



Ferrante Receives Double Honor as Genetic Counseling Visionary...

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Everyone has a cathartic experience, that nanosecond of jarring realization of what could have been, or in the case of the Genetic Counseling Program, what could be. One of the strongest programs in the nation began somewhat inauspiciously more than 20 years ago after Dr. Richard Ferrante attended a lecture at the Greenwood Genetic Center and had his eyes opened to vast possibilities.

“Roger Stevenson talked about genetic counselors and what they do, and I wondered why we didn’t have a teaching program here,” he said. So Ferrante helped lay the groundwork for the program and has contributed to its phenomenal success since its inception.

For his work, the Genetic Counseling Program honored him on May 10 with its inaugural “Friend of the Genetic Counseling Program” award. Before he left the dais, he and those in attendance learned that the newly created award was simultaneously being renamed the “Richard R. Ferrante Friend of the Genetic Counseling Program Award.”



Prior to establishing the Genetic Counseling Program, the School of Medicine participated in clinical genetics and was part of the South Carolina Consortium of Regional Genetic Centers, but Ferrante had a larger vision.

“Clinical programs don’t exist for the sake of the program, they exist to train. I approached Dr. Robert Young and Janice Edwards with the idea of starting a genetic counseling education program and they considered it with some deliberation.”

Edwards, smiling at the memory, recalls things only slightly differently, saying Ferrante “nudged” the genetics group to fulfill the area’s growing need for genetic counselors. “Every time we’d see Richard, he would mention starting the program, and we’d think it’s just so much work, there’s no way possible. But after a while we decided it was the right thing to do, but,’ she said emphasizing the last point, “we made Richard promise he would help us and be a part of it.”

Young and Edwards did their part and Ferrante held up his end of the bargain, too, teaching and acting as a thesis supervisor, positions he has maintained since the program began.

As for his award, Ferrante calls it “stunning.” “My parents were first-generation Americans. Never in her wildest dreams would my mother think I’d go to university, get a Ph.D., wind up teaching at a university, and then having an award named in my honor. I wonder how many people born here realize how truly great a country of opportunity this is.” He also credits his wife, whom he calls a “wonderful person,” with his success.

“It’s nice to be recognized for getting therapy,” he said, explaining that the students in the Genetic Counseling Program are therapeutic for him because they validate his work. “If you want to hang out with some very smart, creative, driven, energetic people, come to the Genetic Counseling Program,” he said.

The Program has grown into what Ferrante envisioned it to be, an organization whose participants “recognize the strengths of people with disabilities”. Certainly, the genetic counselors trained at USC are better counselors because of Dr. Ferrante’s mentorship.

*Article by Sam Morton
School of Medicine*

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Holly Peay Receives Prestigious School of Medicine Award. . .

In March, the School of Medicine presented Distinguished Alumni awards during its annual Black Tie/White Coat Gala. The school honored Holly Landrum Peay, Class of 1997, with its 2007 Distinguished Master's in Genetic Counseling Alumni Award.

In introducing the award recipients to the more than 400 people in attendance, then Interim Dean Richard Hoppmann, M.D. said he believed these alumni are “extraordinary people whose dedication, professionalism, and creativity make them leaders in their fields.” He emphasized the winners were singled out for distinction from a broad field of candidates by their colleagues, making the recognition especially meaningful. “We believe strongly that the quality of our school is largely determined by the character of our graduates,” he added.



Peay has garnered numerous accomplishments. After graduation, she remained in Columbia to work full time at the Department of Pediatrics Center for Disability Resources, an experience that led her to become the first genetic counselor hired by the National Alliance for Genetic Support Groups in Washington, DC.

Joseph McInerney, executive director of the National Coalition for Health Professional Education in Genetics, said Peay “demonstrated a set of abilities that one finds only rarely in someone still so young.” He was so impressed with her work, he hired her and assigned her two educational CD-ROM projects—the genetics of psychiatric disorders and the genetics of common disorders, respectively—that were distributed to a vast audience of primary care providers and public health professionals.

Ms. Peay currently serves as the Associate Director of the National Human Genome Institute-Johns Hopkins University Genetic Counseling Program. There she participated in a project in which Hopkins’ genetic counselors helped identify bodies recovered after Hurricane Katrina. The experts assisted Louisiana state officials with the complex task of collecting data on family history, a key step in the complex system of DNA testing used to match the dead to some of the families of more than 2,000 people listed as missing from the disaster.

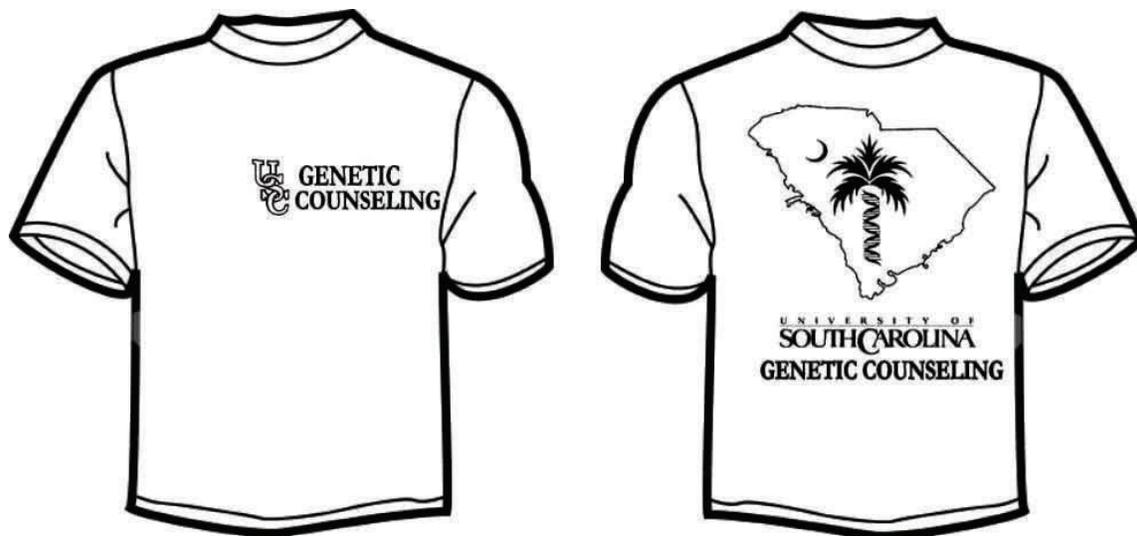
In March, Peay visited the School of Medicine to teach psychiatric genetics and to discuss her experiences following Katrina with genetic counseling students. She stressed that the unique skills of genetic counselors can be utilized in many ways. The genetic counselor’s ability in grief and loss counseling, combined with pedigree skills and knowledge of molecular genetics, offered invaluable assistance in the aftermath of national disaster.

Peay became the sixth recipient of the Distinguished Master’s in Genetic Counseling Alumni Award joining Sonja R. Eubanks, Class of 1995; Victoria A. Vincent, Class of 1987; and Christine E. Miller, Class of 1989, Jill Fischer, Class of 1993 and Cam Brasington, Class of 1988.

*Article by Sam Morton
School of Medicine*

USC Genetic Counseling T-Shirts

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Minimum Donation \$15.⁰⁰

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Note from the Director...

Hello to All!!

Hoping you are well and enjoying a beautiful fall season. We have welcomed seven new students and are immersed in the academic year with lectures, tests, papers, projects....you remember the pace!! As always, we appreciate the energy and accomplishments of our students and the alumni. We now count almost 150 genetic counselors trained at University of South Carolina!!

Take a look at our Genetic Counseling T-shirts. Our students designed this fun way to dress casual, show our enthusiasm for the Program, and give to the Genetic Counseling Fund. Check out the photo on page one... Dr. Ferrante with all the students showing their colors!

Hoping to see many of our alum in Kansas City. Its always great to stay in touch.....

Take care, *Janice*

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Alumni News. . .

Sorry I will miss everyone at NSGC! My news to share is an award I received this yearthe National Down Syndrome Congress Meritorious Service Award...."for dedication to persons with Down syndrome and their families and commitment to the goals of the NDSC". **Cam Brasington (1988)**

Things are great with me! Two updates: I got married on August 5 to Paul Rawicz. September 1, I was promoted to Regional Manager, Northeast for Genzyme Genetics. **Ellen Schlenker (1991)**

I am expecting a baby late February, not sure if that counts for this year or next year's annual edition. Had a CVS due to my lovely AMA risk, 46, XX! Her name is Rachel Ann. **Lara Percenti (1994)**

I will be transitioning to my new role as Assistant Professor and Program Director for UAB's new genetic counseling training program on Oct 1, 2007! The program will be a joint effort between the School of Health Professions and the School of Medicine's Department of Genetics. Our goal is to enroll our first class in Fall, 2009. **Lynn Holt (1996)**

I finished my OB/Gyn residency in Greenville, SC in June and I am now at Duke doing a fellowship in Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility. My wife, Christa, and I have two young children...our daughter (14 months) Carter McLendon and our new, one month old, son Creighton, IV. **Creighton Likes (1999)**

Dave and I are expecting our 2nd child in another 6 weeks or so (and thus, I won't be able to attend NSGC this year). Our daughter, Samantha, is nearly 22 months old and keeps us on our toes. I'm still at RGI and, following maternity leave, will return, most likely with a focus on prenatal as opposed to on PGD/infertility, as this is too demanding to keep up with on a part-time basis. Give my best to everyone there and to all in Kansas City! **Christina (Masciangelo) Lavin (1998)**

Courtney Rowell (2000) recently relocated from Atlanta GA to Salt Lake City to accept the position of Product Manager - BRACAnalysis(r) with Myriad Genetic Laboratories, Inc. Courtney has been appointed Chair of the 2008 NSGC Communications Committee.....and recipient of the 2007 NSGC Region III Leadership Award! Congratulations Courtney!

Marla Jurek (2001) lives in Tulsa, OK. Marisa, Eliana, and Kaleigh turned 3 years old in August, and Ryan is 10 months. I am still staying at home, counting down the months until I can go back to work!! I miss it very much! I have been talking with the Early Intervention program in Oklahoma (Sooner Start) about future job opportunities. We'll see what happens! David is a Project Manager for Baker Petrolite. We really like Tulsa, and hope to remain here for some time.

Emily Hardisty (2001) is living in Durham, NC and has been working as a reproductive genetic counselor at UNC for the past 6 1/2 years. She and her partner, John, are expecting their first child in February, 2008.

Keith and I recently welcomed into our lives a baby girl. Her name is Kate Elizabeth Bittner and she was born on September 24, 2007. **Christina Chimera Bittner (2002)**

Erin Steed (2002) has changed jobs. She is now a prenatal counselor in Spartanburg, SC for the Greenwood Genetic Center. In addition to her prenatal role, Erin is the genetic counselor for a monthly cancer clinic and sees NICU consults, adults and whatever is needed in Spartanburg. She is loving her new position. Erin's family continues to do well and if anyone would like a home in Columbus, NC hers is for sale!

Still working at Savannah Perinatology Associates and living in Ridgeland, South Carolina (although we are trying to sell our house and build on our property in Beaufort). Our daughter, Grace, is 19 months old and doing great. She is an amazing and very entertaining little girl! :) **Libby Malphrus (2001)**

Alumni News Continued. . .

I am in Kernersville, teaching preschool to 3 and 4 year olds. I am still trying to fit science and genetic lessons in whenever I can. My son is 9 (Landon) and in the 4th grade and my daughter is 5 (Addie) and just started kindergarten this year. My husband, Chadwick, is with Allen Tate Realtors. If anyone wants to move to this area, we can find them a great home and a great place for their children to be. **Tara Stamper (1995)**

I have some fun news...my husband and I are expecting a baby girl at the end of October!! I'll keep you posted. **Teresa Berry (2003)**

Congratulations to **Sharon Hoyle Molinari (2003)** and her husband Jeff on their marriage April 28!!!

We're expecting our first baby (a girl!) sometime in January. **Christina Alamino (2004)**

I am still enjoying my position as a pediatric genetic counselor at the Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte. My husband, Eric, and I live in Fort Mill, South Carolina with our dog, Aiken. (I guess I'm one of those people who talks about their dog like a child now. Not a good sign.) **Anne Baughman Bandholz (2004)**

Well, lots of change to announce for me this year!! My husband and I are very excited about expecting a baby girl in late January. We are also building a home on his family's farm in Winchester, KY which we hope to move into before Christmas this year. Hope all is well at USC! **Jen Isaacs (2004)**

I am working at UNC Chapel Hill in Pediatric Genetics as the metabolic genetic counselor. I have been there about a year and love it! I am working with a large faculty group to do follow-up for patients who are diagnosed with metabolic conditions thru newborn screening and also seeing many other patients with metabolic conditions. I also work intimately with our MPS patient population, which is large because Dr. Muenzer is at UNC and created the enzyme replacement therapy for MPS II. **Erin Demo (2005)**

Jeanie Schaller (2006) is currently working at Myriad Genetic Laboratories, Inc., in Salt Lake City, UT. She has enjoyed the past year and a half in Salt Lake and has taken the opportunity to travel around to many of the regional national parks and sites. Last winter, the nearby mountains provided fertile terrain for a beginning skier, and she looks forward to an even better winter season this year.

I'm still working here at Sacred Heart doing mostly prenatal counseling and loving my job. Taylor and I have been married for almost a year and a half now and living happily in Pensacola with our puppy Logan. We'll be moving to North Carolina next spring--by way of Texas for four months this winter. We are definitely looking forward to being back in our home state and, as much as we have loved Pensacola, we miss having four distinct seasons! **Stephanie Francis (2006)**

UAB is still treating me well. I'm doing both pediatric and prenatal counseling and soon plan to transition to pediatric and research. We're really excited about the upcoming Genetic Counseling Training Program here, and are starting to expand in order to accommodate for that future. The "study for Boards" phase of my life is finally over (I hope forever), and I couldn't be happier. I've started the search for a house, and have found the hunt lots of fun! My classmates and I do pretty well at keeping in touch.... we're glad to have excuses like NSGC, weddings, etc. as a cause for reunion!

Christina Barger (2006)

After graduation, **Holly Hardin Zimmerman (2007)** moved back home to Mississippi and married her high school sweetheart, Pat Zimmerman on September 1, 2007. Fellow classmates Karen Echerd, Kate Wilson, Anna Edens, and Melissa Ciano all traveled to the wedding, making Holly's wedding the largest gathering of genetic counselors in the history of Mississippi! While she enjoys the challenges of implementing a new field, Holly looks forward to hiring more counselors in the future!