



Amarillo • Lubbock • Dallas/Fort Worth • Abilene

New sterile lab a benefit for students

With the completion of a new sterile laboratory, the TTUHSC School of Pharmacy will be able to offer its students a specialized type of training that no other pharmacy school in Texas can provide.

Dr. Mikala Conatser, an associate professor of pharmacy practice, will use the new facility to teach second-year pharmacy students how to perform sterile compounding, which she describes as the manufacturing of medication that will treat patients intravenously or through similar methods.

Conatser said these types of medications must be produced in the cleanest possible environments by specially trained staff. She said the sterile room must pass an air particle count, a bacterial growth test and meet other requirements specified by United States Pharmacopeia 797, which is currently a part of a hospital's accreditation process standards.

Conatser has been unable to locate a similar facility at any other U.S. pharmacy school.

"Other schools do offer a sterile compounding course, but this new lab has really raised the bar," Conatser said. "Each student has their own hood to compound in and is taught with great detail the proper steps in the process. They garb, wash their hands and clean their hoods. In addition, new techniques and processes are introduced each week to help build their foundation as the semester progresses. At the end of the course students will be able to easily compound without the risk or fear of contaminating the products or getting needle sticks."

The laboratory is located at the site of a former classroom on the second floor of

the main School of Pharmacy building in Amarillo. The classroom was moved to the school's Pharmacy Academic Center when that building opened in 2010.

The laboratory contains 26 individual work stations with hoods where students are taught to perform proper sterile procedures. Amarillo Regional Dean Dr. Thomas Thekkumkara said the school spent \$520,000 to convert the roughly 2,000-square-foot space from a classroom to a laboratory.

Conatser said the new lab will give TTUHSC pharmacy students an advantage when they enter the workforce.

"Students who are interested in a hospital-based career will already have a good base knowledge of the sterile compounding process and will be able to easily adapt that to their workplace," Conatser said. "Students

involved in a retail setting will also benefit from the process as they will become more at ease with using needles and pulling up medications, facilitating their ability to give vaccinations to their patients."

Conatser said the lab reinforces important sterile com-

pounding techniques that students previously could only simulate.

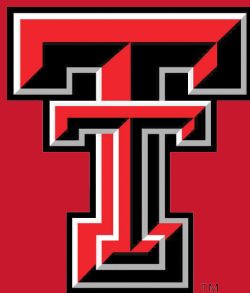
"I've talked to members of my own graduating class and other students who took this course before the new lab was built, and this facility has greatly improved knowledge retainment," Conatser said. "I believe the repetition of performing standard tasks and not having to pretend, but actually being able to sanitize their own work space and make sterile products in each and every lab will be very beneficial in the long run to our students and their future patients."



P2 Kimberly Chapman works with a syringe at one of the 26 hooded work stations housed in the recently completed sterile lab in Amarillo.



The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award baccalaureate, masters, doctoral and professional degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Ga. 30033-4097 or call (404) 679-4500 for questions about the TTUHSC accreditation.



Thomas named Dean's Student Leadership honoree

The Dean's Student Leadership Award was never intended to be exclusive to fourth-year students, yet each of the first eight recipients were in their P4 year. It probably comes as no surprise, however, that P3 Justin Thomas officially broke that string when he was honored by School of Pharmacy Dean Dr. Quentin Smith at a recent ceremony in Amarillo.

Toni Johnson, administrator for the regional dean's office in Amarillo, nominated Thomas for the award. Johnson works closely with the pharmacy school's student organizations and she has seen firsthand how other students depend on Thomas.

"Justin looks for ways to improve, grow and be innovative as he works with the different issues presented to him," Johnson said. "Whether it's for the Student Council or one of the student organizations, Justin's mind looks for innovative ways to stage various activities and creative ways to fundraise."

Johnson said Thomas has also studied the TTUHSC student senate fees budget to gain an understanding of university processes and procedures and that he strives to ensure pharmacy students receive proper funding.

"Justin has a keen business sense that is based on fiscal responsibility," Johnson added. "As a Student Council participant and officer, he has helped the pharmacy student organizations to be fiscally responsible with the fees they receive and to set limits on certain purchases. He is very interested in both the business side of pharmacy as well as the practice side of pharmacy."

During his three years as a pharmacy student, Thomas has become as much a part of the Amarillo campus as the West Texas wind and crowded parking lots. Whether he's on his way to a clerkship, a case study or a student organization meeting, Thomas seems to always be busy,



yet still looking for more to do or someone else who needs a hand.

"Our school is full of outstanding leaders who on a daily basis make an incredible impact on the students and community around us, and it is certainly an honor to be recognized by the dean as part of this group of leaders," Thomas said. "I am incredibly grateful for the recognition and I hope that other students can look at this and become motivated to get even more involved. It is so important and necessary for our school to remain a top choice for future pharmacy students and employers, and all of us play a role in this endeavor."

Even the four-year Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) curriculum seems to leave Thomas wanting more. He is also earning his Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) through the School of Pharmacy's joint Pharm.D. -M.B.A. degree program with the Texas Tech Rawls College of Business.

"I joined this profession because I am passionate about pharmacy as a career and about the limitless potential for where it is going," Thomas said. "However, to reach this potential, there is a lot of work to do. As we have all chosen this profession and this school, our future successes are in no small part determined by improving the quality of both. It is up to all of us to provide feedback and work to leave this institution, and the profession as a whole, better than when we arrived. I get involved because it is our responsibility to do so, and I am just trying to do my small part in helping move this profession forward."

The list of organizations in which Thomas has served is a testament to his willingness to step up when called upon. He is the Class of 2014 president for Amarillo and has served as Student Council President since 2011.

Thomas is also the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) President-Elect for 2012-2013 and he was the group's 2011-2012 Student Political Action Network Liaison, a delegate for the APhA and Texas Pharmacy Association (TPA) House of Delegates for the past two years and a TPA Reference Committee Member in 2011.

Thomas has been a Pharmacy Senator for the Amarillo Student Senate since 2011 and is currently serving as the 2013 Senate President. He is also a member of the Phi Delta Chi-Beta Rho Chapter, Phi Lambda Sigma and the Texas Tech Society of Health Systems Pharmacists.

When combined with his studies and clerkships, Thomas' organization involvement leaves him little personal time. Despite the time squeeze, Thomas believes student organization involvement is important.

"Student organization involvement directly effects the school on both a local and national level," Thomas said. "Having students involved in school organizations increases the voice students have in decisions being made which directly impact them. It also creates a sense of community and identity by having people involved in the political and social aspects of the school."

Thomas said national organization membership gives students the ability to attend conferences where they can meet and interact with potential employers who might not be available at the local level.

"It also builds invaluable skills and cultivates leaders which will be critical for our profession moving forward," Thomas added.

Thomas' involvement has already reaped rewards that will

(See Thomas Award on next page)

Thomas Award *(Continued from previous page)*

help his career. He spent last summer in Deerfield, Ill., as one of two pharmacy students from across the country selected to participate in Walgreens' highly competitive national corporate intern program.

"A large part of the reason I was selected was due to my involvement in student organizations," Thomas said. "As I look to graduate next year, I will be utilizing the contacts and connections I have made through these organizations and programs to begin my career in this field. The experience I have gained from working with all the amazing people in these organizations and with a company like Walgreens will be invaluable as I move forward."

Thomas said there are many people in his life who motivate him to be involved. He is known as someone who can bring people together, a trait he likely developed

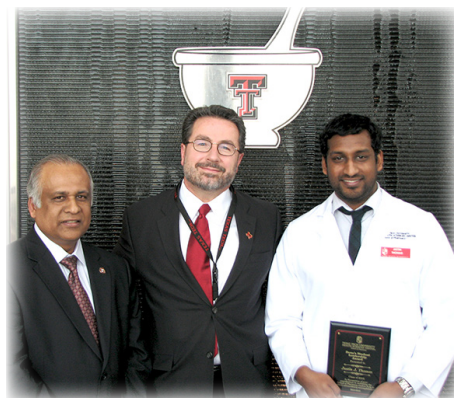
by studying various political leaders and learning how they solve problems and reach agreements with people who come from opposite ends of the political spectrum.

"This might not be the most popular answer in today's current political environment," Thomas said, "but I truly believe that in today's world, building coalitions to buy into your goals is incredibly important. This will be especially critical for pharmacists trying to navigate the emerging new paradigm of modern health care."

Thomas also credits his parents for providing him with the motivation and support necessary to succeed as a student and leader.

"I am extremely busy as a student and taking on these additional roles take up what remaining time I have," Thomas said. "There would be no way I could continue moving forward without the con-

tinued support of my parents. My life is so much easier knowing that every long night spent studying and stressful day at school will end by coming back home. They are always there for me, and none of this would be possible without them."



From left: Amarillo Regional Dean Dr. Thomas Thekkumkara; School of Pharmacy Dean Dr. Quentin Smith; and Dean's Student Leadership honoree Justin Thomas.

Spring dates announced for next round of Medication Cleanout collections

Continuing an important community program that began in 2009, the Texas Panhandle Poison Center (TPPC) has announced the dates for its spring round of Medication Cleanout events in Amarillo, Abilene and Lubbock.

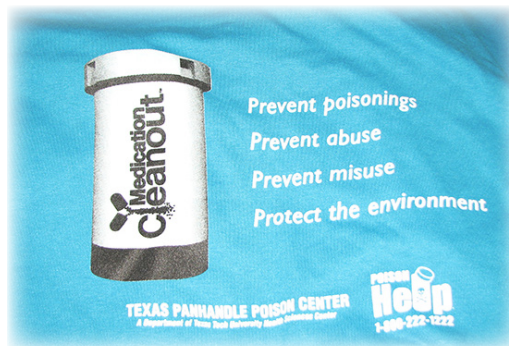
According to TPPC Managing Director and Assistant Professor Dr. Jeanie Jaramillo, the Amarillo event is set for March 23; Abilene's event is slated for April 13; and the Lubbock collection will take place April 27.

All three events will run from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Because the events require coordination between each School of Pharmacy campus, local law enforcement and various other entities, Jaramillo said the dates are firm.

"If you are a student organization leader, a faculty member or a staff member that participates in scheduling other events like health fairs, volunteer days or student organization parties, we would appreciate it if you can make note of these dates so that we don't have conflicts," Jaramillo said. "For students, there may or may not be tests during these weeks, so I hope by providing advance notice, they can plan to study ahead so they are able to participate in these

important events. We realize it's not humanly possible to avoid all conflicts, so simultaneous, unavoidable events are likely."



The next round of Medication Cleanout events are slated for March and April in Amarillo, Abilene and Lubbock.

The 22 previous Medication Cleanout events have resulted in the appropriate destruction of roughly 9,600 pounds of unused medications, including 694 pounds of controlled substances. Jaramillo said the School of Pharmacy now has more data regarding unused medications than any other known entity in the U.S. She hopes the data will be used to drive prescribing and dispensing practice changes and to push for the ability to donate unused,

tamper-sealed medications.

Jaramillo continues to seek active sponsorship from groups that would like to provide volunteer snacks or meals, advertising assistance or supplies.

"Every dollar counts in these hard economic times and we are fighting hard to keep this very important effort going," Jaramillo said. "We will send out further information for volunteer sign up next month. We could not do this without all of the help of our volunteers."

CPFI organizes third Tulia Health Fair

Thanks to the efforts of a School of Pharmacy student organization, and a dozen students and physicians from the School of Medicine, more than 50 residents of Tulia received free health care screenings and consultations Feb. 9 at the Tulia VFW Hall.

The TTUHSC contingent included pharmacy faculty Dr. Shanna James and Dr. Mikala Conatser and members of the Christian Pharmacist Fellowship International (CPFI). Medical school faculty Dr. Brian Weis and Dr. Whit Walker led a group that included eight medical students and two resident physicians.

"This is the only interdisciplinary event that happens on a yearly basis at the Amarillo campus," James said. "This is not only an event that gives back to the community but it also fosters relationships between medical and pharmacy students."

James said CPFI used to undertake an annual mission trip to Mexico that was eventually halted by the school over concerns about student safety. The group replaced the Mexico mission trip with a similar effort in El Paso.

"When I was a student we went to El Paso, and in 2011 dur-

ing my P4 year, I was contacted by the officers of CPFI to help them set up a local mission trip as well," James explained. "I told them I am from Tulia and that I was going on rotation there at the same time they wanted to have the health fair, so that allowed me to help them even more. We also invited the School of Medicine to participate and they have been doing so ever since."

James said she was excited to give something back to Tulia and her Texas Panhandle neighbors.

"Since I know people in Tulia, I have received feedback on the event," James said. "I know there were two individuals who quit smoking in the first year. Today they are still smoke-free, which is amazing."

James hopes to continue the health fair in Tulia and eventually expand it to other rural communities.

"I think it would mean a lot to the residents of the Panhandle seeing the Texas Tech University Health Science Center trying to make an impact in their towns," James said. "And even though CPFI is a Christian organization, we are open to everyone whether they are patients or volunteers."

How to submit items for the Dean's Newsletter

The mission of "From the Dean's Desk" is to communicate the news, events and achievements from the School of Pharmacy to all four of our campuses and to alumni and other friends of the school who enjoy hearing about your good work.

If you or your department, division, organization or class have something you'd like to include in this newsletter, or if you have a question about the types of items typically included in the newsletter, please contact:

Mark Hendricks
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TTUHSC-SOP/Amarillo
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At the Third Annual Tulia Health Fair; P1 Jonathan DeLong (left) explains the causes of heartburn to a patient; P2 Jamie Morris (center) prepares a blood sample for cholesterol screening; and P2 Sara Labus checks a patient's blood pressure.

In case you missed it...



Weidanz

• *The Journal of National Cancer Institute* (13.76 impact factor) recently published a research paper by Drs. Jon Weidanz and Maciej Markiewski (Department of Immunotherapeutics and Biotechnology - Abilene).



Markiewski

The article, titled "Antitumor Activity of a Monoclonal Antibody Targeting Major Histocompatibility Complex Class I-Her2 Peptide Complexes," was published electronically on Jan. 8. It reports on their research on a new T-csll receptor-mimicking antibody.

The Journal of National Cancer Institute also published an editorial that highlights the work. The editorial is titled, "HER2-Directed T-cell Receptor-Mimicking Antibody: A "Me Too" or an Example of Novel Antitumor Aggressive Mimickry?"

• Ryan Collins (P4 – Dallas) and Dallas/Fort Worth Assistant Professor Dr. Steve Pass will be recognized April 26-28 at the Texas Society for Health-System Pharmacists' Annual Seminar and Exhibition in Austin. Collins will receive the Glenda Lawson McRee Pharmacy Student Award and Pass will be honored as the 2013 Pharmacy Mentor Award recipient.

• Parul Gupta received a \$1,000 Graduate Student Travel Support Award to attend the Society of Toxicology 52nd Annual Meeting March 10-14 in San Antonio.



Collins



Pass



Gupta



Getting to know...

Randi King Assistant Director - Office of Experiential Programs • Abilene

Randi King was born in Dallas, but she moved to Lubbock when she was 5 years old. After graduating from Lubbock High School, she attended Howard Payne University in Brownwood and earned a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies.

Shortly after receiving her college degree, King began working at Howard Payne as an admissions counselor before eventually becoming a coordinator in the school's Center for Academic and Personal Success.

"My job as admissions counselor is where I developed my love of working with students in higher education," she said.

While living and working in Brownwood, King met and married her husband, Joe. They have two children: 9-year-old Madison and 2-year-old Nolan.



Top: Randi King and her husband, Joe.

Right: Madison and Nolan

Left: One of Randi's favorite photos she took on a recent trip to Malaga, Spain.

The Kings moved to Abilene in 2007 when Joe had an opportunity for career advancement within the Texas Department of Family Protective Services. King began working for the School of Pharmacy in October 2007 as the early experiential coordinator in Abilene. After a brief hiatus in 2009, she returned to the pharmacy school as the assistant director for experiential programs.

"My favorite part of the job is seeing students find their specific career interests while they're in school and then watching them become successful pharmacists after graduation," King said.

King also loves travelling and photography, especially when they can be done together. Some of her favorite trips have been to Seattle, Alaska, Israel and the Azores.

School of Pharmacy Photo Gallery

The Texas Tech Student Society of Health-System Pharmacists in Amarillo celebrated National Organ Donor Day Feb. 14 by wearing red and posing for a heart-felt group photo.

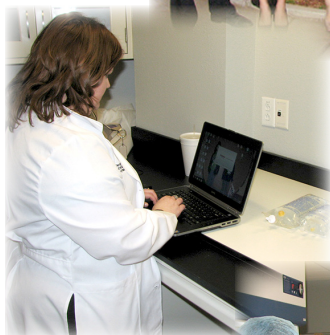


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From left: P2s Steven Nguyen, Sherry Li, Alice Lee, Emily Hong and Angel Acosta at the 2013 Spring Formal in Amarillo.



The Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International visited the High Plains Children's Home in February. Top photo: Amarillo P2 Jason Serna helps a friend create a Valentine's card. Left photo: P2s Jordan Light and Wayne Chee serve some healthy snacks.



At the new sterile lab in Amarillo, Assistant Professor Dr. Mikala Conatser can prepare a lesson while students watch on one of the lab's video monitors.



In January, Dallas P3s Urvi Desa and Monsurat Akinyele (left photo) and Amarillo P2s Travis Clements and Joey Boone pitched in at the APhA Health Fairs at United and Amigos Supermarkets. The Health Fair was also held in Lubbock.



The dance floor was busy at the 2013 Amarillo Spring Formal.



From left: Amarillo P1s Eva Caulson, Rebecca Rearick and Ola Fagbohun pose for a photo at the Third Annual Tulia Health Fair. The event was organized Feb. 9 by the Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International.