

# The NICHD Connection

**April 2016**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

How to Find NIH Support Programs for You	1
Letter from the Editor	2
Interesting Opportunity: NIH Fellows Committee Co-Chair	4
LinkedIn and Beyond Workshop Recap	6
Graduate and Medical School Application Panel Recap	8
Life Outside Lab	9
April Announcements	10
April Events	15
PhD Comics	16

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## How to Find NIH Support Programs for You

By Courtney Kurtyka, PhD

The NIH is an expansive, diverse employer with a wealth of resources available to those who work here. Largely due to its size, however, it can be difficult for employees to find out about existing support programs and to identify whether those resources are offered to members of their employee classification. This can be particularly problematic for some trainees (summer interns, postbac IRTAs, and visiting fellows) since they tend to work here for relatively short amounts of time, hastening the timeline to become informed about programs from which they can benefit.

In order to ameliorate this problem, the Women's Employment Committee developed the NIH Workforce Resource Eligibility Matrix (table and text versions of the matrix can be accessed here: <https://hr.od.nih.gov/workingatnih/worklife/matrix.htm>). This matrix identifies 27 support programs and their availability to 17 different classes of workers at the NIH. Whenever the matrix lists "no," that type of employee is not eligible for that program. However, when the matrix lists "yes," that means only some employees within that classification are eligible, and some further criteria may apply.

If you see a program that may be open to you which you are interested in utilizing, you can click on the hyperlink in the matrix and be brought to that program's website to learn more and double-check your eligibility. If you are unsure of your workforce classification within the matrix, there are descriptions of each group further down in the table PDF listed on the above website.

The programs described in the matrix cover a variety of needs. These include child/adult dependent/elder care, leave and work flexibility, funding and student loans, safety and wellness, conflict resolution and complaints, and commuting and parking. Some interesting programs from these categories that are available to trainees include:

### Child and Adult Dependent/Elder Care Resources and Referral Services:

Parents and caregivers can call 1-800-777-1720 to get referrals.

**Keep the Thread Program:** Only applicable to IRTA and CRTA postdoctoral

(continued on page 3)



## Letter from the Editor

With every issue of this newsletter, I'm impressed by the number of opportunities available to fellows at the NIH, especially within the NICHD. A big thank you to all of the volunteer writers for creating a resource-rich theme this month. Inside, trainees from postbacs to postdocs share [NIH support program information](#), an ["Interesting Opportunity" article](#), and workshop recaps on [networking](#) and [medical/graduate school applications](#).

In particular, I'd like to draw your attention to [Yvette Pittman's announcement](#) that she is hosting a new "Resume Hour" each week. For one hour every Wednesday, she will sit with fellows to discuss resume and CV preparation. Please do consider stopping by! A successful career requires active management. Shaping your resume or CV is a great place to start.

If you'd like to read other articles about NIH resources by NICHD fellows, please visit our [newsletter homepage](#) and scroll down to find our "Regular Feature" list on the left side of the screen. You'll find articles covering NIH and NICHD resources within several of our regular columns, including ["Former Fellow Follow-up,"](#) ["Interesting Opportunity,"](#) ["Thoughts of a Postbac,"](#) ["The Arts,"](#) and ["Event Recaps."](#)

If there are other topics of importance to you, please feel free to contact us. After all, this newsletter is a resource for you.

Your Editor in Chief,  
Shana R. Spindler, PhD

Please send questions, comments, and ideas to [Shana.Spindler@gmail.com](mailto:Shana.Spindler@gmail.com).

## How to Find NIH Support Programs for You (continued from page 1)

fellows who have been at the NIH for at least six months and are working on an established project, this program allows for fellows to arrange greater work flexibility (possibly including increased telework, part-time status, and more flexible hours) when faced with a period of increased family needs.\*

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** Services provided through this program include assistance with setting goals and resource recommendations for financial wellness, retirement planning, and work/life balance. This program also provides assertiveness training, time management and stress management consultation, and assistance with addressing mental health issues.\*

**Office of the Ombudsman:** A confidential, independent resource that can provide advice and mediation if necessary about ethical issues or conflicts.\*

**Transhare Program:** Provides up to \$255 per employee per month to defray the cost of using public transportation to commute to work.

The Women's Employment Committee is doing their best to keep the matrix updated, so please refer back to the page mentioned above for the most recent version. Also, if you notice any corrections that should be made, please write to the Women's Employment Committee at [edi.women@nih.gov](mailto:edi.women@nih.gov). Hopefully, the NIH Workforce Resource Eligibility Matrix can lead to greater awareness and use of the available programs at the NIH.

**\*Editor's Note:** Check out *The NICHD Connection* articles covering these programs: [Keeping the Thread](#) and the [EAP/Office of the Ombudsman](#).

## Interesting Opportunity: NIH Fellows Committee Co-Chair

By Sudhir Kumar Rai, PhD

I started my postdoc training at the NICHD in 2011. From day one, I was very interested in improving my scientific and personal skills. Working closely with the NIH Fellows Committee (FELCOM) as a subcommittee co-chair for the Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE) program was one of the best opportunities that I found at the NIH. It was a challenging but rewarding task within FELCOM. This unique contribution to the NIH community is a great opportunity for any postdoc to gain a high level of interpersonal and scientific management skills.



Within the National Institutes of Health, FARE is a travel award competition that is open to all IRTA, CRTA, clinical and research fellows, postdocs, visiting fellows, pre-IRTAs, postdoc level special volunteers, and graduate fellows. After a rigorous review process every year, nearly 25 percent of candidates (approximately 250) receive financial assistance of \$1,000 to be used towards conference-related travel, provided by the 27 Institutes and Centers (IC) through the scientific directors.

### FARE SUBCOMMITTEE CO-CHAIR TASKS

Serving as the subcommittee co-chair for the FARE travel award program requires outstanding management skills from day one to the end of the FARE award ceremony. As the co-chair, I established a strong, dedicated, and active group of 15 committee members who reported to me regarding updates on FARE activity. To manage this large task, I subcategorized the FARE travel award competition into various subgroups. Following are brief descriptions of each one, to help illustrate the experiences you can gain as a FELCOM subcommittee co-chair:

**FARE Marketing** - We designed and prepared FARE pamphlets and then distributed them throughout campus by email and through 15 FARE committee members.

**FARE Awareness Session** - We created informative presentations about FARE and guidelines for winning, for fellows on campus and off campus (through a webinar). We addressed any query related to FARE within 24 hours.

*(continued on page 5)*

## Interesting Opportunity: NIH Fellows Committee Co-Chair

(continued from page 4)

**NIH-Information Technology** - We teamed up with the NIH CIT department to publicize the FARE campaign via an email List-serve and to develop a computerized domain that allowed individual users to submit their abstracts in their chosen study sections.

**FARE Judge Recruitment and Judging Process** - The FARE program comprises 50 unique study sections in almost all biomedical research areas. To examine more than 1,000 unique abstracts required a very dedicated team for each study section, with a minimum of one principal investigator, one staff scientist, and three postdocs (including current FELCOM board members and previous FARE winners). As co-chair, I recruited 250 judges (with another 250 for back up) for the FARE abstract judging process. I am really grateful to the entire NIH community for their generous support.

**FARE Ceremony** - We circulated the official announcement of FARE winners through individual emails and requested each winner to be present at the FARE award ceremony at Masur Auditorium. We jointly organized the award ceremony with the NIH Research Festival committee members.

**FELCOM Monthly Report and Abstract Publication** - It was a 12-month process. Every month as a FARE co-chair, my job was to submit a report to FELCOM committee members for their valuable input. At the end of the FARE competition, we uploaded FARE winners' abstracts by IC, with authors' names, on the Office of Intramural Training and Education and FELCOM websites.

### WHAT I GAINED AS A FARE CO-CHAIR

If you are looking to contribute to the NIH community outside the laboratory, serving as a FARE co-chair is a great experience. I personally gained experience in managing this very heavy workload along with rigorous benchwork, where my task was to screen 3,004 deletion strains to test retrotransposon element integration in the yeast *Schizosaccharomyces pombe* genome. The NIH FARE program is an excellent platform for balancing our scientific experiences with NIH community involvement, all while building a wide range of scientific networks within the NIH.

## LinkedIn and Beyond Workshop Recap

By Suna Gulay, PhD

As researchers, we frequently make the mistake of focusing on the small details of our projects and not spending enough time on how to communicate the bigger picture to the outside world. Especially during a job search, we need to be thinking about why our specific work experience should matter to others and why we should be considered for positions or given certain perks during job negotiations.

On February 26, 2016, the NICHD Office of Education held a refreshing workshop on networking, led by Scott Morgan, titled “21st Century Networking: LinkedIn and Beyond.” Morgan has led many other networking, public speaking, and science communication workshops at NICHD—he knows how to work with scientists. At the latest workshop, participants learned how to improve their LinkedIn profiles to be more visible to potential employers, as well as how to deliver an elevator pitch and negotiate terms with future employers upon receipt of a job offer.

### LINKEDIN LESSONS

Morgan offered several ways to improve LinkedIn profiles, including:

- » A mission statement or a slogan instead of a title
- » A profile picture
- » Presentations and videos on your work
- » Interaction with different groups, companies, thought leaders, and alumni

Our first activity was to improve the “Title” field of our profiles. The aim was to replace something like “Fellow at NIH” with a mission statement or a slogan that is specially tailored to you but relevant to a broad audience, basically reflecting your “niche.” For example, I work on eukaryotic translation initiation. Considering my previous experience as well, I came up with “expertise in regulation of gene expression at the level of protein translation” during this activity, and I have been getting noticed more on LinkedIn since then. My colleagues came up with even more interesting slogans, so give it a try yourself.

### PERFECT PITCH

Next, Scott Morgan talked about the components of an elevator pitch. An elevator pitch is a 30 seconds to two minutes long summary of yourself and what you do. The name comes from a scenario in which you happen to be in the same elevator with an important person and you only have until the end of the ride to make a good impression. We practiced it with the second activity of the workshop: professional speed dating. Participants talked to one person at a time, making their pitch, and moving on to the next person when prompted.

*(continued on page 7)*

## LinkedIn and Beyond Workshop Recap

*(continued from page 6)*

The aim is to grab the attention of the other person by starting with the big picture and finding common ground, and then to talk about more specific points of your work emphasizing the significance. If a dialogue does not follow, there should also be an “exit strategy,” a last sentence to conclude your pitch.

A way to find common ground may be sharing something relatively personal, such as your passion, or something about your family. Interestingly, the personal conversations seemed to stick a bit better with the participants after the activity was over.

### NEGOTIATE NOW

Finally, we learned about negotiating with employers. Morgan suggests to:

1. Let a future employer bring up “money” first. If your opinion is asked, know the salary range of the position you have applied for.
2. Aim for solutions, not victory.
3. Make a list of non-cash items to bring up during the negotiation.
4. “Make the pie bigger.” Emphasize why it is in the employer’s interest to give you what you are asking for.

Non-cash items are especially important in compensating for a lower salary or an earlier start date than you expect. These might include a lab package for a new principal investigator, compensation for moving expenses, temporary housing, or childcare, for example. Non-cash items are anything that you may find important and the employers may be willing to give you.

So what is your “Title” on LinkedIn? What is the broader significance your research? What are some negotiation points you can bring up after your next job offer? It is never too early to start thinking about these. Happy job hunting!

## Graduate and Medical School Application Panel Recap

By *Daniel Flores*

The application processes for graduate and medical schools are quite different, although both contain some basic similarities. Both groups of applicants write a personal statement, attend an interview, and need to make a final decision. On February 22, 2016, the NICHD Office of Education held a panel-style event titled “The Application and Interviewing Process for Medical and Graduate School.” The panelists included a current medical student, a medical school applicant, a graduate student, a graduate school applicant, and a postdoc. Panelists answered many questions about the application process for both academic tracks.

The panelists agreed on many points. To start, applying smartly is key—there is no benefit in applying to as many schools as you can. Rather, the panelists recommended applying to those schools that genuinely interest you. They also recommended analyzing the average accepted exam scores (GRE or MCAT), looking at out-of-state and in-state acceptance rates.

When it comes to preparing your application, being able to talk in detail about anything on your curriculum vitae (CV) or resume is fundamental. One audience

member pointed out that she was asked about a study abroad trip many years ago and was expected to expand upon it much more than what was written in her CV. Your personal statement is also not exempt from this point. An interesting thought that was brought up by an audience member was that you should be comfortable talking about anything on your personal statement. During your interview visit, the panelists further emphasized that it is key to treat everyone you encounter with respect.

When making your final decision, the panelists encouraged applicants not only to focus on the school itself, but also to consider if the geographical location is a good fit for you. Can you see yourself living there for the next four to seven years? Also, for graduate school applicants, is the stipend adequate to cover living expenses?

Lastly, all of the panelists agreed that the path to acceptance is indeed unpredictable. However, coupling this with stress will only make the process more difficult for you. Your dedication and motivation in your field of choice will ultimately ensure that you have all of the bases covered, and that you have prepared a quality application.

# Life Outside Lab: 2016 Pi Day Celebrations

NICHD staff joined together on Monday, March 14 (3.14), to celebrate an annual Pi Day pie contest. It was a day of seemingly never-ending pie for a never-ending mathematical constant.



Two NICHD postdocs, Dr. Alejandro Alvarez-Prats (left) and Dr. Parmit Kumar Singh, presented PiCo lightning talks at the NIH 2nd Annual Pi Day celebration. They had 3 slides to share 1 idea in 4 minutes.



## April Announcements

### STOP BY FOR NEW “RESUME HOUR” WITH YVETTE PITTMAN!

Every Wednesday, 1–2 pm  
Building 31, Room 1B44

Are you flustered when you have to put yourself on paper? Learn how to perfect your resume or CV during Yvette Pittman’s weekly office hours, every Wednesday from 1–2 pm. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to review your resume or CV in great detail with Yvette.

You will:

- » Learn about keywords
- » Review formatting
- » Establish what to include—and not to include
- » Identify your target audience
- » And much more!

But you don’t need to take our word for it: 

*(continued on page 11)*



“I made my resume with the help of Yvette, which was very helpful. Going to Yvette is like going to hang out with a friend. She was dedicated and spent quality time with me to shape my resume. She had an excellent eye for detail and asked me some important questions, which brought out so many aspects of my resume that I originally ignored feeling they were unnecessary. She even advised me how to change the resume while applying for different jobs. The final version of my resume is a lot better than when we initially started. Overall, I strongly recommend taking a session with Yvette because it’s very helpful, and in the end, you get a well-made resume and a wonderful friend.” ~*Uma Neelathi*

## April Announcements

*(continued from page 10)*

### TWELFTH ANNUAL NICHD FELLOWS RETREAT IS UPON US

Speaker profiles, meeting agenda, and poster information can be found on the [retreat website](#). Registration is now closed. If you are interested in covering any part of the meeting for *The NICHD Connection*, please contact our editor Shana Spindler at [Shana.Spindler@gmail.com](mailto:Shana.Spindler@gmail.com). See you there!

### SAVE THE DATE: POSTBAC FAREWELL, MAY 26

Please save the date of **Thursday, May 26, from 3:30 to 4:30 pm** for our postbac farewell event. We will announce our three 2016 Postbac Poster Day winners for our institute, raffle off gifts from the NIH store, enjoy good food, and listen as Dr. Stratakis offers a few inspiring words to prepare our postbacs for success in their careers. Mark your calendars! More information to follow.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE “WRITE WINNING GRANT PROPOSALS” ANNUAL WORKSHOP

Thursday, July 14, 2016

9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

This workshop will address both practical and conceptual aspects that are important to the proposal writing process. Attendees will receive the “Grant Writer’s Workbook”—an invaluable, up-to-date reference tool for those who intend to write NIH grant proposals. It includes topics from how to prepare a compelling Specific Aims page to insights into which review criteria are most important.

For more information, please contact Yvette Pittman ([pittmanyv@mail.nih.gov](mailto:pittmanyv@mail.nih.gov)).

*(continued on page 12)*



## April Announcements

*(continued from page 11)*

### NICHD POSTBAC TO GIVE PLATFORM PRESENTATION AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**Jackie Picache**, one of our current NICHD postbac reps, will give a platform presentation this June at the 64th American Society of Mass Spectrometry Conference for the work she did with Stephanie Cologna in the Porter lab. Her talk is titled "A Label-free, Mass Spectrometry-based High Throughput Candidate Drug Screening Assay: Application to Smith-Lemli-Opitz Syndrome." A platform presentation is an impressive honor for a fellow in the early years of research. Please join *The NICHD Connection* in congratulating and supporting Jackie in this exciting opportunity and in her pursuit of joining a PhD program.

### NICHD POSTDOC NEELAM DABAS SEN HONORED AS 2016 WSA SCHOLAR

The NIH Women Scientist Advisory (WSA) Committee honored **Dr. Neelam Dabas Sen**, postdoc in the Hinnebusch lab, with a WSA award and the opportunity to speak at their WSA Scholar Symposium, held on February 29, 2016. Each year, the NIH WSA selects two or three female Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE) winners for this honor.

To read more about the work from Dr. Sen's talk, titled "Tale of two DEAD-box RNA helicases: Ded1 and eIF4A have distinct but overlapping functions in regulating eukaryotic translation initiation in vivo," please visit <http://genome.cshlp.org/content/25/8/1196.long>. Congratulations to Dr. Sen on this great achievement!

*(continued on page 13)*

## April Announcements

(continued from page 12)

### DO YOU HAVE AN OUTSTANDING MENTOR?

The time has come for you to nominate a fellow or PI for the NICHD Division of Intramural Research 2016 Mentor of the Year awards. This is a wonderful opportunity to recognize an individual whose mentoring has made a difference in your life here at the NIH.

Below is the link to obtain information about the NICHD's two annual Mentor of the Year Awards, one for a fellow and one for an investigator. Please submit your nomination form and 500-word (maximum) narrative electronically to Yvette Pittman ([Yvette.Pittman@nih.gov](mailto:Yvette.Pittman@nih.gov)). The submission deadline is **Monday, May 2**. Dr. Pittman is happy to answer any questions you may have about the nomination instructions and selection process.

More information at: [Mentor of the Year Awards 2016](#)

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY AT 2016 USA SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FESTIVAL

The annual USA Science and Engineering Festival will take place at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center on April 15-17, 2016, in Washington, DC. The NIH is looking for volunteers to support the NIH Pavilion at the festival. To learn more about this volunteer opportunity, please visit the [NIH Sci-Fest Volunteer Information website](#).

### GET YOUR IMAGES ON THE NIH RECORD FRONT PAGE

The [NIH Record](#) is on the lookout for high-resolution, color scientific images for the front-page masthead of their biweekly newsletter. They accept candidate image submissions via emailed jpg files to the editors, with an eye out for images that are horizontal with plenty of color and contrast. For contact information, please visit <https://nihrecord.nih.gov/submissions.htm>.

(continued on page 14)



Nominations are invited for two Mentor of the Year awards, one for an Investigator (tenured, tenure-track, staff clinician, staff scientist) and one for a fellow (postdoctoral, clinical, visiting, or research fellows).

**DEADLINE:**  
Monday, May 2, 2016

**DETAILS & NOMINATION FORMS AT**  
[fellows.nichd.nih.gov](http://fellows.nichd.nih.gov)

**NIH** Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

## April Announcements (continued from page 13)

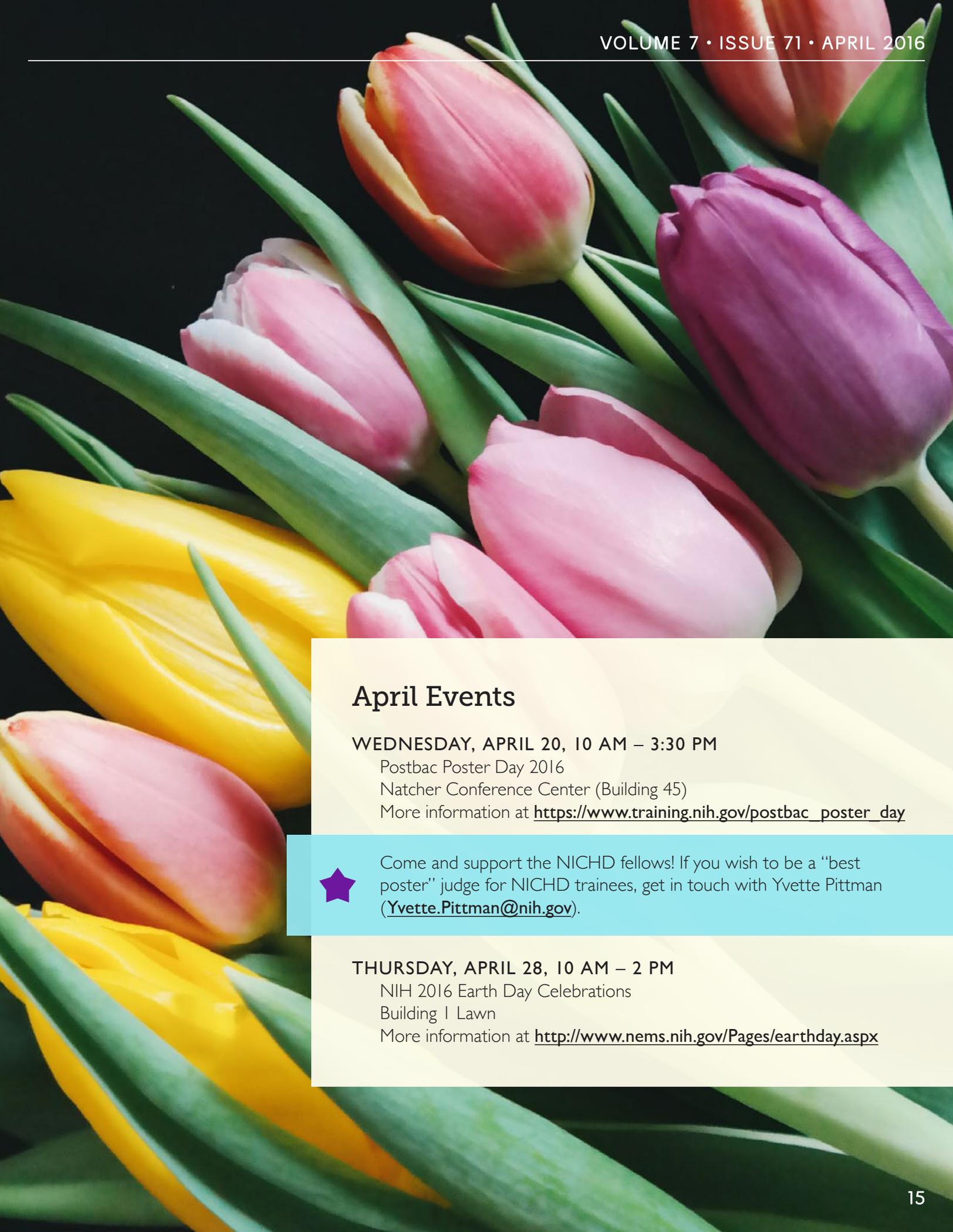
### TECHNOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM – SESSIONS FOR SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS

Vacations, Beaches, Barbeques, and training through the Technology Training Program are all things that can be enjoyed as the weather gets warmer. We will be offering sessions for Microsoft Office 2016, WebEx, SAS, and more through our program. There is no charge for most of the courses and seminars, and registration is open to NIH staff as well as all users of CIT computing facilities. Click on the links below for more details about the courses and to register online.

Here are some sessions for Scientists and Researchers:

- » [Using Xplor-NIH](#)
- » [SAS Enterprise Guide I: Querying and Reporting](#)
- » [Introduction to Jupyter \(formerly iPython\) Notebooks](#)
- » [Introduction to Python Programming](#)
- » [Introduction to Biopython Programming](#)
- » [Introduction to Data Analysis with Python \(pandas package\)](#)
- » [Data Visualization with Python](#)

For a complete list of all sessions currently available, please go to our web site <http://training.cit.nih.gov>.



## April Events

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 10 AM – 3:30 PM**

Postbac Poster Day 2016

Natcher Conference Center (Building 45)

More information at [https://www.training.nih.gov/postbac\\_poster\\_day](https://www.training.nih.gov/postbac_poster_day)



Come and support the NICHD fellows! If you wish to be a “best poster” judge for NICHD trainees, get in touch with Yvette Pittman ([Yvette.Pittman@nih.gov](mailto:Yvette.Pittman@nih.gov)).

**THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 10 AM – 2 PM**

NIH 2016 Earth Day Celebrations

Building 1 Lawn

More information at <http://www.nems.nih.gov/Pages/earthday.aspx>



## PhD Comics



<http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php?f=1862>

