained, especially through associative mechanisms, is vital for any successful endeavor. Reading, comprehension, and memory training are essential high-performance skills." The second lecture was standing room only and featured a professor and director of endocrine and metabolic research in the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Baylor College of Medicine—Houston. Dr. Joseph W. Goldzieher spoke specifically about the issue of osteoporosis and that it was becoming increasingly recognized as a major health problem in the United States.

Mrs. Farrimond closed her letter with "your ideas, presence, resources, and enthusiasm are appreciated." Thank you to all of our Forum members, past and present, who continue to support our mission each year. How lucky we are to still have plenty to like about being in the Forum, all these many years later.



Past Events



GALENTINE'S ONZE

After being rescheduled due to inclement weather (for the second year in a row!), over 150 attendees gathered at the Argyle for the Forum's Galentine's Onze Tournament on Friday, February 3rd from 11am to 2pm. Due to its immense popularity in its second year, the exciting Onze playing and upbeat music filled the air both upstairs and down as friends took part in fun raffles, sipped on refreshments and enjoyed a delicious meal.

Kelly Wade Jewelers hosted a pop-up shop for custom made ready to wear bracelets, and items from their store and donated a portion of the proceeds to the Forum. Ana Montoya, owner of AnArte Gallery, generously donated a \$500 gift card to every attendee at the event, and donated our Onze Winning Prize, a beautiful Analy Diego Vector Computer illustration print 1 of 10, valued at over \$600! Congratulations to our Onze Grand Champion Tricia Steves! Thank you to our

DJ, Sara Jessop, for keeping the party entertained with your fun tunes and to Game Night Gifts for creating the branded Galentines cards and scorepads.

As always, the Galentine's Onze raffles did not disappoint. Congratulations to Denise Landon on winning the gorgeous, framed Gracie Panel! And congratulations to Doré Koontz on winning the Valentine's themed basket that included a \$500 gift card to Julian Gold, perfume from Lin Marche, and other Valentine's Day goodies!

Our Special Event Chairs, **Adrianna Grossman** and **Carolina Lewis**, did such an incredible job growing this fun February event; we are grateful to them and all who attended and participated.

We are proud to announce that this event raised over \$25,000 for The Texas Biomedical Forum!



MEMBER HOLIDAY PARTY

The Forum and Texas Biomed hosted the annual Holiday Cocktail Reception on November 30th, 2022 for our Past Presidents, Current, and Lifetime Members of the Forum. Light bites and refreshments were served before members took their seats for the "Fireside Chat". It was an informative evening listening to Dr. Eusondia Arnett, a researcher in Dr. Schlesinger's lab, as she discussed some of her latest studies and the lasting impacts Forum Grants have had on her research and career. The Q&A session after the lecture was lively, and an overall great discussion was had.

In the festive spirit, attendees had the opportunity to make a grant donation and receive a custom Texas Biomedical Forum Christmas ornament.

A special thanks to our event chairs **Adrianna Grossman** and **Carolina Lewis**, for putting on such a successful event! It was the perfect evening for our members to gather and enjoy the spirit of the holiday season.



2023 GALA PLANNING

We look forward to seeing you at the 52nd annual Texas Biomedical Forum Gala, on Saturday, May 6, 2023, at The Argyle. The Gala is dedicated to the fleet of Forum women, of the past, present and future, who have made such an impact on our community. Since its founding, we have seen the Forum fly to new heights. In honor of every inspirational Forum member and leader, we proudly proclaim the Gala theme to be Birds of a Feather Flock Together!

At this event, we raise money to support San Antonio's very own Texas Biomed, one of the world's leading non-profit biomedical research institutions founded in 1941 by the late visionary Thomas B. Slick, Jr. Over the past 80 years, Texas Biomed has remained at the forefront of human health issues affecting the world's populations. This research requires a budget of nearly \$54 million, which is primarily met by our scientists earning competitive research grants, as well as from our wonderful donors and benefactors.

The mission of the Forum is to support Texas Biomed through community relations, volunteer services and fundraising. For more than 50 years, the Forum has helped raise these much-needed funds through contributions to the annual Gala. Specifically, the Gala raises money for the scientists' pilot study funds.

Over the last twenty years, the Forum has awarded more than \$4 million in Pilot Study Grants!

The grants have enabled Texas Biomed researchers to apply for more than \$80 million in outside grants, amounting to a 20-fold return on investment.

As you prepare for the Gala, plan to arrive on time as our ribbon pull flies off the tree! You will not want to miss the opportunity to take home an amazing prize. Have cocktails, dine, and dance the night away at the after party at the beautiful Argyle. Also please don't feel limited by your Gala participation, as you can always make a gift to grants to help our amazing scientists at Texas Biomed continue their cutting-edge research.



FORUM AND FOUNDER'S COUNCIL CLAY SHOOT CLASSIC

It is with great excitement that we look forward to the 2nd Annual Forum and Founder's Council Clay Shoot Classic, raising funds for Texas Biomedical Research Institute. Event Chairs Lauren Biegler, Ashley Quintanilla, Aaron Asel and Stephanie Dick are putting together a very fun day for all to enjoy!

Thursday, March 30, 2023

11:00 a.m. – 5:45 p.m. (or until last shooter):
Shooting, Pop-Up Shops, Side Games, Silent and Live Auction, Open Bar and Live Music by Django Walker & Band

San Antonio Gun Club
928 E. Contour Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78212

We are expecting over 30 teams of four shooters to participate, and spectators may purchase tickets to attend. We will have food served throughout the day and an open bar, in addition to entertainment, a raffle and pop-up shops. Spectator Tickets are \$100.

To purchase tickets or sponsor, please contact our Clay Shoot Chairs Lauren Biegler, Ashley Quintanilla, Aaron Asel and Stephanie Dick, clayshootclassic@gmail.com or visit the Forum website.

We are honored to celebrate with you this spring!





Texas Biomedical Forum
Post Office Box 6648
San Antonio, TX 78209

UPCOMING EVENTS IN 2023

Forum & Founder's Council 2nd Annual Clay Shoot – March 30th

Forum Gala – May 6th

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter!   



FORUM & FOUNDER'S COUNCIL
CLAY SHOOT CLASSIC

ABOUT TEXAS BIOMED

Texas Biomed is one of the world's leading independent biomedical research institutions dedicated to eradicating infection and advancing health worldwide through innovative biomedical research. Texas Biomed partners with researchers and institutions around the world to develop vaccines and therapeutics against viral pathogens causing AIDS, hepatitis, hemorrhagic fever, tuberculosis and parasitic diseases responsible for malaria and schistosomiasis disease.

The Institute has programs in host-pathogen interaction, disease intervention and prevention, and population health to understand the links between infectious diseases and other diseases such as aging, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity. For more information on Texas Biomed, go to www.TxBiomed.org.