

Minnesota Celebrates DNA Day

Q Health Connections, Concordia University and Northwestern College were proud to host one of three national DNA Day events in St. Paul for Minnesota students in conjunction with the National Institutes of Health Human Genome Research Institute. Established by Congress seven years ago, National DNA Day commemorates the successful completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 and the discovery of DNA's double helix by Watson and Crick in 1953. At the Minnesota event, there were over 100 students who came from high schools and junior highs in and around the metro area, as well as the University of Minnesota, Concordia University and Northwestern College.

The day was packed with informative speakers from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), who spoke alongside the four essay contest winners who read their essays aloud to the attendees. The winning essays discussed: DNA - Genetic Engineering Impact, Outcomes of the Human Genome Project, Recombinant DNA Technology and Human Society, and Solution for Global Warming. It was amazing to hear these dynamic and well-written essays presented by their very poised winners. There were also three different hands-on lab activities, which students could choose from that were a lot of fun and gave the students a chance to do some things they had never done in school.

One of the speakers from the NHGRI, Milton English, Ph. D., said the following about DNA Day: "It's a fun day because we get to talk with students about what we do each day in the lab, as well as discuss the ethical, legal and social implications of genome research. Students get excited when they are able to get answers to their questions directly from a scientist standing in their classroom, rather than having to rely on a textbook or watching a video." Dr. English's presentation was very interactive and allowed for attendees to win prizes by answering questions or figuring out the answers to problems that happened in real life in the NHGRI labs.

Overall the event was quite a success. Many of the adult attendees were very impressed with the knowledge and engagement of the youth participants; and the youth were excited to have adults interact with them in a more equal way. For more information about DNA Day, please go visit the NHGRI website: www.genome.gov.