



# ~ STAYING IN TOUCH ~ with your Appetite for Life

Fall 2008

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Grand Opening

Friends, supporters, and University officials are invited to attend the grand opening of the UNC Nutrition Research Building on October 20, 2008 at 10 a.m.



### Appetite for Life Academy

Classes will focus on bringing cutting-edge nutrition information to a general audience and will include the latest information on diabetes and cancer prevention.

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## The NRI's mission: Understanding what makes you . . . *You*

At some time in your life you probably heard the uplifting sentiment, “*There’s no one exactly like you.*” UNC Chapel Hill’s Nutrition Research Institute scientists accept that everyone is unique. More directly, they want to know why and how.

Recent advances in technology—nutrigenomics and metabolomics—are making it possible to find out why human beings differ in their nutrient requirements and metabolism. Once we



Separate research teams will focus on nutrition’s impact on cancer, brain development, and obesity.

unlock this mystery, scientists will begin to understand how to improve a person’s health at the individual level. This research could allow future physicians to target health interventions to each and every person, improving outcomes for diseases like obesity and cancer.

One of the NRI’s new technologies, nutrigenomics, is the study of how nutrition changes the way a person’s genes work and how genes, in turn, can change a person’s nutrient requirements. Since diet can affect how our genes behave—in effect “switching” them on and off—we are investigating which nutrients can bring about a gene switch.

The NRI’s other tool, metabolomics, is the measurement of the thousands of chemicals in a person’s body—substances that together make up a person’s metabolism. This new technology makes it possible to see a person’s entire complex body chemistry, rather than just a few measures, and understand how that particular body turns food into energy.

Outside the laboratory, the NRI is committed to translating its research into interesting and informative lectures on how to eat healthfully and live well.

The 2008 Appetite for Life Academy sponsored the five-lecture series *Frontiers in Nutrition* in February. The series was popular and widely applauded; it was the first installment of many more public events to come, including a second series that will take place in early 2009.

As our research grows, so will our programs. Keep up with both through this newsletter and the NRI website: [www.uncnri.org](http://www.uncnri.org).



Nutrition experts presented new research and answered questions during the first Appetite for Life Academy series in spring 2008

Photo: NRI



## From the Director's Desk

Steven H. Zeisel, M.D., Ph.D.

After years of planning how the Nutrition Research Institute would come to life, it's exciting to report in this newsletter all that we have done in the first year of the NRI's existence.

We spent the first several months on logistics: building our staff and preparing for our move into the UNC Nutrition Research Building on the North Carolina Research Campus. Once we had a small staff in place, we authored a number grant applications; led several hardhat tours of our new facility; sponsored a successful series of lectures; hosted an international Genetics, Epigenetics, Diet, and Behavior conference; and began building our team of researchers. With a complete staff, we plan to do even more.

Separate from our on-campus efforts, I am also pleased with the role the NRI has taken in the revitalization of Kannapolis. In addition to hiring from the local workforce, the NRI has made a point of purchasing goods and services from Kannapolis vendors, and we look forward to expanding our reach into the community in the next year. If you have not had a chance to meet us in person, you'll certainly get your chance in 2009.

Until then, please stay in touch with us and watch for upcoming events and other announcements from the NRI.

## Off to a great start: Inaugural Appetite for Life Academy series hits the mark

The first Appetite for Life Academy series, *Frontiers in Nutrition*, was a resounding success, with attendance exceeding expectations and topping 200 participants per session.

The topics—ranging from nutrition and cancer to causes of anorexia to the genetics of obesity—attracted a broad variety of audience members and earned high marks on the events' evaluations. Participants praised not only the topics, but also the speakers and shared their interest in health, nutrition, and more seminars.

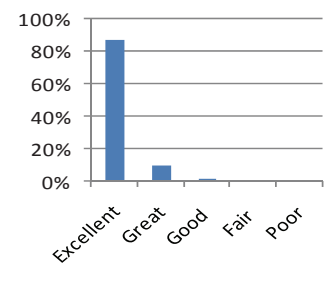
Event evaluations revealed that the series made a positive impact on participants and the wider community.

Many positive comments came from participants who were inspired to eat more wisely, but others shared their commitment to spread the word about healthful eating. More than one professional health care provider said they would carry the NRI's message into their clinic.



Appetite for Life lectures routinely attracted more than 200 participants.

### Appetite for Life Academy Evaluation Results (All Seminars)



These kinds of comments have charged the NRI to design the Appetite for Life Academy to not only share research, but also encourage participants to act on the information and create for themselves a healthier lifestyle.

On the heels of this success, the NRI will kick off a second set of lectures in early 2009.

Stay up-to-date by watching for email announcements, following community calendars, and visiting the NRI's Web site: [www.uncnri.org](http://www.uncnri.org).

## NRI's partnership with Johnson & Wales mixes nutrition with good taste

Let's face it: We know we should eat healthfully—but the high-fat, high-calorie stuff just tastes so much better. Well...the table's turned.

The Nutrition Research Institute will partner with Johnson & Wales University's award-winning culinary program to combine the newest nutrition research with the highest quality ingredients and highest caliber food preparation available.



Photo: Slack

The result will be an ongoing exchange of culinary expertise and nutrition information.

The NRI will provide lectures at some of JWU's Chef's Choice cooking classes, and JWU chefs will take part in cooking demonstrations at the NRI.

"Many people think that eating

to live and living to eat are not compatible," says NRI Outreach Director Beverly Jordan, "but in the right hands, healthful ingredients can become haute cuisine." The NRI-JWU partnership, she says, will illustrate how we can achieve that delicate and delicious balance.

Topics and events are still in development, but you can count on cooking classes that are hands-on, fun, informational, and that include plenty of tasting.

## Sponsor Spotlight

The Appetite for Life Academy is made possible by the generous support of several corporate sponsors.



### Carolinas Medical Center NorthEast

The Carolinas Medical Center stepped forward as the first corporate sponsor of the NRI's main outreach vehicle. "We were proud to partner with [the NRI]," said Gayle Deal, executive director of CMC's business health services.

The Internet company Windstream also sponsored the Frontiers in Nutrition series, which brought nutrition and health information to hundreds of Charlotte-area residents.

"As one of the largest employers in Cabarrus County," remarked Windstream Vice-president Greg Baucom, "We



### windstream communications

are pleased to help promote the health and well-being of both

its customers and employees."

Both Dole Foods and the North Carolina Research Campus contributed toward the Appetite for Life Frontiers in Nutrition series by providing refreshments and location and staff support.

So, a **special thanks** to our sponsors. Without them, we could not present the Appetite for Life Academy.

**For information on supporting the Academy, please contact Beverly Jordan at 704-250-5008.**

## It's almost official

As the UNC Nutrition Research Building on the North Carolina Research Campus nears occupancy, scientists, staff, and supporters of the Nutrition Research Institute are gearing up for everything the building will offer.

The first order of business will be the grand opening of the three main buildings on campus: UNC's Nutrition Research Building, NC State's building, and the David H. Murdock Research Institute Core Laboratory Building. Mark your calendar for the event on the campus October 20th, at 10 a.m.

The event will give NRI supporters and friends a chance to explore the 125,000 square-foot building and will be a recognition of the individuals who purchased bricks that line Patron's Plaza.

In addition to office space and research laboratories, the building will house a metabolic kitchen, a metabolic rate assessment facility, a body composition laboratory, a café, and other spaces and equipment necessary to studying nutrition and its impact on obesity, brain development, diabetes, and cancer.

For information on supporting the NRI or purchasing a brick for the plaza, email [lisa\\_canada@unc.edu](mailto:lisa_canada@unc.edu).

## Top scientists attend NRI's Genetics, Epigenetics, Diet, and Behavior conference

The Nutrition Research Institute welcomed more than two dozen brain and cancer scientists to discuss their current research and to share insights that might further one another's work on how nutrition influences the brain.

The symposium was co-chaired by Drs. Christine Williams and Warren Meck from Duke University, Dr. Jan Blusztajn from Boston University's School of Medicine, and Dr. Steven Zeisel of the UNC NRI.

In addition to these experts, research scientists from throughout the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. presented their work on diet and

the brain. They focused on the newly recognized essential nutrient choline and how it plays a role in brain development. In particular, they looked at epigenetics—how the switches that turn genes on and off work—and reported that choline has the ability to bring about a genetic switch in the brains of lab animals.

"It is very clear that scientists from many laboratories are finding that the diet of a mother during pregnancy is critically important for building the baby's brain," said Steven Zeisel, MD, PhD, and director of the NRI.



Scientists from around the world visited the NRI to share their findings and build collaborations.

"The need for choline and folic acid is probably only the tip of the iceberg," he said.

The NRI intends to host more conferences where leading scientists come together to enhance the research center's increasing contribution to nutrition science.

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### Exploring Nutritional Individuality

## The Nutrition Research Institute needs everyone’s support—yours, too

Whether you are a small business, a corporation, a foundation, or an individual citizen, you can support the important work of the NRI.

Corporate sponsorship is an ideal way to put a company’s name or brand in front of potential customers who take part in NRI events and activities. In addition, affiliation with the NRI can benefit your corporation through workforce training, partnering opportunities, and special corporate events targeted to your company.

Other ways to support the NRI’s work include giving to the Excellence Fund which helps attract new researchers to the Institute, underwriting a specific research project, or sponsoring the work of a particular researcher. Gifts to the NRI are tax deductible, as allowed by law.

To arrange corporate sponsorship or for information on giving to the NRI, contact Beverly Jordan at [beverly\\_jordan@unc.edu](mailto:beverly_jordan@unc.edu) or at 704-250-5008.

Purchasing a brick in Patron’s Plaza is an easy way to make your mark in the world and support the NRI at the same time.

Whether a gift for a friend or loved one, recognition of an important date, or simply a sign of your personal support, a brick in Patron’s Plaza will leave a permanent imprint on the NRI.

Each brick costs \$100 and can contain up to three lines of text; each line can contain up to 20 characters (including spaces).



To purchase a brick, contact Lisa Canada at [lisa\\_canada@unc.edu](mailto:lisa_canada@unc.edu) or at 704-250-5012.

**We’re on the Web:**  
[www.uncnri.org](http://www.uncnri.org)



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### NUTRITION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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