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Virtual Celebration Encourages Exploration of Genomic Careers

By National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI)

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On April 25, high school students across the country will celebrate National DNA Day by tuning in to webcasts featuring cutting-edge genomic research and taking part in a live online discussion with researchers from the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

National DNA Day, begun in April 2003, commemorates the successful completion of the Human Genome Project and the anniversary of the discovery of DNA's double helix in 1953. The event is a collaboration of NHGRI, American Society of Human Genetics, Genetics Society of America, the Genetic Alliance and the National Society of Genetic Counselors.

"As we embark on the genome era, we face an urgent need for a new generation of young professionals trained in everything from molecular biology to computer science to bioethics. National DNA Day is a wonderful opportunity for students to learn from real-life genome researchers how they can join in the effort to use genomics to improve human health," said NHGRI Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.

The first DNA Day webcast will feature Dr. Collins, co-leader of the Human Genome Project, who will discuss "The Genome Era: What It Means for You." The second webcast will feature Elaine A. Ostrander, Ph.D., chief of NHGRI's Cancer Genetics Branch, who will describe her work using the dog genome to understand human disease in a talk entitled "The Power of Comparison: Unleashing the Dog Genome." Both webcasts will be available on April 25 at www.genome.gov/DNAday.

In addition to viewing the free, on-demand webcasts, teachers and students can take part in a live online chat with NHGRI researchers from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern time at www.genome.gov/DNAday. Experts will be on hand to field questions about a wide-range of topics, including basic science, clinical research, genomic careers and the ethical, legal and social implications of genomic research. For those unable to participate in the live event, a transcript of the chat will be available on the DNA Day Web site.

"As we expand our public education program we are pleased that computer technology is enabling NHGRI to reach out to teachers and students across the country in small towns and urban school districts and connect them with genome researchers on National DNA Day," said Vence Bonham, J.D., chief of NHGRI's Education and Community Involvement Branch. "We hope that National DNA Day will excite more students from all walks of life to learn about genome science and careers in genomics."

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