

## Editor's Page

### *2007 AKC Canine Health Foundation National Parent Club Conference*

During my long tenure in the sport of dogs I've been fortunate to have had several experiences that would eventually become my list of most valuable time spent in dogs, experiences that I felt were invaluable learning opportunities. Many of you have had these kinds of experiences in dogs... those you're grateful for because they were so enlightening. I had one of these in October, and it tops my list of "best" events attended in the sport of dogs.

Every other year for the past 10 years the AKC Canine Health Foundation has held a Parent Club Canine Health Conference, during which researchers, scientists, veterinarians, breeders and other dog people gather to discuss the progress that's been made in canine health research and what is on the horizon. The sixth biennial conference was held Oct. 19-21 this year in St. Louis, generously sponsored by Nestlé Purina. To be honest, my greatest fear in covering the conference — parts which DR will devote in-depth coverage to for the next year — is that we will find it difficult to transfer the passion, energy and excitement of the conference to the printed page.

Participants owe a debt of gratitude to Nestlé Purina and CHF for what they bring together for this conference. Each year all AKC parent clubs are invited to send two members to the conference, with hotel and meal expenses covered by the sponsors. The accommodations and food are exceptional and the camaraderie is the kind we seldom experience because usually we're busy showing dogs when we're together — but as positive as those things were, they're not what makes this conference a jewel. It is the speakers and the quality of information they bring that make it what it is. Speakers this year included a host of brilliant, passionate people who are devoted to canine, and human, health and genetics. You may not recognize all of their names — although several will be familiar — but they all deserve mention here and in future issues: Matthew Breen, Ph.D. (North Carolina State University), Rick Vuillet, DVM, Ph.D. (University of California, Davis), Jaime Modiano, VMD, Ph.D. (University of Minnesota), Heidi Parker, Ph.D., and Elaine Ostrander, Ph.D. from the National Institutes of Health/National Human Genome Research Institute, Jerold Bell, DVM (Tufts University), Anita Oberbauer, Ph.D. (UC, Davis), Richard Goldstein, DVM (Cornell University), Mark Oyama, DVM, DACVIM (University of Pennsylvania), Douglas Thamm, VMD, DACVIM (Colorado State University), Peter Muir, BVSc, Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Simon Petersen-Jones, DVM, Ph.D. (Michigan State University), Peggy Root Kustritz, DVM, Ph.D. (University of Minnesota), Christine Petersen, DVM, Ph.D. (Iowa State University), Rhonda Hovan (Golden Retriever breeder) and Brian Zanghi, Ph.D., Ebenezer Satyaraj, Ph.D., and Gail Czarnecki-Mauldin (Nestlé Purina Research Center).

Many topics were covered in the three full days of this conference, but I'll share with you just two of the most remarkable topics discussed, which DR will cover extensively over the next year. First, the amazing research being conducted by Drs. Breen, Modiano, Vuillet and Oyama, among others, into the use of stem cells in cancer research, cardiology, cardiovascular medicine, pulmonary disease, spinal cord injury and other areas — which will in the end benefit not just our pets, but people as well. It was thrilling to learn about the discoveries these doctors are making with therapeutic stem cell research. Second, and just as important, are the advances being made since the canine genome has been completed, again benefiting both animals and humans in the long run. Dr. Heidi Parker from the National Institutes of Health/National Human Genome Research Institute, discussed how the canine genome now allows researchers to identify dogs by breed, ancestry, etc., based on their DNA; the advances this will allow in further research are mind-boggling, and all the more gratifying when one learns that the AKC/CHF and Purina played a major role in funding the sequencing of the canine genome. Understanding exactly what the canine genome is and how it contributes to further research is a complicated business, but this is another subject we'll cover, and help simplify, in an upcoming issue.

Several of the doctors who participated in the conference have agreed to write for DR in the coming months, and we very much look forward to sharing their research and discoveries with our readers.



Christi McDonald, Editor