

# HHP TODAY

HEALTH and HUMAN PERFORMANCE

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## From the Chair



► 2012 is proving to be an exceptionally busy year for HHP in academics and in research.

From new scholarships, new courses, to new research projects, HHP continues to lead the way in demonstrating why UH was recently recognized as a Tier One university.

A great way to keep up with current events and activities in HHP is on our website at <http://hhp.uh.edu> and on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/HHPonFB>.

We are always interested in staying in touch with our alumni. Please feel free to contact me and let me know what you are doing at [clayne2@uh.edu](mailto:clayne2@uh.edu). I would love to hear from you.

Charles Layne,  
HHP Department Chair



Dr. Layne, Dean Roberts & Margo Wolanin

## Why We Give

 Curt Shelley and Joanie South-Shelley

*"Being lifetime UH supporters allows us to give back a small token of what UH has done for us. The personal and professional satisfaction we feel is due, in large part, to the instruction and camaraderie we had at UH."*

Read their story on page 2.



## Scholarships: Investing in Student Success



Dr. John Roberts, Karim Sadiwala, Hailee Shuttlesworth, Kwame Mensah & Dr. Charles Layne

► The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences hosted a reception honoring its 2011 scholarship recipients Jan. 27 in the Wortham Theatre lobby on the UH campus.

The catered reception was a time for students to visit with CLASS administrators and scholarship donors, and for guests to learn more about the recipients.

Five of the awardees were HHP students: Chi Hsien Lee, Kwame Mensah, Darren Randle, Hailee Shuttlesworth and Karim Sadiwala.

During the event, Dean Roberts and Sr. Director of Development Margo Wolanin presented Dr. Layne with a pen to sign

the documents establishing the new HHP Undergraduate Scholarship.

"It is a great honor to be associated with a group of faculty who care enough about student success that they are willing to give their own money to establish the scholarship," Layne said.

Students have a unique opportunity to partner with the faculty and invest in the future by donating \$1, and receiving a UH/HHP window decal.

"We hope by involving the students in the funding of the scholarship through their donations we can begin to create a 'culture of giving' so that students can begin to understand how important their contribution really is to the success of the department and its future students," Layne explained. ■

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Get your window decal from Amanda Butcher in GAR 104. You can also contact her at [aebutcher@uh.edu](mailto:aebutcher@uh.edu) or 713.743.9858.

## Faculty Focus: Adam Thrasher

► Dr. Adam Thrasher answers some of HHP's questions about him and his work:

My research focuses on severe neurological disorders including stroke, spinal cord injury and Parkinson's Disease. I am interested in technological approaches to treating these conditions, such as functional electrical stimulation, robot-assisted therapy and virtual reality training.

My current projects are concerned with improving gait and balance, restoring upper extremity function, and boosting immune function in disabled populations.

### How did you choose your field of study?

I studied engineering as an undergraduate, largely because it was what my father did for a living and I loved mathematics. I pursued a career in the oil field for a couple of years after graduation, but I found that the day-to-day work of a junior engineer did not feed my curiosity like the academic world that I had just left, so I went back.



I shopped around quite a bit before deciding which area of graduate studies I would pursue. Ultimately, I chose biomedical engineering after reconnecting with one of my old professors, Brian Andrews, who described himself as a cyberneticist.

He showed me his laboratory where they were designing electrical stimulation devices to help people who were in wheel-

chairs to walk again. It was the craziest, coolest thing I had ever seen, and I wanted to be a part of it.

### You were born in London, Ontario, Canada. What brought you to the states?

Ever since my false start as a professional engineer, my goal has been to work in academia. I love to teach, to investigate new ideas, and to be in an intellectually fertile environment surrounded by clever people.

I looked for opportunities that would allow me to do these things and continue my research in spinal cord injury, which requires a large urban area with large rehabilitation programs. Houston houses the largest medical center in world, so it is the perfect place.

In 2006, when UH's Department of Health and Human Performance announced an open faculty position, I jumped at the opportunity.

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## Alumni Spotlight: Curt Shelley

► Curt Shelley (M.Ed. '09) and his wife, Joanie South-Shelley ('97, M.A. '01) share not only their university alma mater, but also their community college alma mater in Midland, Texas where they are from.

Curt is the ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) Coordinator for Memorial Hermann Hospital – Texas Medical Center in Houston. His team is responsible for placing patients on a modified version of cardiopulmonary bypass when their lungs cannot support them any longer. Once the lungs heal, the patient is weaned off the ECMO pump and their lungs take over.

"I am the leader of a fantastic team, which has saved the lives of many, very critical patients," he said. "When I see each patient or their family later in their stay, or when they visit later, I am always struck by how amazing it is to see someone who, without my team's efforts, would not be here."

During his studies in HHP, Shelley appreciates that he was provided opportunities

to do an independent study, write a grant proposal, and to develop an interest in public health and community services for the disadvantaged.

In recalling his professors and the merits of the program, he said, "I appreciate their passion for teaching and ability to explain complex concepts."

Joanie earned her bachelor's degrees in history and anthropology at UH, and her master's in library sciences from the University of North Texas (2008). She is currently the archivist at St. Thomas High School in Houston where she maintains, processes and preserves the school's historical collections and assists patrons with research questions.

It was in the UH history department where she acquired extensive writing and research skills. "My archival skills I learned first in a graduate history class, and then through practical experience working in special collections at the M.D. Anderson Library while in graduate school," she said.



Curt and Joanie are loyal and dedicated alumni, to whom staying connected and giving back is important. "Being lifetime UH supporters allows us to give back a small token of what UH has done for us," Curt said. "The personal and professional satisfaction we feel is due, in large part, to the instruction and camaraderie we had at UH." ■

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### Can you share any updates about the The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research (TIIR) Foundation's grant?

This is a very exciting project. Our goal is to determine if exercise on a specially adapted stationary bike can reverse the impact of spinal cord injury on the immune system. People who have spinal cord injuries suffer a lot of infections and cannot fight them off very well. It is a major problem that has no real solution.

For the last eight months, people from the community have been coming to our lab to do the exercise. We have been taking blood samples and storing them. At this time, we have not looked at enough data to determine if the exercise program is feasible as an intervention to improve immunity.

### What do you do on your time off?

I am an avid cyclist, and I spend a lot of weekends riding around the back roads of Brazoria County (when the weather is nice). I also bowl on the UH faculty and staff league. ■



## Great Strides for the Cure

► Registration is open to the public for the May 19, 2012, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's (CFF) annual Great Strides 3K walk on the UH campus. Visit the CFF website at [www.cff.org/Great\\_Strides](http://www.cff.org/Great_Strides) to learn more and to sign up.

Since HHP began hosting the the Gulf Coast Chapter walk six years ago, it has become CFF's largest national fundraising event. There were 1,000 participants in the 2011 walk and more than \$827,000 was raised. ■

## Multinational Strategy in Mexico

► The Texas Obesity Research Center (TORC) was awarded \$100,000 by the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health to establish a multinational strategy to combat physical inactivity in Hispanics.

The Multinational Collaboration to increase Physical Activity in Hispanics spring conference is scheduled for March 26-27, 2012 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

HHP professors Rebecca Lee, Charles Layne and Daniel O'Connor, TORC lab manager, Scher Mama, and a group of graduate and undergraduate students will attend.

Scientists from across the U.S. and Canada will come together with the University of Guadalajara to develop a long-term collaborative agenda focusing on the problem of physical inactivity in Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. ■

## Ledoux Garners Awards and UH Grants

► Assistant Professor Tracey Ledoux has recently received UH grants from the HHP Summer Curriculum Development, UH/CLASS Grants-in-Aid, and the UH Division of Research Small Grants programs.

In 2011, she received the Houston Area Dietetic Association's (HADA) Outstanding Dietetic Educator award. This Jan. Ledoux was named Texas Dietetic Educator of the Year by the Texas Dietetic Association, and she is a 2012 nominee for Educator of the Year by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Ledoux joined the HHP faculty in 2010 with a focus on child obesity and the future goal of conducting research with pregnant women to investigate maternal and child obesity risk.

"It's really flourished since I've been here," she said. "I'm very happy that it has gone in the direction it has because that was my goal."

Ledoux will use her broad background as a clinician, psychologist and dietitian



to investigate an evidence-based practice that will mitigate excess weight gain in pregnant women.

The grants will allow her and her collaborators to identify psychosocial predictors of weight gain, which will be the target that future interventions will aim to change. ■

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RESEARCH

## Alastuey Elected to UH Position

► Dr. Lisa Alastuey, clinical assistant professor, was elected to the UH Faculty Senate for a three-year term, which includes serving on the senate's Community and Governmental Relations subcommittee.

The Faculty Senate is a university-wide body that considers and makes recommendations for its academic development. It also serves as a channel of communications among the various faculties, the president and the provost of the university.

"I look forward to the challenge of serving on the Faculty Senate by helping address faculty policies and procedures in the spirit of shared governance," she said.

In August, Alastuey will rotate off the University Commission on Women (UCW) where she is currently serving as faculty co-chair along with Patrick Daniel, staff co-chair. The UCW is made up of UH faculty and staff members, and is active in identifying women's issues on campus and providing support and advocacy.



*Dr. Alastuey instructs her Child and Adolescent Obesity class.*

"Serving on the University Commission on Women as faculty co-chair, has taught me to step outside of my comfort zone, and that I have the ability to make a difference for women's issues on the UH campus," she said. "I feel very privileged to have

served with a talented and dedicated group of commission members."

Alastuey's teaching focus includes emotional health, women's and adolescent health issues. ■