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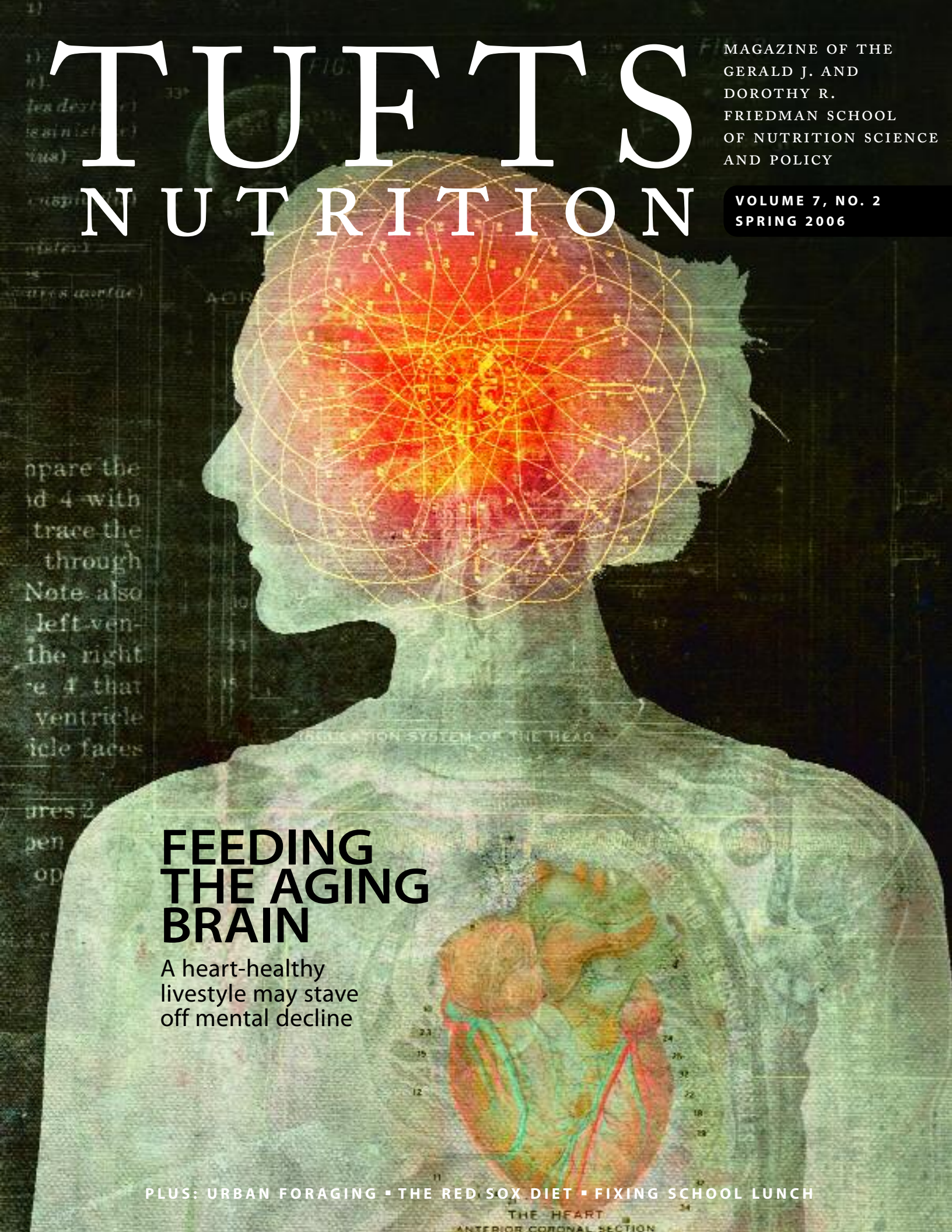

FEEDING THE AGING BRAIN

A heart-healthy livestyle may stave off mental decline

PLUS: URBAN FORAGING ▪ THE RED SOX DIET ▪ FIXING SCHOOL LUNCH

Now oats can really gloat

For this installment of "Ask Tufts Nutrition," Mohsen Meydani, director of the Vascular Biology Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, serves as our expert.

Q: Why are oats good for you? Is it just the soluble fiber?

A: Oats (*Avena sativa*), a cereal grain, are a great source of carbohydrate energy and are high in well-balanced proteins. They are also good sources of several micronutrients, including copper, zinc, calcium, iron, magnesium and manganese and vitamins E, B1, B2 and D. Oats also contain several phytochemicals, including phenolic acid, flavonoids, sterols and phytic acid.

They do provide good amounts of soluble and insoluble fibers. The soluble fiber of oats is a special form known as beta-glucan. Research suggests that when this form of fiber is consumed as part of a healthy, low-fat diet, it can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by lowering blood cholesterol levels. The insoluble fiber in oats creates bulk in the intestine and may dilute carcinogens, thus reducing the risk of colon cancer. Oatmeal consumption is also reported to increase the ability of arteries to dilate.

In addition, oats have unique polyphenols with antioxidant activity called avenanthramides, which are only found in oat grain. In recent laboratory tests, my colleagues and I examined these compounds as extracted from oats or synthetically prepared in the lab for their potential health benefits. We found that they possess anti-inflammatory properties and may help prevent the formation of plaques.

We purified avenanthramides and exposed them to human arterial wall cells for 24 hours and found that the ability of blood cells to stick to the artery walls was significantly reduced. This is noteworthy, because when blood cells stick to walls and cause inflammation, plaque deposits build up and narrow the passageways through which blood flows. We also saw that avenanthramides inhibited the proliferation of vascular smooth muscle cells, the accumulation of which plays an important role in the development of plaques and the narrowing of arteries. Furthermore, we found that these compounds stimulate production of nitric oxide from the cells of arterial walls, causing the arteries to dilate.

In addition, we found that the avenanthramides of oats also suppress production of inflammatory molecules called cytokines and cellular adhesion molecules. These "sticky" molecules occur naturally as a means of fighting infection, but together with cytokines they attract a large number of inflammatory cells in the vessel wall, which can block blood flow.

Taken together, our current cell culture evidence indicates that consuming oats has a great potential to provide benefits to vascular health in many other ways besides just lowering cholesterol. So now you have even more reasons to eat your oatmeal.

Please send your questions for future installments of "Ask Tufts Nutrition" to Julie Flaherty, Tufts University Office of Publications, 136 Harrison Ave., Boston, MA 02111. Or send an e-mail to julie.flaherty@tufts.edu.

PHOTO: FOODCOLLECTION

A little planning now . . . can make a big difference for generations to come.

NANCY CARBONARO

Even 25 years ago, when the Friedman School and the HNRCA were in their infancy, internship experiences helped chart my career path. Now as my oldest daughter, Alisa, is exploring research internships, I am seeing the Friedman School and the HNRCA with fresh eyes. I am amazed at how the school has grown and what it has to offer. My family's charitable remainder unitrust to support future internships allows me to give back to students of the Friedman School."

ROSALIND "LYN" WHINSTON-PERRY graduated from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy in 1983. Through a planned gift created by her family, she established an endowed Alumni Internship Fund. During her degree program she interned at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA). She is a medical editor at the Massachusetts Medical Society and an active member of the Friedman School Alumni Board. Lyn has two daughters, Alisa (pictured above) and Maya.

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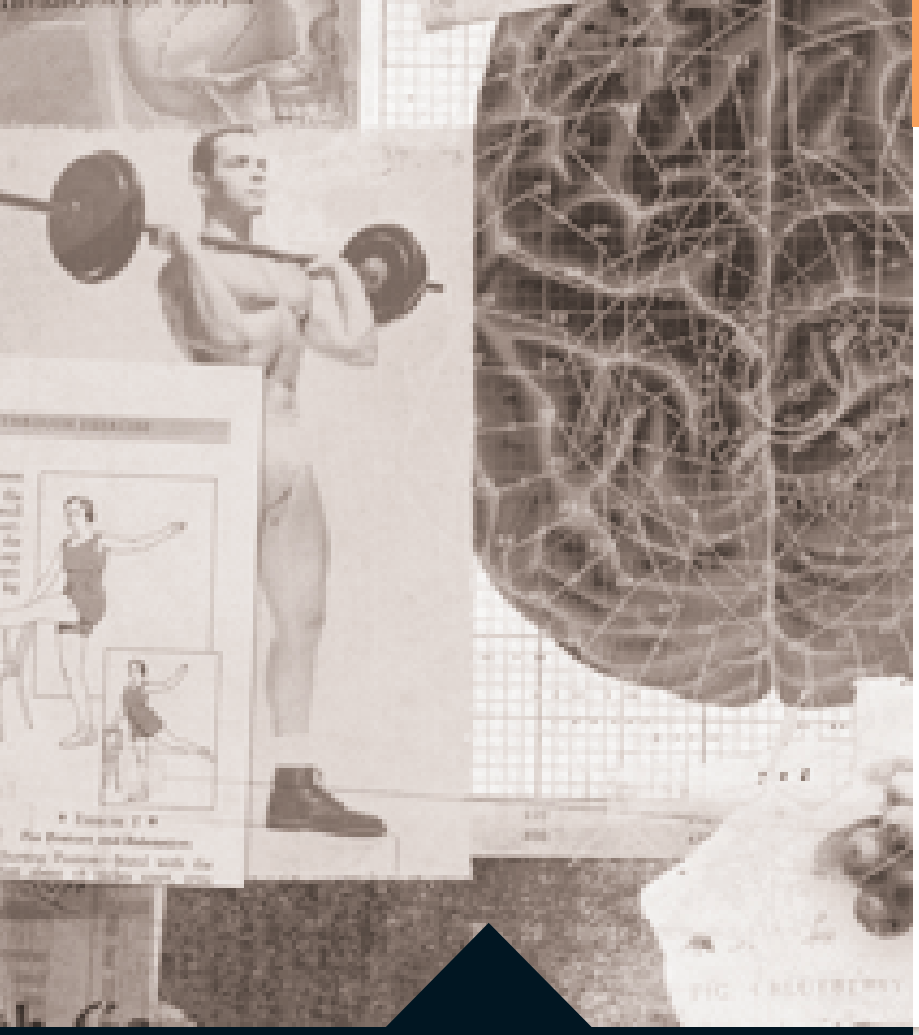

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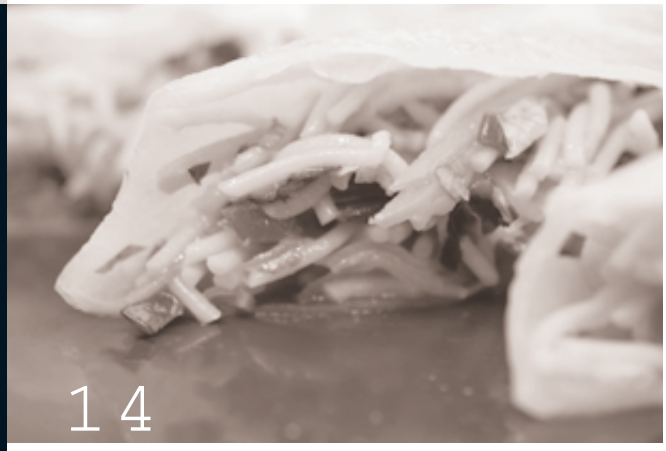

On the cover: The heart/head connection. Illustration by Dung Hoang.

DEPARTMENTS

A wealth of symposia

THE FRIEDMAN SCHOOL HAS MANY STRENGTHS. ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE IS THE LINK between nutrition science and policy and our educational mission. I am therefore delighted that the school will be launching the first annual Friedman School Symposium this September. (Visit **nutrition.tufts.edu.**) The symposium will provide a forum for discussing cutting-edge science and the links to policies and programs. Appropriately, this first symposium will be dedicated to "Dietary Guidelines 2010: The Right Stuff." The Dietary Guidelines are enormously important because they form the basis of U.S. nutrition policy and increasingly have become the essential basis for addressing diet and healthy living.

The Friedman School Symposium is an opportunity to bring together scientists and policymakers to discuss controversial issues in an unbiased and neutral setting. We are fortunate to have a task force from the Friedman School's Board of Overseers that has worked to make this symposium a reality. Chaired by Vishwa Singh, the task force includes Jane Friedman, Paul Morse, Robert Russell, Rhona Applebaum and Sylvia Rowe. In addition, the preparation for the symposium has benefited from the work of the scientific planning committee co-chaired by Simin Meydani and Rob Russell, with members including Bess Dawson-Hughes, Johanna Dwyer, Alice Lichtenstein and Susan Roberts. See you on the evening of September 19 for the opening reception. And fasten your seat belts; we have an exciting mystery speaker to open the symposium.

Are people born with natural leadership skills, or do these talents develop over time?

Always exciting is the spring Gershoff Symposium, this year titled "Toward a Healthier Nation: Complexities of Optimizing Micro-Nutrient Intakes with the U.S. Diet," which was held on April 24. Alice Lichtenstein, with assistance from students Sarah Anderson, Sam Cadena, Latrice Goosby, Wendy Johnecheck, Maina Muthee, Heather Mernitz, Josiemer Mattei, Hilde Peterson and Toshiko Tanaka, pulled together an exciting program.

Knowing that the school was undergoing a serious review of the curriculum, a group of students, with guidance from Patrick Webb, dean of academic affairs, developed a framework to guide thinking about ways to enhance both the breadth and depth of teaching that occurs at the school. The document, called "A Framework for Food Systems Analysis: Opportunities for Engagement," involved a wide range of students from the more policy-related areas of the school and already has been helpful in stimulating dialogue among students and faculty.

Are people born with natural leadership skills or do these talents develop over time? This question is being explored in our taped series called "Conversations with Nutrition Leaders." Interviews with leaders including Nevin Scrimshaw, a World Food Prize winner, and U.S. Sen. Robert Dole, one of the architects of the U.S. food stamp program, reveal some surprises in events that have shaped their stellar careers. The first series of interviews with nutrition leaders will be completed by this summer and available to view at the school. In addition, these taped interviews will be forthcoming in book form.

The energy and enthusiasm among students, faculty, staff, alums and overseers is palpable. We really are the Friedman School on the move.

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The mission of the school is to passionately advance nutritional well-being for people worldwide through excellence in research, teaching and the shaping of public policy.

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We're online. Please check out the magazine and the world of Tufts Nutrition at http://nutrition.tufts.edu.

THE MAILBOX IS EMPTY

Tufts Nutrition is your publication, and as the editor, I am eager to hear from readers. Let me know what you like and don't like. Tell me what you want to read about. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Change from the inside out

OVER THE LAST DECADE, VISITING SCHOLARS JERRY AND MONIQUE Sternin have promoted the use of the positive deviance approach in nutrition to rehabilitate tens of thousands of malnourished children in developing countries. Their premise is the opposite of the expert-driven approach: Instead of barging in as the outsiders with all the answers and telling local parents what they are doing wrong, they help them find uncommon examples from their own communities of people who are raising well-nourished children despite their poverty—positive deviant families—and guide them in designing their own initiative to put those behaviors into practice.

Recently, the Sternins began introducing the positive deviance technique to a much different audience: American health care providers. When Dr. Tony Cusano, an assistant clinical professor at Yale University School of Medicine, heard the Sternins speak at Waterbury Hospital in Connecticut, where he is a nephrologist, he immediately saw the possibilities and the potential resistance from his colleagues.

"Health care is not like a village in Vietnam," he said. "As nurses and doctors, you have to spend your life being confident in what you do. You like to control any change."

Nevertheless, a small group at the hospital decided to use positive deviance to tackle the problem of discharge medications. The average patient leaves the hospital with seven prescriptions, and most of the time, the doctors weren't properly filling out the instruction forms for how to take them. A phone survey revealed that 60 to 80 percent of discharged patients had experienced some sort of problem or confusion with their medications. One patient was taking his medication six times a day instead of every six hours. Another saw that the bottle instructed him to take his medication every day, but he didn't think that meant weekends, too.

When the hospital staff learned the extent of the problems, they took action. Nurses and physicians began working on the issue together. They found that some were making follow-up phone calls after discharges, making sure instructions were given to caregivers such as a family member and having patients write down the list themselves.

Within months, 82 percent of the discharge medication forms were being filled out, and the number of medication problems was cut in half.

"The difference is the collaborative design—getting people to work together so that the changes stick," Cusano said.

Waterbury Hospital is now using the positive deviance approach to improve care for diabetes patients and care of patients with acute surgical emergencies involving abdominal pain or neck and head trauma.

Through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Positive Deviance Initiative is also collaborating with the Plexus Institute in New Jersey to reduce methicillin-resistant staph infections in hospitals in six states. The Sternins will be technical advisors.

ILLUSTRATION: MATTIAS PALUDI

WHOLE GRAINS PROTECT ELDERLY

Researchers at Tufts have found that elderly people whose diets are rich in whole-grain foods may delay the onset of metabolic syndrome—a collection of risk factors for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes that affects 50 million Americans.

The study, which was published in the January issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, examined the relationship between whole-grain intake and metabolic syndrome, which is characterized by abdominal obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and insulin resistance. It also looked at whole-grain intake's connection to cardiovascular disease risk factors and the incidence of death due to cardiovascular disease in the elderly.

"Previous studies have found a link between whole-grain intake and reduced risk of metabolic syndrome in middle-aged populations," said Nicola McKeown, a scientist with the Nutritional Epidemiology Program at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA). "What's unique about our study," McKeown said, "is that we went back to data that was collected 20 years ago, using diet records that captured food intake, and found that whole-grain foods had a subsequent benefit in the elderly."

The study was a collaborative effort that included McKeown; Paul Jacques, director of the Nutritional Epidemiology Program at the HNRCA; and first author Nadine R. Sahyoun, N95, an assistant professor of nutrition and food science at the University of Maryland.

"Consuming a high whole-grain diet is likely to have positive metabolic effects in elderly individuals who are prone to greater insulin resistance," Jacques said.

They found that as whole-grain intake increased, fasting blood sugar levels were lower. Refined grain intake was associated with higher fasting blood sugar levels. Elevated fasting blood sugar levels can indicate impaired glucose tolerance and the presence of diabetes.

Despite being nutritionally inferior, most grain products consumed in the United States are refined, with the average older American consuming five servings of refined grains per day and less than one serving of whole grains.

Based on the research, McKeown said, "Older adults should be encouraged to increase their daily intake of whole-grain foods to three or more servings a day by substituting whole grains for refined grains."

ANXIETY POUNDS

Women with a history of anxiety disorders or depression, particularly at a young age, have higher weights as adults, according to research done at Tufts.

In a study that followed 820 men and women from childhood through young adulthood, scientists found that women with a history of either depression or anxiety—or both, in many cases—tended to gain more weight over time. For example, a 30-year-old woman whose depression was first recognized at age 14 weighed, on average, 10 to 15 pounds more than a similar woman with no history of depression.

Anxiety disorders were associated with women weighing an extra six to 12 pounds by adulthood, regardless of their age at diagnosis. In contrast, depression and anxiety disorders did not seem to affect men's weight gain, the researchers found.

The research was reported in the March issue of the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

Though the weight difference linked to depression and anxiety was not enormous, the extra pounds could lead to obesity in some women, said lead study author Sarah E. Anderson, N04, N06, who worked with Aviva Must, N87, N92, an associate professor of public health and family medicine at Tufts, on the project.

The researchers concluded that treating young women for anxiety and depression could help prevent obesity in some of them later on, although they said more research is needed to confirm that depression and anxiety are, in fact, causing the excess weight gain.

Previous studies have shown similar associations, Anderson said, adding that some people respond to depression by overeating, essentially self-medicating with food.

One explanation for the gender difference, Anderson said, could be that women are more likely than men to have depression symptoms that can contribute to weight gain, including increased appetite and excessive sleeping.

PHOTO: FOODCOLLECTION

A better diet for the insulin-resistant

WHEN WEIGHT LOSS IS THE GOAL, MOST DIETS RESTRICT CALORIES. IT IS A RELATIVELY simple concept—a person can lose weight by taking in fewer calories than he or she expends.

But does it matter where the calories come from? It might, according to findings from a small study published in the December 2005 issue of the medical journal *Diabetes Care*. Researchers at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA) at Tufts discovered that a diet's overall "glycemic load" may be an important determinant of weight loss, but only for some people.

"Our results suggest that in the future, there may be a way to predict who will do best on a low glycemic-load diet," said senior author Susan Roberts, director of the HNRCA Energy Metabolism Laboratory. The key, researchers found, may be in knowing a person's level of insulin secretion.

"Insulin is a hormone that is important in glucose [sugar] metabolism," explained senior author Dr. Andrew Greenberg, director of the Obesity and Metabolism Laboratory at the HNRCA. "The regulation of body weight is, at least in part, influenced by how much insulin a person secretes in response to a load of glucose as well as by how sensitive that person is to insulin's glucose-lowering effects."

PHOTO: MEDIOIMAGES

"In our study, everyone lost some weight as a result of restricting calories," said first author Dr. Anastassios Pittas, an assistant professor at Tufts School of Medicine, "but people who had high levels of insulin secretion and ate a diet with a low glycemic load lost the most weight."

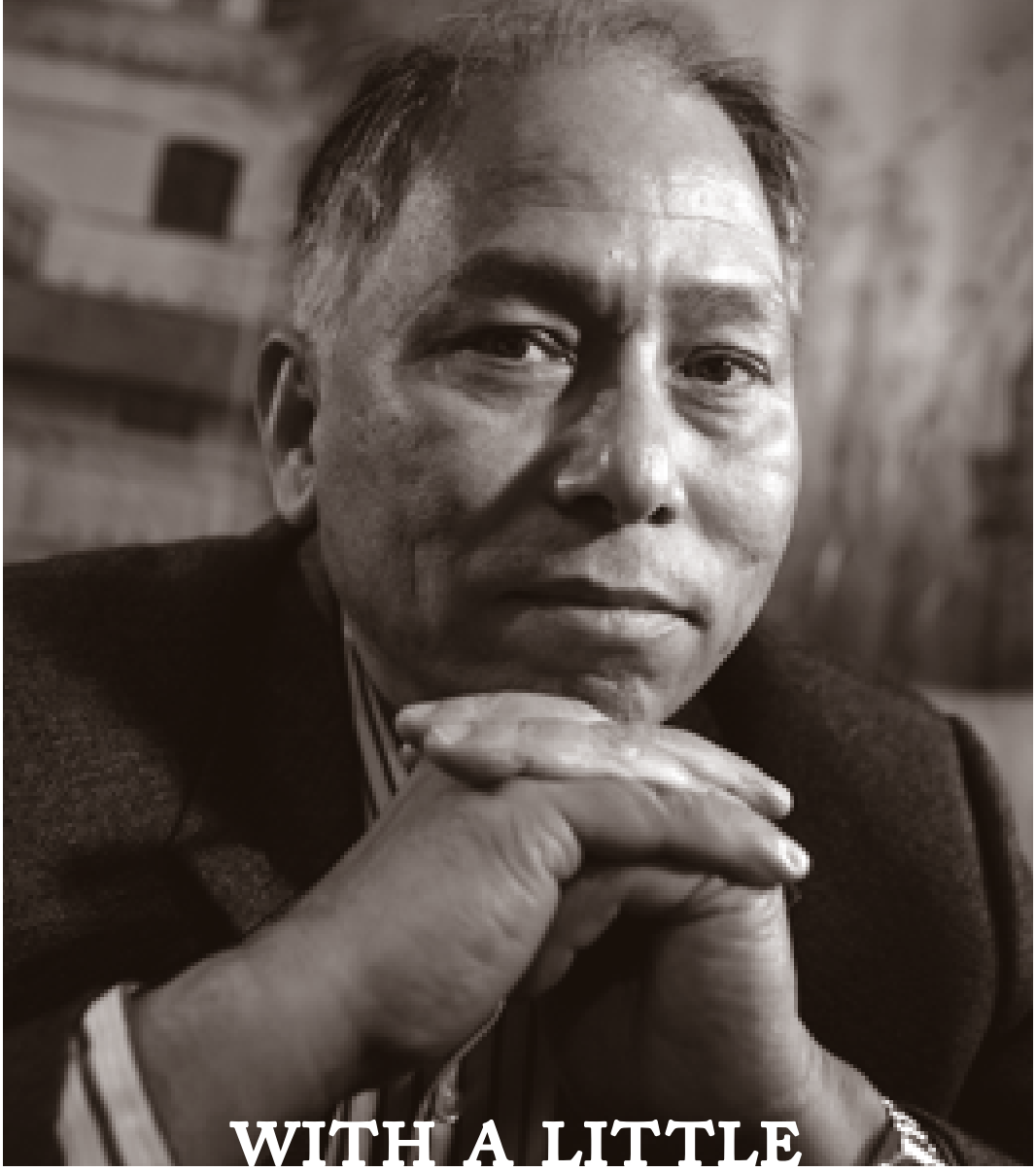
A food's glycemic load is a relative measure of how much carbohydrate is in the diet and how quickly that food is converted in the body to blood sugar. Foods with lower numbers typically have a greater proportion of protein and fat, which usually result in a smaller rise in blood glucose following a meal. Examples of low glycemic-load foods include salads with oil and vinegar dressing, high-fat granola cereal and most fresh fruits and vegetables.

As part of the ongoing Comprehensive Assessment of Long-term Effects of Reducing Intake of Energy (CALERIE) trial at Tufts, the authors studied 32 healthy overweight adults on a reduced-calorie diet for six months. Half of the subjects were randomly assigned to a low glycemic-load diet, and the other half followed a diet with a high glycemic load.

"Glycemic load may not be the 'be-all, end-all' of weight-loss diets for everyone," said Roberts, who is also a professor at the Friedman School, "but it significantly enhanced weight loss in our high insulin-secreting subjects.

"Our findings may eventually have implications for individualizing weight-loss diets," Roberts said. "We need to confirm our results with further studies of larger groups of subjects first, but measuring insulin secretion might be a simple way to target dietary recommendations that help enhance successful weight loss."

Greenberg, who is also an assistant professor at the Friedman School, notes that "only when we have completed these future studies can we determine whether these tests will be useful for making recommendations for the general public."



WITH A LITTLE RESPECT

Ram Shrestha proves there is more than one way to motivate a volunteer

GROWING UP IN NEPAL, RAM SHRESTHA, N90, COULD SEE that his homeland had the deck stacked against it. In a country where the average person scrapes by on an income of $240 a year and 40 percent of people live in poverty, improving the quality of life seemed like a difficult prospect. ■ It wasn't until Shrestha, then a college student, spent 10 months in remote western villages teaching about health, family planning and literacy that he had a change of perspective.

PHOTO: BROOKS KRAFT

"Before that, I used to hear that we are a poor country; we don't have money, so we can't do much," Shrestha, now 51, says. "But with very simple things, you can change peoples' attitudes and behavior. I saw with simple things, you can do a lot."

As the director of Nepal's national vitamin A supplementation program for 10 years, Shrestha has seen the rate of deficiency-related eye disease plummet and infant mortality cut in half. Instead of money, he uses the most basic resources—respect, recognition and the power of community—to change minds and save lives.

GREEN BAGS AND RECOGNITION

It began in 1993, when the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Ministry of Health hired Shrestha to help mobilize Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) to give out vitamin A capsules to all children between six months and 59 months old. The difficulty was that the ministry, which originally had paid the volunteers about 100 rupees per month, was no longer giving out stipends. So Shrestha's challenge was to motivate the volunteers—most of them mothers and grandmothers—in some other way.

He started by making sure the volunteers had recognition in their communities. He gave them all distinctive green canvas bags emblazoned with the vitamin A logo and told his program supervisors to offer a ride to anyone with a bag. He also brought the village chief with him on his visits to volunteers' homes and was sure to ask for directions from passersby, so word got around that the volunteers were meeting with important guests.

Then he worked on the volunteers' families, most of whom saw the vitamin A efforts as taking away time that could be spent providing for them. He saw to it that if a development project came to the community—say, a goat-raising initiative or savings and credit program—the volunteers would be given first dibs.

"Because she was a volunteer, the whole family got the benefits," Shrestha explains. "Now she is bringing something home other people can use."

He also asked the hospitals, health-care facilities and private nursing homes to give the volunteers some fringe benefits, telling them, "If you can lessen their fee or give them some medicine free, do it."

More than 13 years later, Shrestha counts 49,000 volunteers among the program's troops, and everyone in Nepal knows about the importance of vitamin A. "The beauty of this program is that the community has taken ownership," Shrestha says, pointing out that over two days this spring, the volunteers dosed 3.6 million children. "On April 19, you could go to any part of Nepal—even to the remote villages at the base camp of Mount Everest—and you would have seen a volunteer distributing vitamin A capsules. There is no ceremony. People have taken this as part of their life."

So trusted is the program that the government has authorized Shrestha's motivated volunteer network to treat pneumonia cases with antibiotics, a six-year-old program that has been saving thousands of lives every year.

Although Shrestha's parents were farmers who never went to high school, they wanted their eight children to be educated. They wanted Shrestha to become a doctor, but because Nepal has no medical schools, he instead went to Katmandu to study organic chemistry. While pursuing his master's degree, he took a job as a language and culture liaison for the Peace Corps and other non-governmental organizations. He was impressed by the nutrition and health programs that the volunteers were working on.

Inspired and encouraged by the volunteers he worked with, he began applying to nutrition programs in the United States. With the help of financial aid and a generous gift from a mentor, a Canadian professor named Thelma Howard, he was able to enroll at the Friedman School.

After Tufts, he spent two years at the University of Saskatchewan doing research on the calcium intake of adolescent girls and its relation to osteoporosis. While the research was stimulating, he realized that "this kind of study would not be useful in Nepal." He returned home just as the Ministry of Health was organizing its vitamin A program.

AN ENVIRONMENT OF TRUST

Being a Nepali helping other Nepalis has been fulfilling for him, but it didn't guarantee his immediate acceptance by the volunteers and villagers.

"My language, my culture, being a national, it helps a little bit, but not much," he says. "The most influential thing is your nature, your respect for other people, how much you create an environment of trust." He sees that with the Friedman School students who regularly intern with the Nepali Technical Assistance Group, for which he serves as executive director.

Shrestha's techniques have earned him some recognition. In 2000, he received the International Award for Best Practices in Global Health from the Global Health Council, U.S. Last November, he was featured in a *Time* magazine cover story about 16 people who are saving the world one life at a time and was honored as a "hero" at *Time*'s Global Health Summit in New York.

He knows that his work is not over. When it comes to volunteers, he explains, "just because you are motivated today doesn't mean you will be motivated tomorrow." One of his current projects is developing endowment funds to help support local volunteers in the future. Three years ago, he started asking local village development committees to put 50,000 rupees (or about $600) into a savings account, with the idea that the interest from the funds could pay the health volunteers.

"People kept telling me I'm overambitious. How can villages in a poor country like Nepal get 50,000 rupees?" he says. But today, 15 percent of village development committees already have set up such funds, using taxes they collect from the local market and elsewhere.

Throughout his career, Shrestha has taken inspiration from his mother, who, he says, had good insight into working with people. "She always used to say, 'In life, don't have more than what you need. Because we live in a society, we have to share things. Certain things you should keep to yourself, but certain things you should share.' She was very smart," he says. TN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What's good for your ticker may also keep your brain sharp

the heart and brain connection

BY JULIE FLAHERTY | ILLUSTRATIONS BY DUNG HOANG

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT EATING THE RIGHT DIET AND GETTING enough exercise are two of the best ways to reduce the risk of clogged arteries and heart attacks. But did you also know that adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle may reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease? ■ In January, the Alzheimer's Association, a nonprofit advocacy group, released a comprehensive review of the best scientific evidence to date about preventing and treating dementia. Looking at hundreds of studies from around the world, they saw the most salient findings had to do with the importance of controlling cardiovascular risk factors. Reducing blood pressure, reducing weight, reducing cholesterol, treating (or preferably avoiding) diabetes and not smoking were all associated with better mental function. They also saw a close correlation between exercise and brain health.

"We found that well-known risk factors for heart disease also are risk factors for cognitive decline and that physical activity may reduce risk for cognitive decline and dementia in adults," reported Marilyn Albert, past chair of the Alzheimer's Association Medical & Scientific Advisory Council. ■ Like heart disease, dementia is not something that develops overnight, said Dr. Irwin H. Rosenberg, director of the Nutrition and Neurocognition Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA) at Tufts.

"What we are calling dementia is a phenomenon that may occur over decades," he said. "There may be very subtle kinds of decline going on over long periods of time, and how much of that may be nutritionally related is still a very interesting question."

Rosenberg and other scientists at the HNRCA are looking closely at the ways nutrition may help prevent Alzheimer's disease and finding that certain lifestyle choices that protect the heart might stave off cognitive decline as we age.

As James Joseph, a scientist in the HNRCA Neuroscience Laboratory, puts it, "The thing that's becoming increasingly clear from a lot of sources is that what you eat that would be good for your heart is also going to be good for your brain and is also going to be good for your eyes and probably other organs."

THE BEAUTIFUL Bs

If your doctor talks to you about your risk for heart disease, chances are she will eventually bring up the word homocysteine. Homocysteine is an amino acid found in the blood, a by-product of the body's processing of the essential amino acid methionine. Too much of it is related to a higher risk of coronary artery disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease (fatty deposits in peripheral arteries). As many as 50 percent of patients who suffer a stroke and or have other atherothrombotic diseases turn out to have high homocysteine levels. Scientists think this may be because excess homocysteine damages the inner lining of arteries and promotes blood clots.

As a result, homocysteine is one thing some doctors measure when trying to assess a patient's risk for heart disease. But homocysteine, it turns out, is also a risk factor for dementia. In 1996, Katherine Tucker, director of the HNRCA's Dietary Assessment and Epidemiology Research Program, was among the authors of a study that found high plasma concentrations of homocysteine in a group of mostly elderly men were associated with poor spatial copying skills, or the ability to draw a series of geometric figures presented to them. Another Tufts study, in 2001, showed an association between high homocysteine levels and poor recall. A year later, another study concluded that subjects with elevated homocysteine had nearly double the risk of developing Alzheimer's.

Luckily, there is an easy, inexpensive way to lower homocysteine levels. Eating foods with enough B vitamins (such as green, leafy vegetables and citrus fruits) or taking them as supplements can bring down homocysteine. The B complex vitamins, particularly B6, B12 and folate, are essential in breaking down homocysteine and recycling it in the body. That is why some doctors prescribe folic acid (the synthetic form of the vitamin B9, known as folate) for their patients with high homocysteine.

This year, Tucker saw some of the most compelling evidence yet that getting enough B vitamins through the diet can ward off dementia. She and her colleagues followed 50- to 85-year-old men in the Normative Aging Study. They asked them about what they ate and then tested their cognitive abilities. Three years later, they tested them again and checked their blood levels for homocysteine, folate, B6 and B12.

At the end of the study, the men who reported eating the fewest B vitamin-containing foods and had the lowest concentration of B vitamins in their blood showed a decline in their spatial copying scores. The men with higher B levels and dietary intake performed as well as before on the tasks, while those who ate the most B-rich foods actually improved their scores.

In fact, the associations, which were reported in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, were so strong that Tucker said she thought the results, from an epidemiological standpoint, were "beautiful."

"I found that very convincing," she said.

Among all the factors the researchers looked at, folate was particularly protective against mental decline, which means that it may have beneficial effects beyond its ability to neutralize excess homocysteine. Folate, after all, is an important ingredient in cell replication, including the cells in the brain.

In addition, Tucker said a preliminary magnetic resonance imaging study showed "surprisingly strong associations" between the B vitamins and brain health as well. The study subjects who had higher levels of folate in their blood tended to have larger hippocampi and admigdola, important structures in the brain that help with cognitive processing. And B12 was associated with total brain volume.

At this time, high homocysteine is considered only a marker for dementia risk; there is no proof that lowering it with vitamins will prevent Alzheimer's disease. That kind of evidence will have to come through intervention studies, few of which have been done.

"I think it's fair to say that the associations have become stronger and more robust," Rosenberg said. "But such intervention studies as there have been have so far failed to prove that giving B vitamins and lowering homocysteine have a clear outcome in terms of cognitive function."

What should you do in the meantime? Tucker points out that aside from vitamin D,

the B vitamins are the ones that Americans are most likely to need more of. Many people over age 60 have problems absorbing B12, for example, because their stomachs may produce less acid. So while eating a good diet with lots of fruits and vegetables is the best way to get your B vitamins, "it doesn't hurt to take a multivitamin and a B12 if you're worried about it," Tucker said.

FISH FOR THOUGHT

For a truly heart-healthy diet, the American Heart Association recommends eating two meals of fatty fish per week. Fatty fish are cold-water varieties like salmon, tuna and mackerel, which are high in two kinds of omega-3 fatty acids and have been shown to lower triglycerides and maybe even serve as anti-inflammatory compounds.

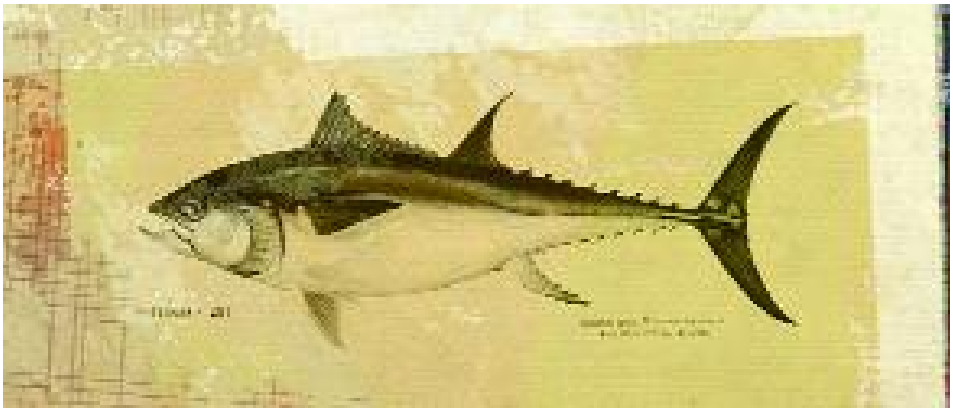
As good as it is for your heart, one of the fatty acids in fish, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), seems to be very special for the brain.

"About four percent of the fatty acid in the blood is DHA," said Dr. Ernst J. Schaefer, director of the HNRCA Lipid Metabolism Laboratory. "But about half the fatty acid in the brain is DHA."

The folklore that fish is "brain food" may be more than legend. It's been shown that DHA is important for brain development in infants. Human breast milk is about 8 to 10 percent DHA, and baby formula companies now add DHA to their products.

At the other end of the age range, patients with dementia have been shown to have less DHA, both in their brains and in their blood.

Using data from the long-running Framingham Heart Study, Schaefer and his colleagues set out to see how well DHA levels in the blood could predict whether a person would develop Alzheimer's. For their research, which is slated to appear in the *Archives of Neurology*, they looked at 899 men and women who did not have dementia, measured their blood levels of DHA and had them fill out a dietary questionnaire. Nine years later, 99 of them had developed dementia, included 71 cases of Alzheimer's disease. After adjusting for other factors such as genetics, age, sex, education and homocysteine levels, the researchers found that the subjects with the highest levels of DHA in their blood ate an average of three servings of fish per week and were 47 percent less likely to develop dementia than the other subjects.



"We think it's because these fatty acids are important for the fluidity of membranes," Schaefer said.

Omega-3 fatty acids can be beneficial in cells by preventing the tight packing of fatty acids in membranes—thereby making the membranes more "fluid." Membrane fluidity is important for optimal function of most cells in the body, which is one reason researchers think omega-3s help keep the heart pumping regularly. But membrane fluidity is especially important for portions of cells that act as receptors for hormones or neurotransmitters.

"What we need now are randomized trials to see if giving omega-3 fatty acids will help prevent dementia or improve cognitive function," Schaefer said.

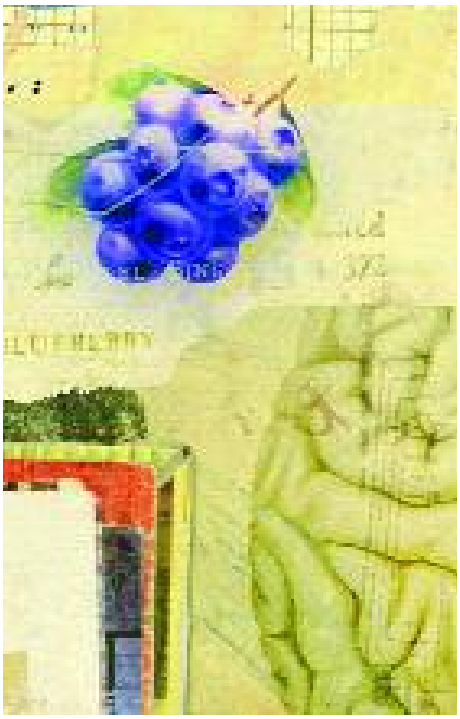
In the meantime, because scientists already know that consuming fish or fish oil will decrease arrhythmias, triglyceride levels, the growth rate of arterial plaque and even blood pressure, Schaefer has no qualms about recommending fish for brain health as well.

"If you are concerned about developing dementia or it runs in your family, there is certainly no harm to eating two or three fish meals a week as a part of heart-healthy diet anyway," he said.

> "If you are concerned about developing **dementia** or it runs in your family, there is certainly no harm to eating two or three fish meals a week…"
>
> —Ernst Schaefer

THE GENETIC FACTOR

The ongoing Framingham Heart Study, which set out in 1948 to study the causes of heart disease and stroke, has turned out to be a rich source of information on risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. Scientists who have plumbed the study have come up with three dementia predictors: homocysteine



levels, fatty fish consumption and a gene that Schaefer and Jose Ordovas, director of the HNRCA Nutrition and Genomics Laboratory, wrote about in 1996.

So far, this is the only gene identified as a risk factor for late-onset Alzheimer's disease. (Early-onset Alzheimer's, which is a rare form that occurs between the ages of 30 and 60, is inherited.) The gene makes a form of protein called apolipoprotein E (ApoE). Everyone has ApoE, which helps carry cholesterol in the blood, but only about 15 percent of people have the form called ApoE4, which increases the risk of Alzheimer's.

About a quarter of the population inherits one copy of the ApoE4 gene, which increases their risk of developing Alzheimer's by up to four times. But not all people who have the gene develop Alzheimer's. Ordovas theorizes that the gene interacts with other genes and with environmental factors (such as diet) to determine when and if the disease develops.

Gene type adds another layer to scientists' investigations into diet and Alzheimer's disease. Tina Huang, a researcher in Tucker's lab, recently completed a study that appeared in the journal *Neurology* comparing gene type, fish consumption and dementia. The study, which used data from the Cardiovascular Health Cognition Study, found that people who ate fatty fish more than twice a week were 41 percent less likely to have Alzheimer's disease. But this was only true of subjects who did not have the ApoE4 genotype.

BERRY GOOD

One of the most frustrating facts about Alzheimer's disease is that not only is there no cure, but there have been few medical breakthroughs in how to manage it.

"The drug companies come up with drugs that so far have made tiny, tiny effects on mental functioning in dementia," Rosenberg said. "There is not nearly as much being invested in something like nutritional factors that might prevent cognitive decline, partly because there is not a lot of money to be made. No drug company is going to have proprietary rights for that."

James Joseph, a scientist in the HNRCA Neuroscience Laboratory, agrees. "This is scary when you think about it," he said. "We're using 40- to 50-year-old technology now to treat Alzheimer's disease. Aricept [one of the most common drugs used in treating dementia] is based on neuroscience that is almost 50 years old." Acetylcholinesterase-inhibitors such as Aricept seem to modestly moderate symptoms but do not prevent disease progression, including cell death.

As the baby boomers approach their golden years, the number of people with Alzheimer's disease will only increase. "If we don't get a handle on Alzheimer's disease, if we don't prevent it, delay its onset over the next 10 years, you can't believe what it's going to be like," Joseph said.

Indeed, much of the concern about the long-term solvency of Medicare is based on the estimated cost of caring for baby boomers, assuming that they develop Alzheimer's in the same proportions as earlier generations.

Until a cure is found, HNRCA scientists are centered on nutritional prevention. Joseph's research has focused on two familiar factors in cardiovascular disease—inflammation and oxidative stress—which also seem to be detrimental to brain function as we age.

"What we see at the end of the day is that inflammation processes and oxidative stresses are really at the heart of every major disease that you could think of regarding aging," Joseph said.

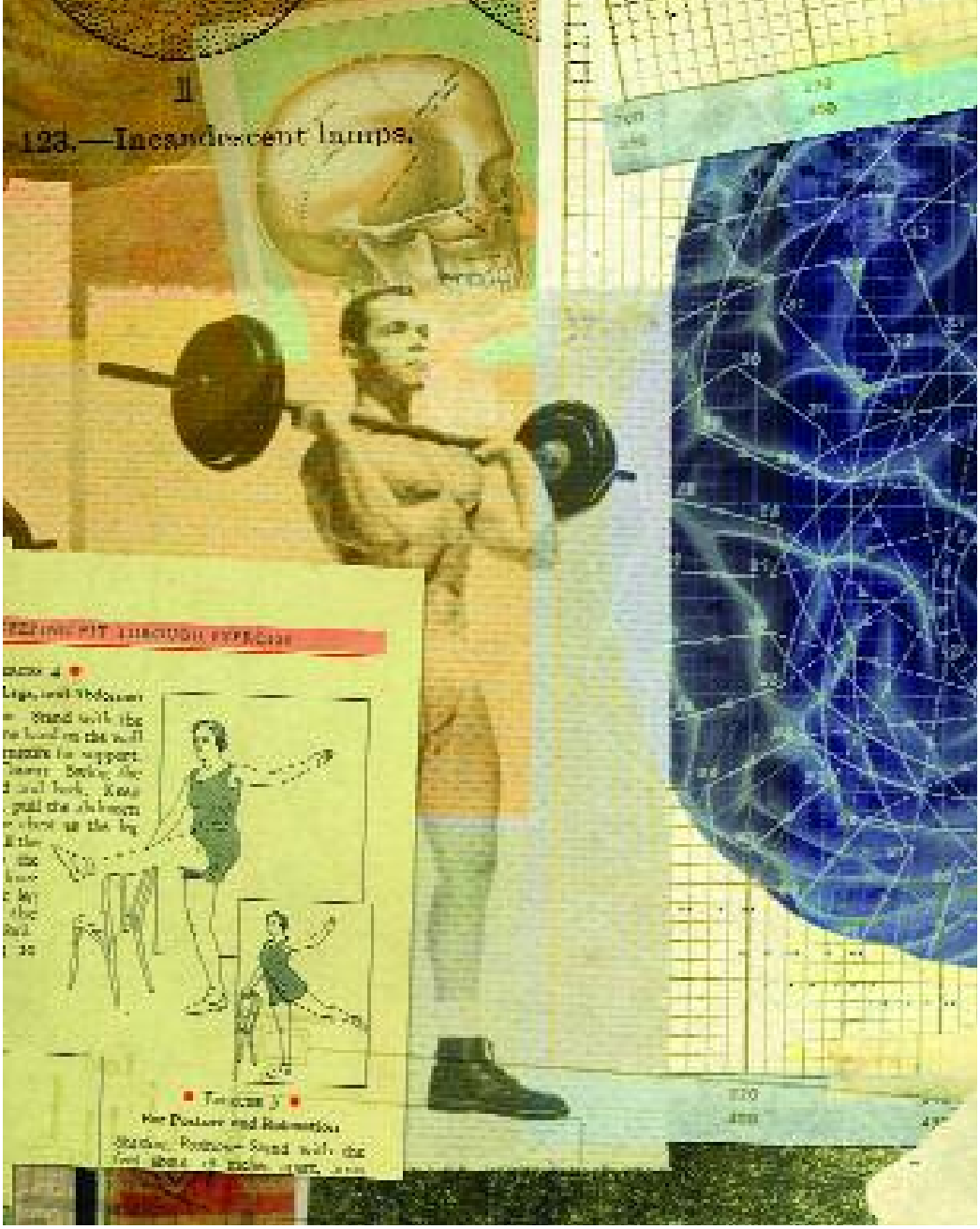
Because antioxidants mop up the very reactive molecules called free radicals that cause the oxidative stress, Joseph has been investigating colorful foods that are rich in antioxidants and how they affect the aging brain. At the top of his list: berries. Blueberries, in particular, seem to help reverse some aspects of brain aging, at least in animal studies.

Joseph's team took aging rats that were already showing declines in memory, motor coordination and balance and put some of them on diets supplemented with blueberry, spinach or strawberry extracts. All of the rats on the supplemented diets out-performed the control group, with the blueberry group showing the best improvements in neuronal and cognitive behavioral activity as well as motor behavior.

Yes, blueberries are rich in antioxidants. In fact, among some 50 fresh fruits and vegetables tested by Joseph and his colleagues, they ranked highest in oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC). But Joseph said something more is going on in the brain "machinery" that takes neurotransmitter chemicals and translates them into electrical signals and back again. Receptors on the surface of brain cells grow less responsive to chemical messengers as we age. Yet in the blueberry group, two types of receptors actually became more sensitive.

"This isn't an antioxidant effect," he said. "It's a communication effect. We know from our work they are actually turning off signals associated with free radicals in some cell systems. They are actually enhancing the communication of some signals that are very important in learning and memory. They make one neuron talk better to another neuron."

In the March issue of the journal *Nutrition*, Joseph and his colleagues, including Barbara Shukitt-Hale, described promising findings about another blue-purple fruit, Concord grape juice. Previous research had found the colorful juice to be protective against various cancers and heart disease. Mature rats that drank the juice performed significantly better on tests of their motor and cognitive skills. Other tests have shown promising results with strawberries and cranberries.



"In the aged animals, that machinery can get turned back on with berries," Joseph said. "I don't know if it will get turned back on with other things, but I know berries would do it.

"I don't think any of these diets is going to cure a disease like Alzheimer's disease," he said. "This would be all in either preventing it or pushing out the onset of it. I think to cure this disease is going to take far more than any of these foods can do. The idea is to keep you functioning longer. A healthy diet, I think, may contribute to that."

Think he is overestimating the importance of delaying the onset of the disease? Consider this: Studies predict if the onset of Alzheimer's is delayed by just five years, the prevalence of the disease and the number of people in nursing homes will be cut in half.

Exercise during the **middle years** can have a positive effect on the brain later in life.

ON THE MOVE

There's no question that carrying around extra pounds and leading a sedentary lifestyle put a damper on heart health. Now several studies have linked excess weight to an increased risk of developing dementia. At the same time, more and more studies are showing that exercise can thwart Alzheimer's.

Exercise during the middle years can have a positive effect on the brain later in life. A Swedish study that appeared in the online issue of *The Lancet* followed 1,449 men and women who were in their thirties, forties and fifties. The researchers surveyed the people regularly about their leisure-time physical activities as they grew older. By the time the subjects were between the ages of 65 and 79, the researchers found that individuals who exercised at least twice a week were 60 percent less likely to have developed Alzheimer's compared to those who exercised less often.

In January, a study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed that even moderate activity can stave off mental decline. The study followed 1,700 men and women ages 65 and older who had no cognitive problems. Over the six-year course of the study, 158 of the subjects developed dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. But the seniors who exercised moderately for at least 15 minutes each day were 30 percent less likely to show cognitive decline. The study suggested that even a short, brisk walk every day could help ward off the disease.

Along with flexing your muscles, Joseph points out, you should be flexing your grey matter. Many studies have shown that keeping the brain active—be it with crossword puzzles or reading—keeps the brain responsive.

"There's a triad of things you ought to be doing: diet, exercise and exercising your brain, which is probably as important as exercising your body," Joseph said. He added, somewhat unscientifically, that watching reality television shows should make you "lose points." TN

Julie Flaherty is the editor of this magazine. She can be reached at julie.flaherty@tufts.edu.


Red Sox

Guarding the plate

Tufts nutritionist keeps the Sox healthy for the Fenway Faithful

by Jacqueline Mitchell

TARA MARDIGAN IS SITTING WITH FOUR COLLEAGUES ON A PANEL of public health professionals when someone in the crowd shouts out a question meant just for her. ■ "What's up with Johnny Damon?" ■ She smiles, unfazed by a question she's probably been asked a lot lately. ■ "Well, he's gone now, so we don't really care."

Mardigan, N02, M02, is not just another Boston fan getting over the center fielder's defection to the Yankees. As the team nutritionist for the Boston Red Sox, Mardigan might be more concerned about pitching ace Curt Schilling's health than even the die-hard fans swarming Kenmore Square on a summer evening.

Mardigan's association with the Red Sox began when she started working with Schilling as a client. During her on-site consultations with him, the rest of the team would pepper her with nutrition questions.

Most baseball teams consult with nutritionists only when a player needs to be whipped back into shape after an injury or an illness. But seeing the general interest in the Red Sox clubhouse, Mardigan presented a proposal to the team, offering nutritional services that emphasized a preventive approach. Having witnessed her success with Schilling during 2004, the team said yes.

Professional athletes have the same nutrition questions as the rest of us, Mardigan says. Many of them are looking to trim the fat; some want to boost their energy and, says Mardigan, "no one ever wants to hear they have to eat more fruits and vegetables."

During her one-on-one counseling with the players, Mardigan downplays nutritional supplements and recommends eating a wide variety of natural foods. "I tell them to look for color, to eat color-rich foods—and no, Cheetos don't count."

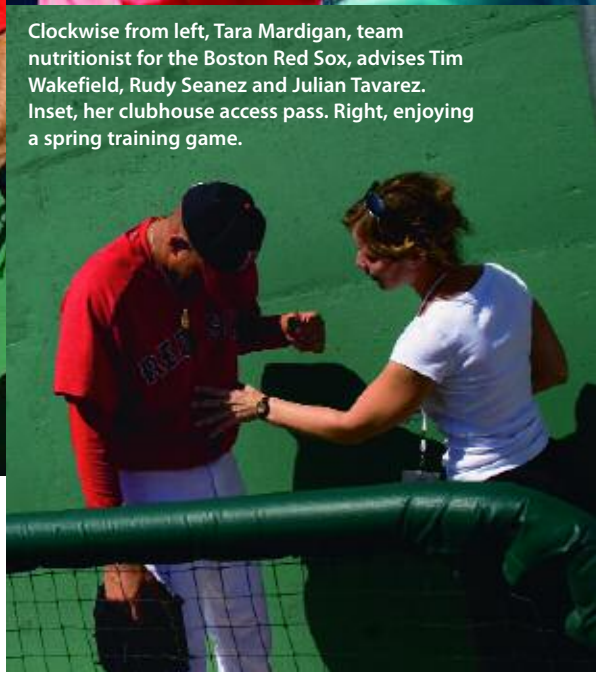
WHETTING HER APPETITE

Working with the team is the latest step on a path she began forging as a young athlete herself, training as a gymnast in upstate New York. When some of her peers began starving themselves, she wondered which foods could fuel her body best. With herself as her first client, Mardigan embarked on a career that would have her asking that same question for a lot of people, from cancer patients, to private clients to the most scrutinized athletes in New England.

From her first day as an undergraduate at the University of New Hampshire, Mardigan worked to become a dietitian. After graduation, she matched with the Yale-New Haven Hospital Dietetic Internship Program where she prepared for the National Registration Exam for Dietitians.

Once licensed, Mardigan became a clinical dietitian at Massachusetts General Hospital

PHOTO: TRAVIS DOVE



Clockwise from left, Tara Mardigan, team nutritionist for the Boston Red Sox, advises Tim Wakefield, Rudy Seanez and Julian Tavarez. Inset, her clubhouse access pass. Right, enjoying a spring training game.

in 1996, where she got a strong introduction to specific nutrition prescriptions for various clinical situations. It was at a professional conference that she first heard of the Friedman School's Nutrition Communication program. She still remembers the inspiring conversation she had with Jennifer Hellwig, N97, about the virtues of the unique program. After three-years at MGH, Mardigan enrolled at Friedman. "As soon as I started, I knew I was in the right place," she says. "Everything we were learning was very applicable. In class and outside of class, it seemed real. It seemed worth doing."

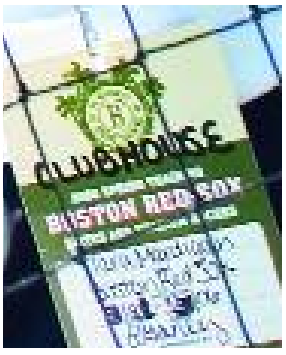
Passionate about her coursework, Mardigan discovered her interest in public health halfway through the program. Working with Professor Jeanne Goldberg, she figured out a way to graduate with both her master's in nutrition communication and her master's in public health. "I was really intrigued by the idea of making broad changes and finding broad-based ways of reaching people," she says.

Mardigan's career is marked by her creative approaches to reaching people in different walks of life. One day, walking by Sociedad Latina, a youth center in Boston's Mission Hill neighborhood, she popped in and proposed adding a nutrition workshop to their roster of health programs.

Mardigan talked to the kids and teens about how their eating habits could affect their health, now and later on. She used engaging demonstrations to make her messages stick. "I remember slowly pouring 64 teaspoons of sugar into a bowl to show them just how much sugar was in the ever-popular 7-Eleven Double Gulp," she says. "Their jaws were all wide open with surprise.

"This was a tough audience," she adds. "But it was fun, it was visual and it worked."

Mardigan reaches out to the community in other ways, too. As one of four dietitians at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, she works to keep her patients well nourished despite the common side effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy—including nausea and diminished appetite—by adding certain foods, eliminating others and tweaking meal schedules.



She also fields the increasing number of questions that come in about combining herbs, vitamins, supplements and integrative therapies with traditional cancer therapies.

Additionally, Mardigan and her colleagues at Dana-Farber host a bimonthly session called "Fighting Cancer with Your Fork" for patients, their family members and the community. This spring, the Dana-Farber nutrition team is also gearing up to take an outreach project for prostate cancer survivors on the road. The dietitians will take Dana-Farber's mobile teaching van to underserved areas of Boston to urge minority prostate cancer survivors to pay close attention to healthy lifestyle changes. "Minority men are especially at risk for aggressive cancer or cancer recurrence," Mardigan says. "We need to change that. Lifestyle change is a good place to start."

Her work at Dana-Farber incorporates the clinical, educational and public health aspects of nutrition. "It includes a little bit of everything, which makes me really happy," she says.

But the work can take its toll, too. "We get to know these people very, very well," she says. "When we suffer losses, it's always hard. Sometimes that can catch up with you."

STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

In addition to her role at Dana-Farber, Mardigan runs a private practice called "Tara's Table." Mardigan meets with patients in their homes and creates customized diets that address her clients' nutritional needs while taking their lifestyles into consideration. She'll even take them grocery shopping, educating clients as they shop while keeping empty calories out of the carriage.

"It's an instant intervention," she says. "It takes a step out of the process. If it's not in their house, I don't have to get them to throw it away."

Mardigan is taking a similar approach to coaching the Sox in good nutrition. In addition to meeting with each major and minor league player, she'll also be making broad changes to the food served to the players before games.

"If I'm telling them one thing and they only have access to something else, it's not going to work. They are not going to comply," she says. "It's really like any other public health measure."

The Sox may miss their pre-game pizza, but they—and all of New England—may be thanking Mardigan come October, as the team's improved nutrition increases their stamina and performance. TN

Jacqueline Mitchell is a senior health sciences writer in Tufts' Office of Publications. She can be reached at jacqueline.mitchell@tufts.edu.

PHOTOS: TRAVIS DOVE; CHRISTOPHER CHURCHILL TOP RIGHT

NUMBERS GAME

Course applies science to America's favorite pastime

David Tybor and Andy Andres

We are all hard-wired, says David J. Tybor, N03, to collect information about the world, to see patterns and draw conclusions. But our biases, assumptions and beliefs often lead us astray on our quest for truth.

"We tend to selectively examine evidence that confirms that which we already know," says Tybor. "It's a pattern that goes on in everything—medical advice or nutritional advice. But this is about baseball, so it's more important," he deadpans.

Tybor is talking about "The Analysis of Baseball: Statistics and Sabermetrics," the class he and his colleagues, Andy Andres, N99, and Morgan Melchiorre, have taught at Tufts' Experimental College on the Medford/Somerville campus for the last three years.

Sabermetrics, as defined by the field's founding father Bill James, is the "search for objective knowledge about baseball." Sabermetricians use statistics to assess player performance in a way that goes much deeper than traditional baseball statistics.

"Sabermetrics asks what are the traditional means of player evaluation and why might they be wrong or not tell the whole story," Tybor says.

A measure of worth

Long considered a hobby of little interest to professional baseball players or management, sabermetrics began to gain widespread acceptance when Oakland Athletics' General Manager Billy Beane used its principals to the team's obvious advantage. A new generation of baseball executives began explaining trades and acquisitions with stats right out of Bill James' playbook. Today, every sports writer and rotisserie league participant fancies himself a sabermetrics whiz-kid. But the mathematical elegance behind the metrics is largely lost on the mainstream fan.

"Just like everyone who has ever eaten a meal thinks they know a lot about nutrition," says Tybor, "everyone who has ever watched a game thinks they know a lot about baseball. Sabermetrics is a way to see people's biases."

That's where the Ex-College class, one of very few credited sabermetrics classes in the country, comes in. The course has its origins in the Tufts employee softball league in which Tybor, Andres and Melchiorre play for the Friedman School's team, "Jumbo's Peanut Surprise"—back-to-back league champions, Tybor is quick to point out. All lifelong fans of the game, the three frequently engaged in debates typical among baseball fans: Exactly how many millions of dollars is Pedro worth? And does Big Papi or A-Rod deserve the MVP?

"It's probably a stupid thing to be sitting around shooting the breeze with your friends and think people would probably be interested in this conversation," Tybor laughs. "But we all had different skills from other fields that would be appropriate."

Tybor, currently a doctoral candidate in nutritional epidemiology at the Friedman School, has teaching experience in statistics and statistical analysis. Andres, now an assistant professor of natural science at Boston University, earned his Ph.D. in muscle physiology from Friedman. Melchiorre is information specialist at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts. The trio designed a 13-week course that examines traditional baseball statistics and explores the new ways of thinking about them. Students learn about statistics' usefulness for projection and prediction and how sabermetric evaluations affect the economics of baseball.

"The baseball world has a lot of interest in our class," says Andres. "This really is about using the scientific method to better understand the game."

Tybor believes the course has value to everyone, not just those with major league dreams.

"We're giving some lessons about becoming consumers of data," he says. "We'll teach you with baseball, and then, when you watch the nightly news or read about the latest findings about low-fat diets, you'll have some way to think about what those numbers mean."

—Jacqueline Mitchell

scrounging

BY DIANA REDWOOD | ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KLEEBER

and the city

THE HEART OF THE SUBSISTENCE LIFESTYLE IS harvesting wild foods with your own hands. It is creating meals out of what to others are weeds and shadows in the woods, too laborious for words or just not as tasty as Cheetos and frozen pizza. It requires time and effort and a commitment to the idea that all that is edible does not have to be purchased. So is subsistence unattainable when you are not living in the wild? What happens, for example, when a girl from Alaska moves to the ultimate concrete larder—the City of Boston?

I would like to give hope to those in the cement lands who find themselves itching to gather, to hunt, to acquire sustenance by dint of effort and skill, cunning and physical labor. Here is some advice gleaned from years of research as a student and as a person with a perverse yen: scrounging.

Food waste has always been obscene to me. I was the one who would drink the last of the chalky lemonade merely to finish it. The one to take home a doggy bag from the restaurant composed of one tablespoon of rice, half a chapatti and some slivers of eggplant coated in oil. As a poor (thrifty, prudent, miserly, avaricious) student, it comes as no surprise that I thought of food often. Surprisingly, food eyed me back and gave me a wink in the form of lecture receptions, conferences, art openings, department parties and sport regattas. No matter that I wasn't actually in the engineering department, part of the ear doctors' convention, terribly interested in late 18th-century Chinese sewer works or one of the art installation crew. I partook of the brie, dates, crackers, wine, dolmas, pizza, soymilk, chicken korma, pasta salad, melon, Coke and petit fours.

I learned that by eating quickly and delicately, I could tuck away an amazing amount on three-inch plates. I would circle the buffet again and again, smiling sagely, if uncomprehendingly, at the German speakers next to me or chewing thoughtfully while listening to World Bank plans for rural development subsidies. But scrounging as an art form extends beyond the cocktail hour into plans for meals to come.

BACKPACKS AND ALPHA LIONS

TIP #1: Big purses and small backpacks can hold a lot if packed correctly. Always take an empty Tupperware-style container and plastic grocery bags (at least two, one for dry foods and one for wet) with you wherever you go. You never know when you will be meandering by, the revelers having long gone, the knishes lying forlorn upon foil trays, entreating your approach.

TIP #2: Custodians and catering crews are your friends. Greet them. Acknowledge that they are the alpha lion in line at the gazelle carcass. Ask permission to partake. (After all, they may be eying those leftover stuffed mushrooms as much as you). Smile. If they say, which they will nine times out of 10, "Go for it; we just throw it in the trash," thank them. Pull out your plastic bags (see Tip #1) and start filling them with the 10 pounds of shaved luncheon meat left lying on green lettuce leaves.

Group like items together. Never put the strawberries in with the cubed smoked Gouda, unless you will be separating it as soon as you get home. In order of preference, choose meat, fruit, vegetables, cheese, and then lastly, desserts. Cookies travel well, but they are the most commonly available item and will be at the next reception, besides being not as nutritionally dense as the previously mentioned comestibles. Avoid condiments. Regretfully leave the salad dressing behind; the little plastic cup will indeed collapse in your satchel, because you are transporting this all home in your arms or on your bicycle, yes? If you have a friend to call when the plunder is more than you can handle, do so. Give them a share of the loot. Use one of the leftover plastic catering trays. It will balance on your handlebars if you walk slowly alongside.

Between classes or on breaks, canvas which university buildings are more likely to have dinner meetings, committee luncheons, guest lectures, etc. Then stroll through the hallways looking into rooms. Pay attention to flyers. If you see people meeting, look quickly to the side of the room for the sterno burner's cheery flame. Alternately, follow the catering carts to their destination, identifiable by the coffee urns, those steaming metallic edifices. Note the room number and floor. Wait a couple hours. Although you may need to check back now and again, they will leave food.

The sweetness of acquisition is about providing substance at the cost of your time and labor and foresight, not your wallet. It is about reducing waste and not letting something as valuable as food rot away untransformed into muscle, fat and thought. And it is about breaking the taboos of unsightly desire; joy in gaining that which others find sullied, imperfect, probably contaminated, and certainly not the focus of the event.

Why do I feel such intense joy when acquiring these passed-over morsels? And why does it also feel shameful to gather up the leftovers? Why am I furtive in my motions, tucking foods hastily into my bag with a napkin lain over? Why do I feel I must hotly defend myself when I catch people looking? "Well, it will go to waste!" I exclaim. But that is not the whole story.

Food is our ultimate communion. Without it we cease to exist. Yet food is also cultural expression, both in what we eat, what we choose not to eat and how we leave it behind. Acknowledging both the noble sentiment and the greedy clandestine abandon of carrying home 20 pounds of leftover BBQ beef ribs, though you are a professed vegetarian, will go a long way to understanding the complexities and delights of being a scrounger. TN

Diana Redwood, N04, is a nutrition research specialist with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium in Anchorage, Alaska.

About a blog

Ever wonder what a food economist does to let loose? Parke Wilde hits the blogosphere.

WILDE, AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, STARTED HIS U.S. FOOD POLICY weblog (usfoodpolicy.blogspot.com) in December 2004, as he was nearing the end of his first semester teaching a course on U.S. food policy at the Friedman School. It was a way to monitor recent developments in food stamps, food spending, household food security and a huge assortment of food policy issues while exercising his writing skills.

Parke Wilde

"I realized that while I knew the scholarly material I was teaching, I didn't know the issues of the day as well as I once did as a reporter," said Wilde, who spent two years before grad school as the editor of a weekly publication put out by the Community Nutrition Institute.

His blog's tagline is "U.S. food policy and economics from a public interest perspective." Like most blogs, opinion is part of the territory. "The tone is a little bit advocacy-oriented," he said. "It tends to rap the knuckles of people who have done things that are not in the public interest."

For example, he's criticized restaurants like Quizno's, Fuddrucker's and Applebee's for not releasing nutrition information about their foods. It's his way of nudging the food industry to police itself. "In order for the market economy to work on its own, customers need certain information," he said. "I almost want to protect the food industry from undue government regulation."

> "Customers need certain information"
>
> —Parke Wilde

To wit, he pokes fun at a Florida Tomato Committee crackdown on a local variety of tasty but frequently misshapen produce. (Headline: "The federal government protects us from ... ugly tomatoes.")

In another post, he uses his 5-year-old son to illustrate his concerns about the quality of school lunches: "Our son sometimes reports eating carrots or fruit salad, but at other times it seems there was no fruit or vegetable. When asked, he agrees that there apparently was some such thing somewhere, but it leaves me picturing a bowl of vegetables in a small cave at the end of some long rabbit hole in Alice's Wonderland."

He doesn't assign his blog as mandatory class reading (a bit too much hubris for him), but he does have a number of student readers who e-mail him with ideas. And he expects to publish scholarly articles elsewhere that started out as blog topics.

He gets about 200 readers a day to his blog, an audience few scholarly articles can claim. Not bad for a hobby.

PHOTO: VITO ALUIA

Alice Lichtenstein

Irwin Rosenberg

High honors

TWO FRIEDMAN SCHOOL PROFESSORS WERE honored by the American Society for Nutrition at the Experimental Biology 2006 meeting in San Francisco, Calif., this spring.

Alice Lichtenstein, director of the Cardiovascular Nutrition Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging (HNRCA), became the first woman to receive the Robert H. Herman Memorial Award. The award honors a clinical investigator whose research has contributed importantly to the advancement of clinical nutrition, particularly the biochemical and medical aspects of human nutrition. Lichtenstein, the Stanley N. Gershoff Professor of Nutrition Science and Policy, was singled out for her contributions in cardiovascular nutrition. Her research has, in part, laid the groundwork for the recent dietary guidelines recommendations to decrease trans fat and the FDA's decision to require trans fat labeling.

Irwin H. Rosenberg, director of the HNRCA Nutrition and Neurocognition Laboratory, received the Conrad A. Elvehjem Award for Public Service in Nutrition. He has held many key positions that influenced nutrition policy, guidelines and public health, including chair of the Panel on Vitamins, Minerals and Hematinics at the FDA; chair of the Food and Nutrition Board; president of the nutrition society; and chair of the Institute of Medicine committee on Dietary Reference Intakes. The former director of the HNRCA and dean *emeritus*, Rosenberg is a University Professor at Tufts and holds the Jean Mayer Chair in Nutrition.

PARTNERS IN HEALTH

THE FRIEDMAN SCHOOL HAS EMBARKED ON A TWO-YEAR PROJECT WITH THE EMIRATE OF Ras Al Khaimah (R.A.K.) in the United Arab Emirates to create distance learning curricula for nutrition students and a healthy lifestyle program for its citizens and visitors.

On April 6, Izzat Dajani, chief executive of the emirate's Investment and Development Office, visited the school and joined Dean Eileen Kennedy in signing a memorandum of understanding outlining the collaboration.

"This is a terrific opportunity for the school to link cutting-edge science to application, improving overall nutrition," Kennedy said. "The activities of the Friedman School will have much more of an impact globally."

The Friedman School will explore development of a master's of nutrition degree program for R.A.K., most likely centered on online courses that will have the same rigorous requirements as courses taught at Friedman. Dajani, who points out that almost two billion people in 10 countries live within an hour's flight of R.A.K., expects the program will attract students from throughout the region.

"R.A.K. is aggressively defining itself as a regional player in health care and education," he said. "We're attracting global institutions of repute, institutions with specific disciplines. Tufts has proven to be a special partner."

Ras Al Khaimah is the northern most of the seven states that make up the United Arab Emirates. Its standard of living is comparable to that of many industrialized countries, and accordingly, its citizens face some of the same nutritional challenges.

"The Tufts nutrition program really addresses many of the nutrition ailments we face in our part of the world," Dajani said. "In the Middle East, in the subcontinent and in the neighboring counties, we see a lot of poor nutrition practices, lots of obesity, high levels of smoking, minimal exercise and high levels of stress. Combine all that, and it really isn't a good formula."

Dean Eileen Kennedy and Izzat Dajani sign a memorandum of understanding

To address that, the Friedman School plans to develop a healthy-lifestyle nutrition and wellness program to be used in health centers and other out-patient settings in R.A.K. The program will address diet and exercise and their roles in preventing obesity and lifestyle diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

PHOTOS: LICHENTENSTEIN BY ED MALITSKY; OTHERS BY MARK MORELLI

Cummings School has new leader

FOLLOWING A NATIONWIDE SEARCH, TUFTS HAS APPOINTED DR. Deborah Turner Kochevar as the fourth dean of the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. She starts her new job on August 1. ■ Board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology, Kochevar is widely respected as a leader in veterinary medicine, an inspirational teacher and a scientist.

"The students, faculty and staff at the Cummings School are among the best in the nation," Kochevar said. "I am thrilled to serve as dean for such a dedicated and talented group. From its beginning in 1978, the school has served as a model for progressive and innovative scholarly activity. I hope to nurture and expand those traditions to the benefit of the school and the veterinary profession."

Kochevar is currently associate dean for professional programs and holds the Wiley Chair of Veterinary Medical Education at Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. She also is a professor of veterinary physiology and pharmacology at the College of Veterinary Medicine, with a joint appointment in medical physiology. She has been on the faculty at Texas A&M since 1987 and served two stints as acting dean in 2004 and 2005.

"I'm excited about having Dr. Kochevar join our senior academic leadership team," Tufts President Lawrence S. Bacow said. "Not only will she be an outstanding dean of the Cummings School, she also will have much to contribute to the entire university. She has enormous energy and is a superb teacher and scholar."

Kochevar graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. in English and biology from Rice University in 1978. She received a doctor of veterinary medicine degree from Texas A&M University in 1981, and a postdoctorate degree in cellular and molecular biology from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in 1987. She was a National Institutes of Health National Research Service Award Fellow from 1984 to 1986. In the mid-1990s, she spent a year in Washington, D.C., as a Congressional Science Fellow with the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.


Dr. Deborah Turner Kochevar

Heralded as an inspiring mentor to her students, Kochevar has won many teaching awards, including the Norden Distinguished Teacher Award, the Student American Veterinary Medical Association National Teaching Award in Basic Science and the Former Students Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching at Texas A&M. She has received numerous grants for education and curriculum development and participated in educational outreach projects funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Science.

Kochevar's research focuses on pharmacology and cellular and molecular biology. She has received research grants from the American Heart Association, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and corporate sponsors.

"After a comprehensive, national search, I am delighted that we've hired the best candidate in the country," said Tufts Provost and Senior Vice President Jamshed Bharucha. "Dr. Kochevar is passionate about research and teaching and is the perfect leader to take our veterinary school into the future, building on the successes of former Dean Phil Kosch and *Interim* Dean Sawkat Anwer."

Kochevar is president of the American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology and is active in the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), having chaired its Council on Education and the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates. As a member and vice-chair of the AVMA Council on Research, she also served on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Veterinary Research*.

The committee charged with finding the best candidate to lead New England's only veterinary school was composed of faculty, students and staff. The committee began its search in June 2005, after Kosch announced his decision to take a one-year sabbatical before returning to Tufts to assist the Provost's Office with special research projects. M. Sawkat Anwer, distinguished professor and chair of the school's Department of Biomedical Sciences, has served as the veterinary school's *interim* dean since last July. He will resume his teaching and research responsibilities full-time on August 1.

PHOTO: LARRY WADSWORTH

A CHALLENGE MET

TWO HUNDRED TUFTS RUNNERS JOINED President Lawrence S. Bacow at the starting line in Hopkinton, Mass., on April 17 for the 110th running of the Boston Marathon. The Tufts team participated in the fourth annual President's Marathon Challenge, which raises funds for nutrition, medical and fitness research at the university.

Tufts runners raised more than $900,000 during the first three years of the challenge, and the 2006 team exceeded its $400,000 goal, raising more than $401,000 in donations and pledges so far, according to Eric C. Johnson, executive director of development, who ran his fourth marathon challenge this year.

Scott Loomis, a student at Tufts School of Medicine, was the fastest runner from Massachusetts

Scott Loomis, a second-year student at Tufts School of Medicine, was the fastest runner from Massachusetts to cross the finish line, clocking 2 hours, 28 minutes and 48 seconds over the 26.2-mile course—good enough for 35th place among the 20,117 runners who toed the starting line.

The 2006 Tufts team consisted of 102 students, 41 alumni, 26 faculty/staff members, 10 parents and 21 friends of the university, including Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone. Throughout the winter, team members participated in interval training runs with Don Megerle, Tufts' longtime men's swimming coach, and attended nutritional seminars hosted by faculty of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. "I continue to be impressed by everyone's commitment to being part of the Tufts Marathon Team," Bacow said.

In addition to the runners, another 300 to 400 members of the Tufts community served as volunteers and cheerleaders along the marathon route. For more about the race or to make a Challenge pledge, go to **http://www. tuftsmarathonchallenge.com.**

Julie Pierce

Defining what we know as

THE LIGHT ON THE HILL CAN SHINE MORE BRIGHTLY, says Julie Pierce, Tufts' new executive director of communications. "It's often said that Tufts is a hidden gem," says Pierce, who arrived at Tufts last fall and stepped into her position on a full-time basis in January. "I see my job as helping bring that gem to light, to get the word out about Tufts as a distinctive place. If we're not doing a good job of talking about our people, about their research and about what makes Tufts special, then the university's not going to get the recognition it deserves.

"Successful communication is critical to the success of the university," she says. "And our ability to shine a light on Tufts is absolutely essential to the success of our next capital campaign."

Pierce has spent most of her career working in Asia; her background includes experience in communications strategy, reputation management, media relations and publishing. Her responsibilities at Tufts include oversight for Publications, Public Relations and Web Communications, which now make up a university-wide communications office within the three-year-old University Relations Division led by Mary Jeka. "We're beginning to take a much more integrated and collaborative approach to how we talk and write about Tufts and how we serve various constituencies, both internally and externally," Pierce says.

As the university prepares for its next capital campaign, with a goal of raising more than $1 billion, University Relations has undertaken a branding initiative designed to strengthen Tufts' communications and visual identity. That's the type of talk that until fairly recently was typical of the commercial world, not academia.

"It's true, we're not strictly in the business of selling a service or a product," Pierce says. "We're in a more genteel profession. Some would like to believe we don't need to talk about what makes us special or what makes Tufts different [from other universities]. But if we don't, we leave it to others to define us. We're stepping forward and taking ownership of our own identity." The communications team will begin rolling out the new visual identity system in June and will be meeting with many groups across the university over the coming months.

Pierce's other priorities include:

- Strengthening Tufts' presence online, in part by working with the professional schools and key externally facing departments, including Admissions and Human Resources, to build user-friendly websites based on a common design template and content management system.
- Providing strategic communications counsel and support to senior university officers and the leadership teams at each of the schools.
- Assessing opportunities to improve print and online publications and marketing communications collateral based on internal and external feedback as well as competitive benchmarking in terms of quality, cost and timeliness.

A graduate of Yale University, Pierce began her career as a copy editor for the Economist Intelligence Unit, a provider of business intelligence for multinational companies. At age 25, she went to work for the company's operations in Hong Kong, arriving there with little more than two suitcases and the desire to experience life abroad. She subsequently worked for management consultants McKinsey & Co., both in Hong Kong and in Boston, returning to the United States in 1999. She lives in Newton, Mass., with her husband and their two teenage sons. *—Helene Ragovin*

PHOTO: JOANIE TOBIN

SMALL WORLD

Medical school wins $375,000 global health grant


Dr. Jeffrey Griffiths

AS SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN TO AFRICA SEVEN OR EIGHT TIMES AND spent a month last summer working in Africa and Bangladesh, Dr. Jeffrey Griffiths, associate professor of public health and family medicine and of medicine, knows a thing or two about the value of traversing great distance and connecting with others. That knowledge underlay his recent successful grant application to NIH for seed money to create a Global Health Framework at Tufts University, based at the medical school. This fall, the NIH awarded Tufts a grant of $125,000 annually for three years to link, unify and deepen the dimensions of the university's education and research into global health.

"The grant size may be small, but it will be catalytic for us," says Griffiths, principal investigator for the proposal. Five years in the making, the grant will help pay for the creation of a global health curriculum open to Tufts students across disciplines; provide $50,000 a year in student exchange funds, enabling a number of students to travel overseas and foreign students to come to Boston; support a half-time global health program assistant for three years; underwrite the development of Internet-based educational collaborations with colleagues and institutions abroad; and fund twice-yearly global health workshops on campus.

Griffiths sees the grant as a matter of "lining up the strengths that we have here at Tufts" while magnifying their impact. "At the same time, it's about tapping the moment where people are focused on international events and the health slant on things," he continues, singling out the scare over avian flu from China and tsunami relief efforts in Thailand in 2004 as recent dramatic examples.

Curricular offerings will tap expertise from a number of Tufts schools—including, in addition to the medical school, the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and its Feinstein International Famine Center, the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, the Fletcher School and the School of Engineering.

Big questions within the program scope can be richly framed from multiple perspectives, he believes: What is our definition of health? What is the relationship between poverty and health, and how can we get people out of the desperate, grinding poverty that we find in so many developing nations? How can epidemics or pandemics be managed effectively across national borders? How do we handle disaster relief? Coursework will start at the graduate level, but eventually filter down to undergrads, thus benefiting the entire Tufts community.

The addition of a part-time staffer in global health is intended to provide steadiness and continuity for the program, with assigned tasks ranging from hunting down additional funding sources to helping students find their overseas placements. "It may be the most critical piece of all," Griffiths says.

Personal and institutional collaborations over the Internet promise to exploit modern technology by putting students and colleagues together in real time. The kinks of this co-curricular approach are still being worked out, but once everyone is connected, beginning with sites in East Africa, "students at Tufts will no longer learn about global health issues in other countries, they will learn with people in those countries," Griffiths says.

Tufts will officially launch a Concentration in Global Health within the M.P.H. program beginning in the 2006–07 academic year.


Martin J. Sherwin

PULITZER PRIZE-WINNER

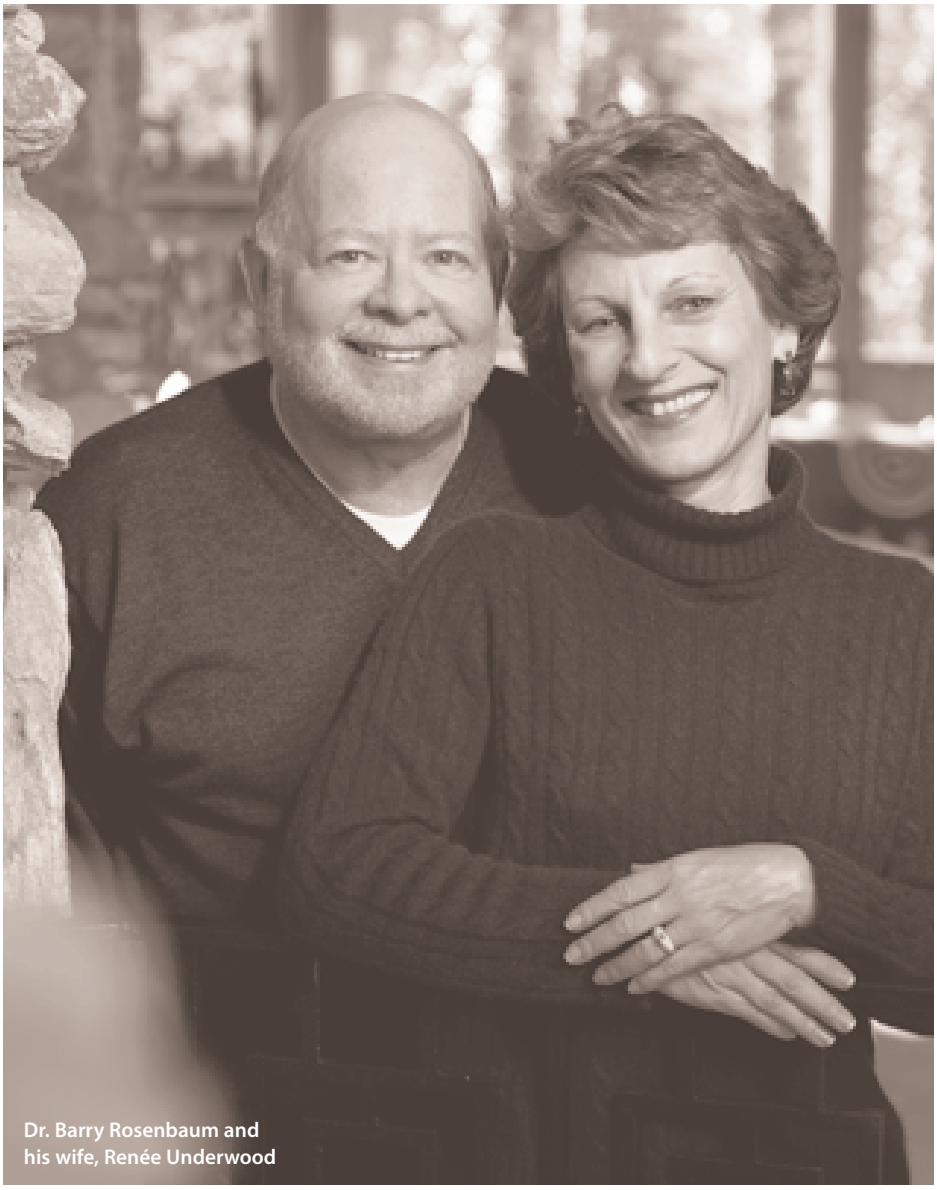
MARTIN J. SHERWIN, THE WALTER S. DICKSON Professor of English and American History at Tufts University, and biographer Kai Bird have been awarded the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for biography for their book on the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist who led the Manhattan Project, which resulted in the development and use of the atomic bomb in August 1945.

A *New York Times* review describes *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (Knopf, 2005) as "a work of voluminous scholarship and lucid insight, unifying its multifaceted portrait with a keen grasp of Oppenheimer's essential nature."

"Oppenheimer was well known for black hole theory," a region of space that has so much mass concentrated in it that there is no way for a nearby object to escape its gravitational pull, Bird told the Boston Herald. "He, as a subject, was a black hole—extremely enigmatic, complicated."

Sherwin became interested in Oppenheimer while writing *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and the Origins of the Arms Race* (Vintage Books, 1987). Earlier this year, *American Prometheus* received the National Book Critics Circle Award for the best biography of the year.

PHOTOS: MELODY KO



Dr. Barry Rosenbaum and his wife, Renée Underwood

Noted nephrologist and wife establish charitable trust

by Nina Braten

DR. BARRY ROSENBAUM, A60, HAS LONG FELT THAT ONE OF TUFTS' strengths is its caring and dedicated faculty. His fondness for Tufts' instructors was reinforced the day his international relations professor approached him and said, "Barry, you would be so much more handsome if you shaved your beard off."

Rosenbaum, just having returned from spending a summer in the late 1950s as a "gandy dancer" (a railroad worker), was the only student on campus with a full beard. He was not the slightest bit offended and brightly recalls that it was one of the many moments when he knew that the faculty at the college cared about the students they taught. "They really took an interest in us," he says.

Now, Rosenbaum, a Friedman School overseer, and his wife, Renée Underwood, are saying thanks. They have established a charitable remainder trust to benefit the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and the Tufts University Alumni Association. The unitrust gives them the ability to make a significant gift to Tufts and provides them with income for life.

"Creating a charitable remainder trust is unique because people can donate assets or other items to charities while simultaneously ensuring a stream of income," Rosenbaum says. "It's a great way to meet all your needs."

Although Renée is not a Tufts graduate, she says she has grown to love the university and the Friedman School as passionately as her husband. She joins Barry in many of his trips to the Hill on behalf of the university.

Rosenbaum's interest in nutrition began during his specialty training in nephrology, when he learned the importance of nutrition physiology in the biochemistry of the body. He has since become an overseer to the Friedman School.

"It has been a wonderful experience and has meant a lot to me to make a contribution to the workings of the school," he says. "Tufts taught me how to think. Now I use that ability to come up with research topics and innovative ways to raise money."

Rosenbaum recently retired as the founder and managing member of the Atlanta Nephrology Referral Center in Atlanta. He received a B.A. from Tufts in 1960 and his M.D. from Seton Hall in 1964. An active Tufts alum, Rosenbaum is a past regional vice president of the Tufts University Alumni Association, an interviewer and one of the founders of the Tufts Alumni Admissions Program (TAAP) and the founder of the Atlanta Tufts Alliance.

PHOTO: GREGORY CAMPBELL

Dr. James Rabb (left) and Joan Arbetter Rosenberg (above)

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE DRAWS FROM VOLUNTEER LEADERS

by Mark Sullivan

ASK DR. JAMES RABB WHY HE SUPPORTS THE Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and he turns eloquent spokesman.

"The mission of the school is one of the great humanitarian missions," said Rabb, a Friedman School overseer and Boston-area physician. "It's feeding the hungry, treating and preventing disease through nutrition and managing the policy issues of world hunger, which affects more people than bullets."

So Rabb has offered his services to help raise several million dollars in contributions to the school by co-chairing a new Development Committee, drawn from volunteer leaders from the Board of Overseers and the Friedman Alumni Association.

Formed to bolster the school's fund-raising efforts, the Development Committee will expand the school's pool of donors at the leadership ($1,000-plus) level, cultivate new friends and institutional partners capable of providing major and principal gifts and recommend fund-raising strategies for the university's upcoming capital campaign.

"Past efforts on behalf of Friedman School fund-raising largely have been led by professionals in the development office," said committee Co-Chair Joan Arbetter Rosenberg, N84, of the Friedman Alumni Association Executive Council. "With the formation of the Development Committee, volunteers and professionals will partner to strengthen the school's fund-raising efforts."

Other members are Elizabeth Cochary Gross, N82, N88, a Friedman overseer and president of the school's alumni association; Executive Associate Dean Judy Diamond; Overseer and Trustee *Emerita* Ruth Remis, A79P, A81P; and Overseer Robert Usen, A50, N03P.

Working closely with the committee are Mark Grossmann, the school's director of development; Cindy Briggs Tobin, the school's director of annual giving and alumni relations; and Wendy Lekan, associate director for corporate and foundation relations.

Committee members aim to harness their networking skills to attract outside support for the Friedman School's singular work. "Through strategies such as events and one-on-one meetings, the committee is working to expand the school's body of friends to dramatically increase the school's resources and strengthen its ability to fulfill its mission," Rosenberg said.

Because the Friedman School has been in existence for such a short time and its graduates tend toward altruistic careers, the committee's efforts to find additional supporters are crucial, said Rabb, who finds the compelling nature of the school's mission and work stimulates the interest of many new friends.

"The beauty of the school is the fusion of the hard and social sciences and policy," Rabb said. "It's a unique graduate school that encompasses nutrition in its entirety—from counting the vitamins in your diet that promote better health to caring for desperate survivors of a tsunami.

"Our aim is to interest people in supporting this critical and lofty mission of inquiry into all aspects of nutrition," he said. "It's a very big job."

To support the Friedman School or to learn more, call the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at 617-636-2940 or visit **http://nutrition.tufts.edu/giving**.

PHOTOS: MELODY KO

The mission that ties us together

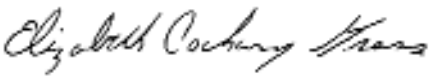
During my more than 20 years' association with Tufts, I have watched the Friedman School evolve and, unlike many alumni, I have had a chance to view it through a variety of lenses: as a student, scientist, faculty member, director of admissions, Alumni Association president and overseer.

Tufts has long had a proud tradition in the nutrition field through its Frances Stern Nutrition Center. As a member of the school's first class of just 14 students, I was part of a grand experiment—to create an institution that trained new leaders in the nutrition science and policy realm and provided cutting-edge scholarship that could help people in meaningful, powerful ways. Back in 1982, I don't think any of us could have imagined the school as it exists today:

- A world-renowned, respected leader in the nutrition field.
- More than 850 graduates who are helping to change the world in roles as diverse as scientist, scholar, industry leader, public relations specialist, community organizer and policymaker.
- A beautiful facility in downtown Boston that offers state-of-the-art classrooms and places for students and faculty members (and alumni!) to connect.
- Degree programs that span the discipline of the nutrition field, including one-of-a-kind programs like Nutrition Communication and Humanitarian Assistance.

As much as the school has grown from its humble beginnings, the core of the school remains the same: its mission. I urge you to stop by the school, meet the latest generation of students and check out its great home base at 150 Harrison Avenue. For those of you who may want to help students, network or renew bonds with friends and mentors, we would love for you to be involved in the Alumni Association. To find out more, please contact Cindy Briggs Tobin, director of alumni relations and annual giving, at 617-636-2940 or cindy.briggs@tufts.edu. Or visit the alumni section of **http://nutrition.tufts.edu.** I look forward to connecting with you!

Sincerely,



ELIZABETH COCHARY GROSS, N82, N88
PRESIDENT, FRIEDMAN SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Elizabeth Van Huysen Mayer and former Tufts President Jean Mayer

OBITUARY

FORMER TUFTS FIRST LADY AT

Elizabeth Van Huysen Mayer, the wife of former Tufts University President Jean Mayer, died on April 4 at Tufts-New England Medical Center. She was 91.

"Betty," as she was known to the Tufts community during the 16 years she served as the university's first lady from 1976 to 1992, was deeply interested in Tufts students and was frequently in the audience for athletics events, plays, dance performances and lectures. The Elizabeth Van Huysen Mayer Campus Center, opened in 1985 on the Medford/Somerville campus, is testament to her stature in the Tufts community.

Born in Somerville, Mayer grew up in Weston. She attended the Dana Hall School before entering Vassar College, eventually transferring to Radcliffe as a commuter student during the Depression. She did not graduate with her class but received her bachelor's degree through the Harvard Extension School in 1976 at the time of her 40th reunion.

Unpretentious and athletic, Mayer was the junior champion of her golf club, played baseball with the boys and had a mean back-hand. She went hang-gliding at age 75, and at age 88, when she locked herself out on the roof of her summer cottage in Gloucester, she climbed down a tree rather than disturb the neighbors.

After leaving college, Mayer worked as a reporter, a dance instructor at an Arthur Murray studio, a secretary to movie mogul Louis B. Mayer (no relation) and in Harvard's Department of Physiological Chemistry.

It was at Harvard in 1941 that she met Jean Mayer, a lieutenant in the Free French Forces, who told her on the spot that she was the woman he would marry. He sailed for Europe, but when his ship was torpedoed, he asked her to join him in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they wed. He returned to action for more than three years while Elizabeth, who had a security clearance from her Harvard work, worked at the Manhattan Project and in the radiation lab at MIT. After the war, they lived in New Haven, Washington and Paris before returning to the Boston area in 1950, when he joined the Harvard faculty.

The couple came to Tufts in 1976. She volunteered in the Boston public schools well into her eighties and was a trustee of Lawrence Memorial Hospital, the Somerville Historical Society and the National Braille Press, among other organizations.

Mayer is survived by five children and nine grandchildren.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

N87

Laura Coleman, N95, is a research specialist at the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation in Wisconsin.

N92

Xiang-Dong Wang, professor at the Friedman School and director of the Nutrition and Cancer Biology Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, has received a five-year, $1.4 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to study the chemopreventive effect of lycopene against carcinogenesis and insulin-like growth factor-1 signaling. Wang has been invited to speak on "Smoking, Alcohol and Vitamin A" at the American Institute for Cancer Research international conference on "Food, Nutrition and Cancer," which will take place July 13-14 in Washington, D.C. He has also been invited to speak on "Carotenoid Oxidative Metabolites: Implications for Cancer Prevention" at the International Society for Free Radical Research 13th biennial congress, which will be held August 15-19 in Davos, Switzerland. Wang will give an invited talk on "Alcohol, Retinoids and Hepatocellular Cancer" at the International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism's 2006 World Congress September 10-13 in Sydney, Australia.

N96

Carolyn Contract works for the Center for Health Communication at the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, D.C.

N98

Jennifer Otten is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Vermont.

Karen Schroeder married Michael Kassel on May 7, 2005. She is working as a freelance medical writer.

Wanda Velez-Carrasco, N99, is an assistant professor at the Universidad Central del Caribe's School of Medicine in Puerto Rico. She teaches lipid metabolism to first-year medical students. Her research focuses on nicotinic receptors.

N01

Jessica Collins is the director of the Somerville Health Agenda for the Cambridge Health Alliance.

Holly Freishtat has joined Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland as an agricultural marketing program director. The program operates in collaboration with the Economic Development Association of Skagit County, located in the northwest corner of Washington State. The program is aimed at marketing the Skagit Valley brand and creating an identity for Skagit-grown products.

N02

Kimberly Dong and **Kendrin Sonnenville** traveled with the Tufts Travel-Learn Program to Paris and Amsterdam in May 2005.

Casey Lewis has been promoted to manager at Cadbury Schweppes Inc., and has moved to Australia to start a nutrition department for that company's Asia Pacific region.

N03

Vanessa Cavallaro traveled with the Tufts Travel-Learn program to Paris and Amsterdam in May 2005.

N04

Jean Bianchetto is a recruiter for volunteer services in the Metabolic Research Unit of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts.

Alexander "Sasha" Chanoff, F04, launched Somerville-based Mapendo International (www.mapendo.org) in 2004 to rescue and protect people fleeing conflict and violence in Africa who have fallen through the net of humanitarian aid. The organization's medical and rescue initiatives aim to reach out to thousands of people whose struggle to survive would otherwise go unnoticed.

Justine Kahn is a senior child nutrition outreach coordinator for Project Bread in Boston.

Kristine Shedd is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of California at Davis.

N05

Stacey King is the coordinator of Healthy Living Cambridge, a program of the Department of Public Health in Cambridge, Mass.

PHOTO BY MELODY KO

Fixing school lunch

What do celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, legendary restaurant owner Alice Waters and Friedman School alumnus Bill Idell have in common? All are chefs using their culinary know-how to turn the school lunch experience into something more than chicken nuggets and French fries. While Oliver and Waters have campaigned for changes nationally and internationally, Idell, a professional chef for 18 years, is using the midday meal to work nutrition into the curriculum at a Massachusetts charter school. At the same time, he empathizes with budget-strapped school lunch directors who face pressure to curb childhood obesity. For more on the story, see page 14.

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