

Prize catches

By Dana Cook Grossman

Who doesn't like hooking a big fish, either literally or figuratively? A lot of hard work always precedes a strike—acquiring the right equipment, scouting out the right spot, summoning up the patience to wait for the right moment. But it's all worth it when you land that silvery prize. No, I don't fish myself, but my brothers were avid fly-fishers, so I absorbed the lingo (and happily helped consume the catch!).

As it happens, DARTMOUTH MEDICINE recently reeled in some prize catches: three awards from the New England chapter of the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA).

Amos Esty, the magazine's managing editor, received a Will Solimene Award for Excellence in Medical Communication for "The Supply Side of Medicine." Amos drew on the research of DMS faculty member David Goodman to explore a key health policy question—how many doctors does the U.S. need? The judges deemed it "a fascinating and well-written article that tackles the current debate as to whether there is an impending physician shortage. The arguments were balanced, clearly laid out, and easy to follow and understand, with a great use of facts and figures."

And associate editor Jennifer Durgin received a Solimene Award for "Sound & Silence." The judges called her story "a poignant and moving personal account of raising a child born profoundly deaf. The author describes the emotional journey without ever straying toward melodrama or pity, and the text is both personal and informative without becoming saccharine."

At the chapter's annual meeting in Boston, AMWA officials not only hand out the Solimene Awards but also announce a couple of winners of a "best of the best" prize, chosen from among the Solimene recipients. This year one of those awards, the Neil Duane Award for Distinction, went to Jen for "Sound & Silence." Is it . . . er, a fluke that the Duane Award is both silvery (a lovely engraved silver box) and edible (it was filled with chocolate that Jen was kind enough to share with the office)?

Yet another prize with piscine associations recently came Amos's way. He was selected for a prestigious 10-day fellowship this past May at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole, Mass. The MBL's Logan Science Journalism Bio-

medical Fellowship is an all-expenses-paid, hands-on immersion in science. The fellows—mostly journalists from major news outlets like NPR and the *Washington Post*—work alongside MBL scientists to gain a feel for actually doing research.

Amos got to go out on a trawler to collect the sea urchins that many MBL scientists use as a model organism to study developmental biology. Then he worked in a lab that's seeking lessons for human health from the sea urchin's surprisingly complex innate immune system. "It turns out that these seafaring pincushions are far more sophisticated than they look," Amos wrote in the fellowship's blog, "and, in at least one respect, quite a bit more advanced than the humans studying them."

Whenever I read a passage like that I pause to reflect on what prize catches I have for colleagues. Amos's and Jen's writing, as well as that of assistant editor Matt Wiencke, is regularly praised by researchers and clinicians for its substance and grasp of nuance and by lay readers for its accessibility and humanity. Such writing is, just like landing "the big one," hard work: behind the accolades and awards lie hours of slogging through scientific papers, interviewing experts, and assimilating and winnowing reams of material. But thanks to the caliber of the work we get to cover, even the chase is a thrill. All of us regularly remind ourselves what a prize catch it is to be part of the DMS-DH enterprise.

Coincidentally, just as this issue was going to press, DMS recruited a prize catch. Dartmouth President Dr. Jim Yong Kim announced that as of October 1, the Medical School will have a new dean: Dr. Wiley "Chip" Souba. Currently the dean at Ohio State, he is a noted cancer surgeon and also holds a doctorate in nutritional biochemistry from Harvard and an M.B.A. from Boston University. In addition to over 300 scientific papers, he's written widely about effective leadership—and his prose is both lucid and inspiring. A 2002 article titled "Academic Medicine and the Search for Meaning and Purpose" is a particular case in point.

It sounds like I should borrow a page from Izaak Walton's famous 1653 treatise, *The Compleat Angler*, and dub our new dean "the compleat administrator." We'll have more about him in the next issue. In the meantime, see the box above. ■

For a **WEB EXTRA** with more about the new dean, plus links to the prize-winning articles and MBL blog noted below, see dartmed.dartmouth.edu/f10/we07.



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