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Medgar Evers College

Brooklyn Public Library Partners with Medgar Evers College To Add a Special Twist to National DNA Day

April 24th, 2008

As part of a host of educational activities across the country on National DNA Day, Brooklyn Public Library, in partnership with Medgar Evers College Genomics Education and Outreach Project, is holding a day long series of events at the Central Library, located at 10 Grand Army Plaza. The Library will welcome Dr. Milton English, a genome researcher from the National Institute of Human Genome Research, National Institutes of Health (NHGRI). Dr. English, a genomics researcher and also a graduate of Tilden High School in Brooklyn, is one of the more than 40 genetics experts, "DNA Ambassadors," that the NHGRI is sending to discuss their field at high schools and communities around the country.

"Genomics has grown in its relevance not only for the scientific community but also for the lay public. It is important that students, both science and non-science majors, and the lay public learn about this 21st Century biological science and the implications it has for many fields in science, for health, and for society," said Dr. Doris Withers, Professor of Biology and Education at Medgar Evers College. "The National DNA Day speaker, in presenting a first-hand perspective, will provide insight on how students can go about pursuing career opportunities in genetics and genomics research and will illustrate advances being made practically every day in this promising field."

The Library will be the site of activities for students of all ages, for teachers, and the general public from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. There will be presentations on genomics research and its applications, on careers in genomics, on family health history, and on wellness. An interactive virtual lab will include access to the NHGRI all-day online chat room where genomic researchers will conduct an open forum for students and the community around the country. There will be games and arts and crafts involving DNA for young and older children.

Students from Middle School 394 in Brooklyn who have written essays about DNA for the national essay contest and the local winners will be awarded cash prizes from the President of Medgar Evers College, Dr. Edison O. Jackson. Biology students from Medgar Evers College will assist in setting up and hosting the activities.

National DNA Day, begun in April 2003, commemorates the successful completion of the Human Genome Project and the

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anniversary of the discovery of DNA's double helix in 1953. Observed on April 25, the event aims to educate the public and engage and excite the students about genomics and to inform them of career options. National DNA Day programs are occurring around the country. In Oxford, Ohio, Miami University faculty has developed games for children and tools for teachers. The Wisconsin Department of Health will mobilize its genetic counselors to present informative programs at secondary schools across their home state. A group from the University of Nebraska Medical Center will bring exhibits and demonstrations to six high schools at Indian reservations in Nebraska and South Dakota. Oklahoma City Community College will host 300 students and teachers for a day of genomic exploration and a genome-oriented performance.

"Enthusiasm surrounding National DNA Day seems to grow with each year," said Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), located in Bethesda, Md. "Cracking the code of the human genome was a major milestone that now has opened new opportunities for inquiry into fields as diverse as molecular biology, computer science and bioethics. National DNA Day encourages a new generation to join in the exciting progress being made in using genomics to improve human health."

DNA Day at the Brooklyn Public Library is a project of The Human Genome Project: Community Conversations Committee (HGPC) at Brooklyn Public Library. The Committee members are Maxine Copper, Chairperson, Lisa Chow, Shirley Hall, Anthony Loum, and Angeli Rasbury from Brooklyn Public Library; Sabrina Waldron and Alice Dontanville from Libraries of the Future; and Dr. Doris Withers of Genomics Education & Outreach Project at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. The Human Genome Project: Community Conversations is a joint initiative of Libraries for the Future and WE ACT for Environmental Justice, made possible with funding from the National Institutes of Health

National DNA Day is part of a collaborative outreach from the NHGRI, the American Society of Human Genetics, the International Society of Nurses in Genetics, the Genetic Alliance and the National Society of Genetic Counselors. For more information about National DNA Day, visit www.BrooklynPublicLibrary.org and www.genome.gov/dnaday

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