

Keck School of Medicine students finally meet their match



Ryan Ball



Jon Nailick

'I feel like I couldn't be better prepared: USC has made me feel really confident going into residency.'

— Keck School of Medicine student Lade Maurice-Diya

By Amy E. Hamaker

The weather was gloomy, but the atmosphere was electric for Match Day 2012 at the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad, as 167 Keck School of Medicine of USC seniors learned exactly where their journeys into the wide world of medicine would begin.

At 9 a.m. on March 16, students rushed to grab their letters from the National Resident Matching Program, a private, not-for-profit corporation that provides a uniform date to learn of appointments to graduate medical education positions.

Lade Maurice-Diya's smile could be seen from across the quad as he scanned the paper that listed his first-choice match: Huntington Memorial Hospital in Pasadena.

"I'm ecstatic right now! When I interviewed there for general surgery, they seemed really accepting," he said. "And I feel like I couldn't be better prepared: USC has made me feel really confident going into residency."

On Match Day, more

Above, Jackie Eastman (right) is thrilled to find out she's going to the University of North Carolina for a residency in internal medicine. Top left, Lade Maurice-Diya (right) celebrates getting his first choice.

than 16,000 U.S. medical school seniors and 15,000 graduates of osteopathic, Canadian or foreign medical schools find out where they will be matched with one of approximately 24,000 residency positions.

Seniors across the country all open their envelopes at the same time in a coordinated moment. Overall, 16,527 U.S. seniors participated in this year's match, 32 fewer than in 2011.

Matches for class of 2012 Keck School students were outstanding, said Donna D. Elliott, associate dean of student affairs. According to Elliott, the 167 Keck School matches included 13 in the early military, urology and ophthalmology matches, as well as, for the first time ever, two students in the Canadian match.

"This is a very special day for all of us, but especially for me," Carmen A. Puliafito,

Keck School dean, told the students. "Yours is the first class for which I was dean for all four years, and the match results for this class are the best ever."

Puliafito gave much credit to Elliott and to the faculty advisors, "who mentored and coached you through this very challenging and ever more competitive matching process."

Henri Ford, vice dean of

See **MATCH DAY**, page 2

Keck physicians staff LA Marathon medical team

By Alison Trinidad

With sunshine, cool breezes and clear skies, March 18 was a beautiful day to run a marathon in Los Angeles. And volunteers from the Keck Medical Center of USC, the official medical team for the 2012 Honda LA Marathon, were on hand to oversee the care and treatment of the race's 21,500 runners from start to finish.

Physicians and nurses from the Keck Medical Center, supported by students and faculty from the Keck School of Medicine of USC and other medical volunteers, provided on-the-spot care at mobile medical tents along the 26.2-mile course, at the finish line, post-finish area and family reunion area.

In addition to the 10 medical stations along the course, which began at Dodger Stadium and ended near the Santa Monica Pier, the medical team had access to a mobile hospital equipped to perform emergency surgery. Although surgery was not necessary, runners suffering from dehydration, hypothermia and muscle cramping were treated to liquids, blankets and massages. More than 175 runners were treated by the medical team, the core of which was led by Sean Henderson, chairman of the Keck School Department of Emergency Medicine, and emergency



Alison Trinidad

USC orthopaedics resident Allyson Estess (center) and other volunteers assist a runner out of the medical tent.

See **MARATHON**, page 3

Study reveals clues in neurodegenerative diseases

By Leslie Ridgeway

Keck School of Medicine and USC School of Pharmacy scientists have revealed a new clue about the structure of proteins involved in type 2 diabetes that could eventually lead to the design of a drug to treat neurodegenerative diseases.

Using a new approach to view structures generated in disease called fibrils, the researchers were able to explain the overall rope-like structure of the fibrils formed by proteins in type 2 diabetes, as well as the mechanism by which the structures form. This is important information for researchers working to develop therapies to attack type 2 diabetes and other neurodegenerative diseases including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and Huntington's disease.

"If we can understand what makes these proteins go bad and what they look like, we can develop drugs to treat type 2 diabetes and other related diseases," said Ralf Langen, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology in the Keck



Leslie Ridgeway

The study was led by Ian Haworth (left), associate professor in the USC School of Pharmacy, and Ralf Langen, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the Keck School.

See **FIBRILS**, page 2

Rubicon protein key regulator of immune system, study shows

By Alison Trinidad

A global team of microbiologists led by the Keck School of Medicine of USC has identified a critical protein in the fight against bacterial and fungal infections like tuberculosis and ringworm, laying the groundwork for scientists to develop target-specific drugs that have fewer side effects.

“We have found a single protein that controls three major immune processes, but each of those processes are functionally and genetically separable,” said Jae Jung, professor and chairman of the Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology at the Keck School. “That means if we block one process, the protein is still able to mediate the other two. This is important for drug makers. Using small molecules, we may be able to modulate specific interactions and minimize side effects.”

Jung, who holds the Fletcher Jones Foundation Chair of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology, is the senior author of a pair of studies detailing

the discovery in the March 15, 2012, issue of the *Cell* sister journal, *Cell Host & Microbe*.

Discovered in 2009, the protein Rubicon is known to regulate autophagy, the process in which a cell breaks down unwanted or damaged products.

Perhaps the most well-known mechanism of autophagy involves the formation of a membrane around a target in the cell, separating it from the rest of the cell before the contents of the vesicle decompose. In the current study, Jung and colleagues observed that Rubicon also activates phagocytosis, the process in which special white blood cells called phagocytes ingest harmful particles like bacteria and dying cells.

It appears that in the presence of bacteria, Rubicon binds to specific enzymes that alert the phagocytes to jump into action. The researchers found that the protein acts in the opposite way in fungal infections by acting like a

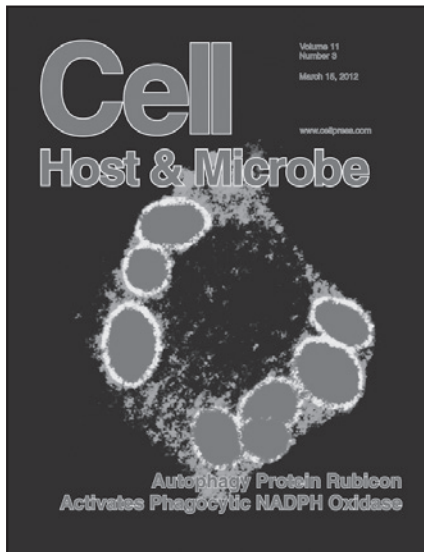
physiological brake to the body’s natural antifungal immune response.

“Immunology is so dynamic,” Jung said. “It is surprising that the ‘autophagy protein’ controls two other processes.”

Although the new information may play a key role in drug development, how and why Rubicon acts the way it does are yet to be determined, Jung said.

Other USC co-authors include Chul-Su Yang, Jong-Soo Lee and Mary Rodgers, postdoctoral fellows at the Keck School; students Hee Jin Kim and Chan-Ki Min; research assistant June-Yong Lee; Ambrose Jong, associate professor of pediatrics; Ebrahim Zandi, associate professor of molecular microbiology and immunology; and Chengyu Liang, assistant professor of molecular microbiology and immunology.

The research was a collaboration with the College of Veterinary Medicine of Chungnam National University in Korea, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Boston University School of Medicine, KAIST Institute for the Biocentury of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology in Korea, and Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. It was supported with funds from the National Research Foundation of Korea, Hastings Foundation and The Fletcher Jones Foundation.



‘We have found a single protein that controls three major immune processes.’
—Jae Jung, professor and chairman of the Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology at the Keck School

FIBRILS: Structures in proteins linked to diabetes and neurodegenerative diseases

Continued from Page 1

School and corresponding author on the study. Langen’s research group collected the key data on the fibrils using an electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) technique that takes advantage of “spin labels” placed in key places on the protein. These results were then used to generate the fibril structures using computational methods.

Ian Haworth, associate professor in

the USC School of Pharmacy and the lead researcher in the computational work, added “It’s a great example of using basic science methodology to address health-related problems and promote translational research.”

The research, “Fibril Structure of Human Islet Amyloid Polypeptide,” was published online ahead of print as a Paper of the Week in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*.

The fibrils are contained in proteins that change shape, clump together and deposit in affected areas of the body in patients suffering from type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, and Huntington’s disease.

To get a higher resolution view of the fibrils formed in type 2 diabetes, the researchers developed an approach combining site directed spin labeling with continuous wave and pulsed EPR

as well as computational refinement.

Type 2 diabetes, also known as adult-onset diabetes, is the most common form of diabetes. Patients with this chronic condition do not produce enough insulin, or certain cells do not respond to insulin (also known as “insulin resistance”). The result is high levels of glucose in the blood. The disease can be attributed to family history and genes, but patients also may be overweight.

MATCH DAY: Medical students savor ‘outstanding’ matches that mark next phase of training

Continued from Page 1

medical education, said, “I think we have a group of students who are exceptionally bright, made a lot of wise decisions and scored very well, and the advice that they received

from the faculty was very much on point. As a whole, the Keck School is doing a very good job at preparing its students for the residency match.”

This year, 117 students will

complete all or part of their training in California; of those, 53 students will be at Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center.

Braden Barnett, who matched in internal medicine,

is one of the 53. “I’ve had great experiences with all the people at L.A. County so far—the residents, the faculty, the patients,” he said. “I want to go back for more.”

Fifty-three students will travel outside of California for some or all of their training. Eighteen other states were represented in this year’s match, with New York receiving the highest number of Keck students for the third year in a row.

Student Jackie Eastman is excited to leave for the University of North Carolina for a residency in internal medicine. “It’s a great place to live, and UNC has a great program,” she said. “My fiancé really wants to move there, and so this is the perfect match.”

The most popular specialty was internal medicine, with an all-time record high of 34 Keck students being matched. This was followed by general surgery and emergency medicine (each with 15 students); OB-GYN and pediatrics (each with 12 students); and ortho-



Braden Barnett raises his glass to staying at the Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center.

pedics (with 10 students).

Shemi Jalil is excited about her residency at LAC + USC in internal medicine. “I love it because it encompasses every disease, and I’m still excited to learn more about every organ system,” she says. “I’ve been here at USC for many years, and I’m so excited to continue here because of all the support given to students.”

Full match lists are available at the Office of Student Affairs.

The Weekly

Next Issue: March 30

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Through new website, CTSI offers research funding, support to USC faculty

By Nasim M. Thompson

The Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI), a USC-based research institute that offers faculty members across the university funding, education and resources to help advance their research from discovery to practical health applications, has launched a new website to bolster support for researchers.

The site, at www.sc-ctsi.org, is designed to offer easy access to the resources and advice that investigators need most and features a news section and a calendar of events and deadlines.

Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, called the CTSI “a critical force helping accelerate USC discoveries through the research pipeline and into the community.”

To help fill funding gaps, CTSI

offers faculty over \$1 million per year in funding opportunities for career development, academic community-partnered research, development of novel methods or technologies, team-building activities and pilot clinical/translational research.

For investigators seeking additional training, the institute offers two mentored training programs—one for clinically trained faculty and one for pre-doctoral students. The institute also helps investigators obtain crucial regulatory approvals and guides them as they anticipate and respond to ethical issues.

CTSI provides biostatistics and bioinformatics consultations to investigators during study design and helps them analyze their data. In addition, the institute supports data capture and data management for

research studies through a secure Web application called REDCap.

Tom Buchanan, director of CTSI, said, “We know that research is a complex arena to navigate, so we aim to equip investigators with practical resources that can help them take their projects to the next level.”

Some of these practical resources include helping pre-clinical researchers assess the feasibility of their study concept and working with them to develop and manage customized project plans.

When pre-clinical discoveries move to human application, CTSI helps clinical researchers with feasibility and design consultations and preliminary budget development, as well as providing resources such as space and experienced research staff at the Clinical Trials Units on the USC Health Sciences Campus

and at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

CTSI also assists with the last stage of translational research—translation into clinical and community settings. It offers community-engaged research trainings and individualized consultations, and helps USC faculty connect with community partners through program evaluation and dissemination of best practices.

In addition to matching investigators to community partners, CTSI fosters research team-building efforts through topic-focused networking sessions and theme-focused “speed dating” to match investigators with specific clinical challenges to those with technological solutions.

The institute also plans to host symposia and programs to help investigators build effective and sustainable research teams.

Stem cell clinical trial seeks ‘holy grail’ of growing new blood vessels to save limbs

By Ryan Ball

The big toe on Peggy Levin’s right foot is dying. What’s worse is the problem could spread and she could lose her entire leg.

Levin suffers from peripheral arterial occlusive disease and has no circulation in the tiny blood vessels in her toe. Having tried a number of other treatments, she has come to the Keck Medical Center of USC to participate in the testing of a new stem cell therapy.

“This is kind of my last-ditch effort to save my toe,” Levin said of the phase III clinical trial sponsored by Harvest Technologies Corp. The treatment involves harvesting Levin’s bone marrow from her pelvic bones,

spinning them in a centrifuge to concentrate her own stem cells, and then delivering them to the affected area with a series of 40 injections in the leg and foot.

“This is the first thing we’ve done at USC with stem cells in vascular diseases,” said Karen Woo, assistant professor of clinical surgery, who is treating Levin. “Growing new blood vessels is like the holy grail.”

Woo said that if the therapy is successful, it could be applied to a variety of other disciplines such as trauma in which blood vessels are damaged and plastic surgery involving tissue grafts that require blood supply.

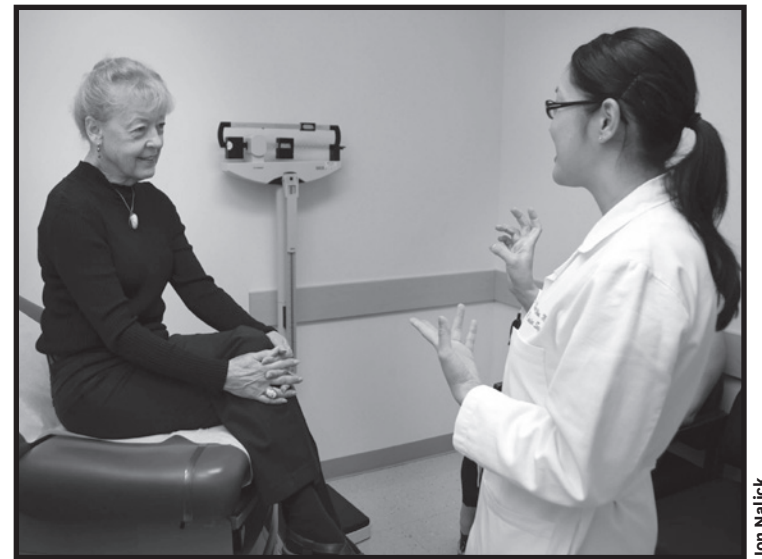
The traditional treatment for someone like Levin is

to do a bypass. A very long incision would be made along the entire length of the leg, and one of her veins would be removed and used to create a bypass around the diseased portion of the artery.

More recently, surgeons have been employing an endovascular method where they go in with catheters, wires, balloons and stents to try to open up narrow or blocked areas. For some patients, like Levin, these treatments are either not an option or are ineffective.

Levin is the first patient to enroll in the stem cell trial at USC. Enrollment began in December 2011 and Woo said they plan to have a total of 10 patients participating.

Two-thirds of the patients,



Jon Natlick

Keck Medical Center patient Peggy Levin (left) discusses her treatment with Karen Woo, assistant professor of clinical surgery. Levin is participating in a clinical trial that aims to save her toe, which has been progressively losing circulation.

chosen at random, will receive the stem cell therapy, and one-third will receive a placebo. Harvest hopes to have 200 people enrolled across the country. There are six other participating sites, but USC is the only one in the western United States.

“We are getting a lot of requests from people all over because nobody wants to lose their leg,” said Woo. “This study is targeted to people who have no other surgical or endovascular options.”

At the time of this reporting, Levin has had a one-week check up, meaning it’s too

soon to tell if the treatment has been beneficial. It may take anywhere from six to eight weeks before any improvement becomes apparent.

Levin and the other patients enrolled will be followed for two years.

Levin has mixed feelings about being, as she put it, a guinea pig, but has been impressed with the quality of care she has received at USC and is hopeful of a good outcome. “I think it’s exciting that anyone thinks about doing things like this to help people, and I believe it’s going to work,” she said.

MARATHON: Medical team treats more than 175 runners

Continued from Page 1

medicine resident doctors Clare Roepke and Jamie Eng. Students from the USC Primary Care Physician Assistant Program also volunteered their time. Glenn Ault, associate dean of the Keck School, served as the marathon’s medical commissioner, managing the hundreds of medical personnel along the route and serving as the marathon’s medical spokesman to news media.

“It was a great honor for Keck to partner with the LA Marathon,” Ault said. “The exposure this event provided for our medical enterprise was invaluable. It was incredible to see the level of commitment from all of our volunteers to assist Los Angeles in this great event.”

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito shepherded the first-time partnership with the marathon, through which Keck provided comprehensive medical services on a pro bono basis for the benefit of the entire Los Angeles community.

“Our marathon has world-class partners, and we are thrilled to add Keck to that group,” said Nick Curl, COO of the LA Marathon, LLC. “In the end, it’s the runners and people of Los Angeles who benefit the most.”

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A March 20 article in the *Los Angeles Times* quoted **Michael Goran**, who holds the Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Endowed Chair in Childhood Obesity and Diabetes and is professor of preventive medicine, physiology & biophysics, and pediatrics at the Keck School, about health risks associated with the consumption of high-fructose corn syrup. Goran also was quoted by the *Post-Bulletin*.

A March 19 story in *The Washington Post* quoted **Katherine Sullivan**, associate professor of clinical physical therapy at the Ostrow School, and **Amytis Towfighi**, assistant professor of clinical neurology at the Keck School, about using exercise to promote stroke recovery.

A March 18 broadcast on Fox News affiliate KTTV-TV interviewed **David Agus**, professor of medicine at the Keck School, about his book *The End of Illness*.

A March 16 report in the *Los Angeles Times* quoted **Glenn Ault**, associate dean for clinical administration at the Keck School, about how marathon runners can physically prepare for a race. Ault, medical commissioner for the 2012 Honda LA Marathon, also was quoted by the *Santa Monica Daily Press*, Patch.com and Runners Web.

A March 16 article in the *Visalia Times-Delta* quoted **Inderbir Gill**, professor and chair of the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Department of Urology at the Keck School, about robotic surgery.

A March 14 episode of “All Things Considered” on NPR featured an interview with **Juan Felix**, associate professor of clinical pathology, obstetrics and gynecology at the Keck School, about new guidelines for the Pap smear test. Felix chairs the medical advisory panel of the National Cervical Cancer Coalition.

Calendar of Events

This Calendar of Events is also online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar for the Health Sciences Campus community

Saturday, Mar. 24

7:30 a.m. HemOnc Today Breast Cancer Review and Perspective. Various speakers, including Debu Tripathy, USC. Hilton San Diego Bayfront. For registration and more information: <http://www.HemOncTodayBreastCancer.com/>

Tuesday, Mar. 27

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Evidence-Based Treatment and Special Populations," James Alexander, Univ. of Utah. CSC 250. Info: (323) 442-4065

Wednesday, Mar. 28

8:30 a.m. Women in Management Seminar. "Women and Hormones: Managing the Effects in the Workplace," Kathryn Randel, USC. Attendees are welcome to bring their own breakfast. CHP 102. Info: (323) 442-1865

Thursday, Mar. 29

Noon. Cellular Homeostasis Lecture Series. "Novel Cell Culture Surfaces for Shaping and Sensing Cellular Phenotype," Alexander Revzin, UC Davis. MCH 156. Info: (323) 442-3109

2:30 p.m. 3rd Annual Mini Medical School: "A Day in the Life of your Medical School," features Trojan Family reception, Dean's address, faculty presentations, Q&A with students and campus tour. KAM Mayer Auditorium. To RSVP and more info: (323) 442-1530

Friday, Mar. 30

Noon. Medicine Grand Rounds. "Polypharmacy in the Geriatric Population," Christina Stiles, USC. IPT Conference Room B. Info: (323) 226-7556

Monday, Apr. 2

Noon. Medicine Grand Rounds. "Common Variable Immuno Deficiency (CVID)," Behzad Yashar, USC. IPT Conference Room B. Info: (323) 226-7556

Tuesday, Apr. 3

Noon. Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "The Genetics of Addiction," Laura Bierut, Washington University in St. Louis. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

12:30 p.m. USC Center for Excellence in Teaching Active Learning Workshop. Lunch will be provided. UPC: DML 240. To RSVP, visit <http://cet.usc.edu/rsvp/> Info: (213) 740-3959

Friday, Apr. 13

Noon. Department of Family Medicine. "Addressing Mental Health Needs within Primary Care," various speakers. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-1678

Sunday, Apr. 29

3 p.m. Orange County Reception: Keck School Dean Puliafito hosts the OC Trojan Family and introduces the newly appointed director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, Dr. Stephen Gruber. Balboa Bay Club, 1221 West Coast Highway, Newport Beach, CA. To RSVP: keck.usc.edu/balboabayclub Info: (323) 442-1767

Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week's issue—although three weeks' advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to *The Weekly*, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2832, or email to ebalauw@usc.edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number for information.

Rodney Peete headlines occupational science autism symposium

By Mike McNulty

Former USC and National Football League quarterback Rodney Peete described what he called his family's "never day" in 2000, the day when his son, Rodney Jackson "R.J." Peete officially was diagnosed with autism.

Their physician listed the "never's" that are erroneously assumed to accompany the autism diagnosis: never going to college, never getting married and never saying "I love you."

Peete was guest speaker when more than 300 faculty members, students, alumni and community partners gathered at the Ronald Tutor Campus Center on March 9 for the 23rd Occupational Science Symposium.

Hosted by the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC, the "Autism in Everyday Life: Interdisciplinary Research Perspectives at USC" symposium featured speakers focused on innovative research, clinical practices



Rodney Peete

or personal perspectives on autism and its impact on everyday life experiences.

Since retiring from playing football, Peete has become an ardent advocate for autism awareness, education and family support largely through the work of his nonprofit HollyRod Foundation, which he co-founded with his wife, actress Holly Robinson Peete. In 2010 he released his first book, *Not My Boy! A Father, a Son, and One Family's Journey with Autism*, which chronicles his family's experience raising a child with autism.

Peete described how R.J.'s developmental skills

began to stall at age two and a half. While wife Robinson Peete grew concerned, Peete recalled his own denial and stubbornness to seek professional help, driven in part by his own competitive personality and athletics background.

Peete also recounted the day when he put aside his own pride and decided to pursue as much professional assistance and education as possible to help his son.

"From that moment on, I started to see the world through R.J.'s eyes, not mine," he said. With years of direct clinical intervention—including occupational therapy—Peete reported that R.J., now 14 years old, has made significant progress in his social, communicative and functional skills. R.J. now attends a mainstream school, plays the piano, and most important to his parents, says, "I love you."

For more information about the symposium and the 2012 event speakers, visit <http://ot.usc.edu/research/symposium>.

USC joins World Health Day on April 7 at Los Angeles Expo Center

World Health Day LA is kicking off "Walk to London 2012," the United States Olympians Association's ceremonial walk to raise awareness of the London Olympics Games and to draw attention to physical fitness, on April 7 in Los Angeles.

This year, World Health Day LA is teaming up with Olympians, volunteers, community members and local businesses to highlight fitness and health in L.A.

In addition to free health screenings, entertainment and Olympics-themed sports activities, locals will get to join Olympians for a ceremonial walk around the L.A. Memorial Coliseum.

"This event is a chance to bring neighborhoods together in the name of health," said Ivette Flores Guintu, program manager for the USC Institute for Global Health. "In this economy, free events like World Health Day LA are the perfect way to spend a Saturday with family and friends. You get to learn something and have fun doing it."

World Health Day LA is a student-run joint event of USC, UCLA and Western University of Health Sciences.

Activities on April 7 at the Los Angeles Expo Center's Soboroff Sports Field will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and include:

- Olympics-style games for kids, hosted by local sports businesses and USC athletes;
- Free health education and screenings for cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, bone and dental care;
- Internationally themed lo-

cal entertainment groups; and

- Healthy food trucks.

At 12:15 p.m., the "Walk to London 2012" walk around the Coliseum with Olympians will begin with a show by the USC Trojan Marching Band. Afterward, Olympians will present participating kids with medals at an awards ceremony.

For more information, to register or to volunteer, visit www.worldhealthdayla.org.

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Visit the USC Web: <http://emergency.usc.edu> This page will be activated in case of an emergency. Backup Web servers on the East Coast will function if the USC servers are incapacitated.