

# brain waves

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## Night of a Thousand Laughs



Jeff Garlin

Please join us on June 10th to support the Brain Research Foundation, and to celebrate how laughter can heal.



The average child laughs 400 times per day. The average adult? 15! The Brain Research Foundation wants to make you feel like a kid again, at least for one night.

On Friday, June 10, 2005, the Brain Research Foundation will hold its much-anticipated gala event. Our theme, *Laughter is the Best Medicine*, will focus on how humor and a positive outlook on life can greatly benefit your health. A portion of the proceeds will go to the Clown Care Unit at The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital (detailed on page 3).

Co-Chairs, Jean Jernstedt and John McDonough, have created a night full of amusement. Keeping with the theme, we will have a variety of entertainers at our gala to ensure laughter and merriment. There will be jugglers and magicians during cocktail hour, and Patti Vasquez will make us laugh with her hilarious

comedy over dessert. The evening will be capped off with the soulful sounds of Laurel Massé, formally of the group *Manhattan Transfer*.

We are extremely thrilled to have Jeff Garlin, co-star of the critically acclaimed HBO series *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, as our Honorary Chair. Garlin is a multi-talented comedian who writes, acts, produces, directs and performs stand-up comedy. It is a tradition of the Brain Research Foundation to honor an important person with the Foundation's Creativity Award. The Creativity Awards were established to recognize individuals who have dedicated their lives to fulfilling their creative abilities and to inspire all people to use their creative potentials to the fullest. This year, the Brain Research Foundation will be honoring Jeff Garlin's humor and ingenuity by presenting him with our 2005 Creativity Award.

# dear friends



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This edition of *Brainwaves* focuses on laughter and health. When you laugh, you don't think about how that laugh affected your body. However, scientists have been studying the benefits of laughter for years. Laughter stimulates the production of endorphins and strengthens the immune system. It also increases heart rate, providing more oxygen to the brain. Most important, laughter is just plain enjoyable.

We hope that many of you will join us for a night of laughter. We are in high gear planning this year's benefit, *Laughter is the Best Medicine*. It will be held on June 10, 2005 at the Union League Club of Chicago. The gala will be filled with merriment. There will be jugglers and magicians during cocktail hour, comedy over dessert and music to top off the evening.

Those of you who attended last year's *Discovery and Impact* symposium on memory and aging, sponsored by The University of Chicago and Brain Research Foundation, learned about the newest discoveries in Alzheimer's research. One of the speakers, Dr. Sangram Sisodia, has an exciting article in the scientific journal *Cell* (March 11, 2005), which expands on the talk he gave in April 2004. Dr. Sisodia utilized a transgenic animal model that exhibits some of the characteristics of Alzheimer's disease to uncover how to stop the progression of this disease. His lab discovered that the transgenic mice housed in enriched environments – cages with toys, exercise wheel and playmates –

displayed smaller amyloid plaques in the brain, one of the pathological hallmarks of Alzheimer's. More specifically, mice in this enriched environment have elevated activity of an enzyme that breaks down amyloid protein. Furthermore, this environment increases expression of 41 genes that are associated with learning and memory, nerve growth and forming new blood vessels in the brain. This significant finding provides potential therapeutic targets and possible markers of Alzheimer's disease.

The University of Chicago's 2005 *Discovery and Impact* series is underway. This year, the series highlights three different research areas affecting healthcare today. One upcoming event, on May 12th, will focus on the amazing technology of minimally invasive surgery. The University of Chicago surgeons, including BRI Director Dr. Richard Fessler, will discuss the latest surgical innovations. For more information, you can contact Jill Hulten at (773) 834-8771.

It is wonderful to see how scientific research can make a difference in peoples' lives. Thank you for playing an important role in these discoveries. Your support does make a difference.

Sincerely,

Terre A. Sharma, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



*The Children's Hour –  
glass clock in lobby;  
6 ft. in diameter*

## Kids Come First

The newest pediatric hospital in Chicago opened its doors in February 2005. The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital, named after Gary C. Comer, founder of the Lands' End clothing-catalog company, and his wife Frances, was designed to provide optimal care in cheerful surroundings. The Comer's generous donation of \$21 million helped fund an extraordinary facility and various educational programs.

Comer Children's Hospital offers state-of-the-art care in a kid-friendly, family-centered environment. The hospital provides all inpatient children's health services at The University of Chicago Hospitals, including nationally recognized programs in cardiology, neurology, neonatology, transplantation and other medical and surgical specialties.

Upon entering Comer Children's Hospital, you can see that it has been built with its patients in mind – children. In fact, the

hospital was developed from opinions and suggestions of a Children's Advisory Board, Teen Advisory Board and Family Advisory Board. Their feedback improved quality of service and quality of life while at Comer's Children Hospital.

Each child who does not require care in an intensive care unit is in a private room, which is 308 square feet in size. That is a 74 percent increase over previous room size. The rooms are filled with special accommodations, both big and small. Each room has a flat screen TV, small refrigerators, cable, Internet and queen size sofa beds for parents. Patients are able to adjust the lights, temperature and even the showerhead height.

The hospital was also designed as a family-centered facility. There are many key family resources for patients and parents. In-room sleeping accommodations enable parents to comfort their child day and night. A bedside admissions process allows parents to complete necessary



*The University of Chicago  
Comer Children's Hospital*

paperwork while remaining by their child's side. The second floor Family Care Center offers accommodations for parents who will be staying for longer periods of time, which includes eight sleeping rooms with private bathrooms. In 2006, Comer's Children Hospital will open a 6,000 square-foot healing garden. The garden will be a place of tranquility where patients and families can go to relax and relieve stress.

It is clear that significant consideration has gone into every aspect of Comer Children's Hospital. Each floor is inspired by poetry to create an uplifting and inspirational environment. The hospital is filled with more than 300 pieces of lively art, including paintings, quilts and sculptures. Many of the pieces encourage interaction, helping to distract the children from the concerns at hand.

In addition to building a kid-friendly facility that provides comprehensive, technically advanced pediatric care, The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital sponsors various community programs. The Mobile Healthcare Van is a hospital on wheels, bringing medical services to Chicago's

South Side. The van provides healthcare to children ages 3 to 19, including immunizations and physicals for school. Comer Children's Hospital is also very active in the National SAFE KIDS Campaign that teaches kids about the importance of bicycle helmets, seat belts and other safety tips.

The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital strives to improve the health of all children by providing specialized care, at the hospital and within the community.

**Hospital Facts:**

- \$135 million
- 242,000 square feet
- Seven stories high
- 155 beds – 60 medical-surgical; 65 neonatal intensive care; 30 pediatric intensive care

**Technology:**

- 16-slice computerized tomography (CT) scanner
- Bedside monitors connected to hospital computer network
- Magnetic resonance imaging machine
- State-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab
- Wireless call system

**Special features:**

- Flat-screen TVs
- In room queen-size sofa beds
- Cable
- Video games
- Play areas
- Cheerful artwork
- Room service
- Teen lounge

**Make 'Em Laugh – Clown Care Unit**



One very important program that helps distract kids from their worries is the "Clown Care Unit" at The University of Chicago Comer Children's Hospital. In 1986, Big Apple Circus, a not-for-profit performing institution, established the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Program. There are currently seventeen Clown Care Programs throughout the nation.

The Clown Doctors bring laughter and joy to the bed-sides of acutely and chronically ill children. The Clown Doctors simplify medical procedures by performing their own clown medicine such as red-nose transplants, kitty cat scans and chocolate milk transfusions. These one-on-one interactions help alleviate fears about upcoming surgeries or procedures. When you see the smiles and hear the laughter of the children, you realize how important "clowning around" really is.



*Program for Executive Health Physicians – (l) Andrew M. Davis, M.D., M.P.H. & (r) William R. Harper, M.D., Medical Director*

**The Program includes:**

- Comprehensive review of medical history
- Complete physical examination
- Vision and hearing tests
- Blood chemistry and hematology profile
- Dermatology screen
- EKG and treadmill stress test
- Body composition analysis
- Flexibility and strength assessment
- Lung function testing
- Gender specific testing: Mammography and Pap; Prostate screening
- Nutrition counseling
- Review and analysis of tests

## Don't Clown Around When It Comes to Your Health

Scientists have found that a positive outlook and laughter is good for your health. Though, nothing takes the place of regular physicals and a healthy regimen. The Program for Executive Health at The University of Chicago Hospitals can help you with both of those. The Program offers a comprehensive medical evaluation, carefully designed to meet the needs and expectations of today's busy person: a program intended for anyone who is interested in learning about their health status in a single visit. One visit, one day, one convenient location – because the Program is tailored to fast-paced work and lifestyles there is virtually no downtime throughout the day.

**"The executive health center is very professional, highly organized and provides an opportunity to see all the medical specialties in a single day. I highly recommend this convenient, personalized and thorough program."**

**– David Fishburn, BRF Trustee**

At the conclusion of your appointment, your University of Chicago physician provides you with an in-depth profile of your current health status based upon your complete medical history and the results of the various tests and assessments that are performed throughout the day. More importantly, your University of Chicago physician provides you with a plan of action for optimizing your health and well-being.

A key advantage of the Program is early detection of disease and its preventative approach to healthcare. Over the past five years, the physicians in the Program have successfully diagnosed diseases and conditions which otherwise may have gone undetected or untreated for several years, such as multiple myeloma, hypertension, serious heart disease, diabetes, breast cancer and kidney cancer. One area of detection that has become prevalent in the Program is the early diagnosis of metabolic syndrome, a precursor to Type 2 diabetes.

**"Your health is at the forefront of our program"**

**– Shara Storandt**

In its sixth year of operation, the Program is in the process of expanding its operations to increase amenities and to accommodate more individuals. Since its inception, the Program has experienced a steady increase in business. Various organizations continue to offer the Program as an added benefit to their employees, with the aim of improving employee morale, retaining good workers, attracting good employees and improving productivity.

**"You are serious about your work and family commitments, isn't it also time to take your healthcare seriously?"**

**– Andrew M. Davis, M.D., M.P.H.**

For more information about the Program for yourself or for your organization, please contact Shara Storandt at (773) 834-9002.

# food for thought



For more information on the Brain Research Foundation, please call (773) 834-6750 or visit our website at [www.brainresearchfdn.org](http://www.brainresearchfdn.org).

## Women's Council Luncheon

On December 2, 2004, the Women's Council of the Brain Research Foundation held their annual holiday luncheon. The event took place at the lovely home of Carol Fessler, Treasurer of the Women's Council.

Members socialized over food and drinks, while perusing the beautiful jewelry of Jackie Gidwitz's trunk show. The proceeds benefited multiple sclerosis research at The University of Chicago's Brain Research Institute. Thank you to everyone for attending, and making the luncheon a success.

## Spring Seminar

The Women's Council Spring Luncheon and Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 19, 2005 at Spiaggia. Registration will begin at 10:00 a.m., followed by an informative seminar by Dr. Kurt Hecox titled, "Bringing Science to the Treatment of Children's Seizures." We hope that you will join us.

For more information contact Carol Fessler at (847) 784-9779.

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