

ACT CHURCHILL FELLOWS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

April 2010

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2010.

Churchill Chat

ACT Churchill Fellows Committee recently hosted our inaugural Churchill Chat. The event was held on February 19th at the Emeritus Faculty Cottage at the Australian National University. The evening was an enormous success with 34 people attending, including members of the ACT CFA, the President of the NSW CFA, staff members and members of the selection committee. Three Churchill Fellows (Holly Northam 2006, Peter Batten 2008 and Jo Slattery 2000) described their journey.

We have had some terrific feedback from Fellows about the evening and as a committee we will schedule another evening for **Thursday 24 June at 7.30pm** (more information to follow).

Holly Northam – organ donation after cardiac death



During her fellowship Holly travelled to the United Kingdom, Spain and the United States of America visiting programs associated with organ donation. Each of these countries has initiated strategies to improve outcomes for patients awaiting transplantation. Holly was fortunate to experience many of the processes involved in the care of patients following death and organ donation, and care of their family in those countries, as well as involvement at meetings where ethical/legal issues were clarified, taught and debated.

As part of her fellowship Holly's goal was to identify ways to help our community through increasing opportunities to save and improve lives through organ donation. She also identified activities and processes that were contributing to higher donation rates overseas than are experienced in Australia.

Back in Australia Holly is committed to promoting information learned at a national and specialist level, educating health professionals and the public as a whole and to develop organ donation sponsors and champions.

Peter Batten 2008 Churchill Fellow – mentoring programs for people with Autism/Ausbergers Syndrome

During his fellowship Peter studied programs using the latest brain research to address the neurologically based deficits associated with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome. In his presentation Peter explained the three areas of brain function linked with these deficits. By understanding how an individual's strengths and weaknesses in the three areas of brain function: Theory of Mind (the ability to predict what another person is thinking and feeling), Executive Functioning (the ability to prioritise and sequence information) and Central Coherence (the ability to attend to detail AND see the big picture), we are in a better position to develop informed and individualised treatment strategies for people with this recently classified and increasingly diagnosed disability.

During his fellowship Peter learned how to "train the brain" using cognitive behavioural strategies to teach individuals with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome how to think socially (Theory of Mind), get organised (Executive Functioning) and see the big picture (Central Coherence). Because these "social thinking" skills are continually developing throughout life, Peter spoke about the need to expand our current early intervention model of government funding to one that supports a person with Autism/Asperger's Syndrome to develop their social thinking skills at all stages of the life cycle. To raise awareness of the cognitive based treatment strategies for Autism/Asperger's Syndrome being used overseas, Peter is currently arranging an Australian speaking tour for a leading social thinking practitioner from the USA. Anyone interested in receiving details of the Social Thinking workshops can contact Peter via peterwbatten@gmail.com



Jo Slattery 2000 Churchill Fellow – to study legume-*Rhizobium* plant interactions from countries where legumes first originated

The purpose of Jo's study tour was to visit countries where legumes have originated, to increase understanding of agricultural issues affecting legume production in such countries, and then relate this knowledge to Australian farming practices.

As part of her study she visited agricultural programs in many countries where legumes have originated and to visit CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) agricultural research institutes in developing countries. Countries visited were India, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Syria, Turkey, United States and Mexico.

At each institute (or university) she spent up to a week discussing CGIAR (or institute) programs, travelling to farmer paddocks and visiting field experimental sites where legumes were being assessed. As part of the field study component of this tour, in excess of 400 nodules (*Rhizobium* bacteria) were collected.



News from Churchill House

50th Anniversary of the Trust on 12 April 2015 – stay tuned for more details.

Obituary

Geoffrey Henry recently passed away. Geoff Henry was one of the first Churchill Fellows in Australia. After completing his Fellowship, Geoffrey worked at the John Curtin School of Medical Research in the Department of Neurophysiology under Nobel Prize Winner, Professor Sir John Eccles. He was a Doctor of Science. Further information can be obtained from Ralph Westen or the John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU.

2010 Churchill Fellows - 5th National Convention

22nd - 24th October, 2010

Melbourne, Victoria

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