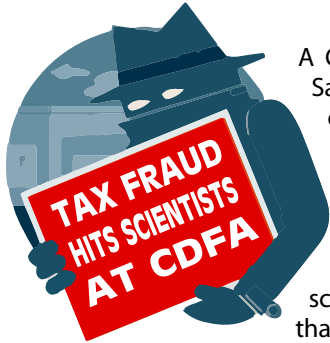


CAPSule

E-Mail CAPS at: caps@capsscientists.org

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April 2016, Issue #16-04



A CAPS Local Rep working at the CDFA in Sacramento contacted CAPS in mid-April with a chilling story and a call for help. She reported that six scientists at the facility—herself included—had their tax returns bounced back by the IRS because the returns had **already been filed** by someone using their social security number. Every one of the state scientists received a letter from the IRS stating that their returns had been filed on December 31, 2015. Most or all were expecting a tax **refund**.

The group notified their local management of this alarming news. They noted the conspicuous coincidence that ALL of them suffered the very same fraud. As a result, departmental network personnel scanned their computers for viruses the first week of April. No apparent leaks were found and since then no other actions had been taken by the department at the time of printing. Suspecting that this was a coordinated theft of personal information, with a common denominator—that they ALL work for CDFA in the same work unit—they contacted CAPS. They asked CAPS to pursue a more urgent investigation into this unexpected and unwelcome incursion into their lives.

CAPS immediately requested that CDFA make this investigation a priority at the highest level, to identify the potential breach and to assist employees to recover from any damage that resulted. This should include polling other employees to determine how widespread the breach may be. It may include notifying tax and law enforcement authorities about the identity theft and putting safeguards in place to prevent further incursions.

There is no proof yet that the identity thieves accessed the state's personnel records. However, the fact that all those adversely affected work together, and that the identity thieves filed fraudulent returns on each of their behalves on the same date, suggests a compelling coincidence that deserves urgent and close examination of the department's personnel records.

CAPS will continue to press this investigation. Stories of illegal hacking into public databases abound. State scientists and all public employees should expect to have state-of-the-art protections in place to ensure that their personal lives aren't adversely affected by unscrupulous data hackers. Unfortunately, for several state scientists at CDFA, such protections may not have been adequate to prevent their exposure to tax fraud.

If YOU have experienced tax fraud, or any identity theft that you believe may have resulted from access to your employer's personnel records, we want to hear about it. Please send us the details. All such information is confidential: caps@capsscientists.org.

CDPH PHAME AWARDS

Several Public Health Scientists celebrated their 15 minutes of "PHAME" at an annual awards ceremony on April 7 at the California Department of Public Health. PHAME stands for Public Health Acknowledging My Efforts and seeks to recognize employees for their outstanding efforts.



Yuriy Shchepin and Kuldeep Dhillon

Among those honored was CDPH's San Bernardino Responders Team which assisted County workers in the wake of the December 2, 2015 terrorist attack that targeted the County health department, killing 14 staff and injuring 21 others. CDPH staff spent weeks assisting the county health department with its environmental health workload. This effort allowed the local health workers to grieve without a disruption in service to the community. The team was led by manager (and CAPS member) Kelvin Yamada.

Individuals were also recognized in the Innovation and Collaboration categories. CAPS member Kuldeep Dhillon was honored for his "significant improvements, outstanding research and tireless efforts in addressing issues to implement new methodologies to detect novel genetic disorders into our genetic disease screening programs." CAPS member Yuriy Shchepin received an award for the "plan, design, and implementation of confirmatory tests at Genetic Disease Laboratory Branch."

CAPS member Elizabeth Andersen-Rodgers was also recognized for her work on the 2016 "Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community" survey instrument and methodology which evaluates the marketing of alcohol, tobacco and food products in stores. Other winners included the CDPH Get Healthy Team, the Measles Outbreak Response Team and the Enterovirus D68 Outbreak Response Team, all featuring dedicated state scientists and CAPS members.

Congratulations to all these CAPS members for their outstanding public service!

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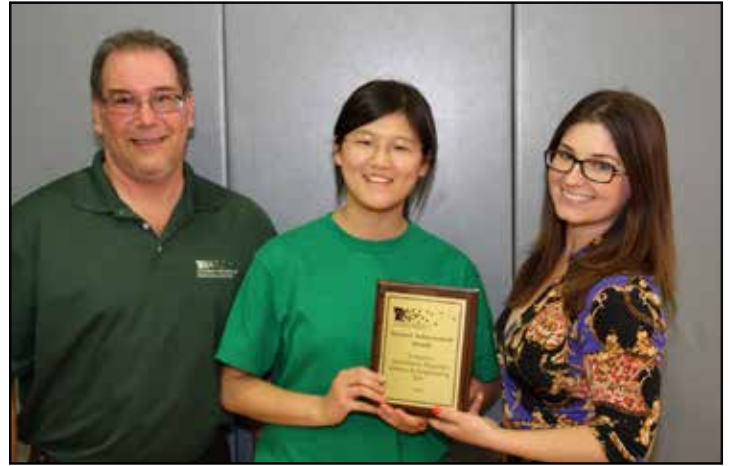
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CAPS AT THE SYNOPSIS SACRAMENTO REGIONAL STEM FAIR



CAPS members join Senator Dr. Richard Pan to deliberate the top scoring projects of the Synopsis Sacramento Regional STEM Fair.



CAPS member and NorCal STEM Education Foundation President David Miller poses with CAPS Director Brittany Sheahan and the CAPS Science Achievement Award winner Amy Liu at the Fair Awards Ceremony.



CAPS Directors Kelley Aubushon and Brittany Sheahan show students the exciting world that is science and represent CAPS at the College and Career Expo, sponsored by the U.S. Army.



CAPS Director Valerie Chenoweth-Brown receives CAPS member Abdul Hakim's scoring sheet.



WOMEN OF THE YEAR. It didn't take long for CAPS Director (and DTSC ES) Brittany Sheahan (pictured at left) to make her mark in San Diego, one year after her transfer from Sacramento. Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez recognized Brittany as one of several females selected as the 80th Assembly District's 2016 Women of the Year. Gonzalez received an unprecedented number of nominations this year, so making the list of finalists was truly an honor. Brittany attributes her nomination to her active participation as a STEAM (STEM +Arts) student mentor and CAPS activist.



By *Patty Uelez, President*

Serving as a CAPS Officer, Director or Local Rep isn't exactly like volunteering at the local food bank, but it's still very important service to others. When I was first elected to the CAPS Board of Directors long ago, I was urged to run by a colleague. I never imagined I would serve so long. I am sometimes asked why I continue to serve CAPS with the challenges and controversies that come with it.

Service to CAPS isn't for the *notoriety* or any *rewards* it may bring. Whatever recognition comes with being a CAPS leader carries with it an obligation to explain the complexity of how things get done. When it comes to improving the salary and benefits of state scientists, that isn't easy. Increasing compensation for state employees is perhaps the single hardest thing to do because labor costs are the state's single biggest obligation, both for active and retired state employees. Explaining the process is equally challenging because there are always so many variables.

It takes constant care and attention—**time**—to ensure that the employment and professional needs of state scientists get addressed properly. Some of my CAPS time is covered by the state, usually when it involves direct meetings with state officials. But, over the years, I have devoted untold hours of my personal time and vacation and annual leave to conduct CAPS business. I'm fortunate that I can balance my very busy work schedule with my obligations to CAPS, something not everyone can do.

The common denominator for most who serve CAPS is the heart of a servant. Perhaps it's an extension of our drive as scientists to serve the public as protectors of public health and the environment. However it's manifested, the willingness to serve CAPS is more about what you can **give**, not what you **get**.

This is vitally important work. It requires informed decisions by state scientist volunteers who are willing to put the time in, learn the ropes and make critical decisions. That includes

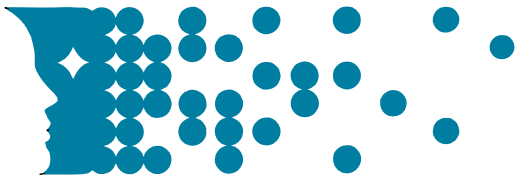
retaining the experts to help develop strategy then carry it out. Some would say that CAPS is too small to make a difference, that perhaps we should become part of a larger more homogenous organization with more clout. I disagree.

We had that "big union" model before CAPS was formed. The professional interests and needs of state scientists were lost in the crowd, and the organization was dominated by other more numerous and generally lower paid occupational groups. The formation and election of CAPS by state scientists in the mid-1980s was a fundamental exercise of democracy. Since then, we have set our own priorities, established our own dues and fees level based on need, and expended resources in order to further our own agenda, and no one else's. That decision—to form our own union—has produced important results over the years, including formula-based health benefit contributions, numerous court victories that other unions didn't pursue, and a long-standing public relations program that supports science and science-based education, among many other things.

There are important goals we've yet to accomplish, starting with pay equity for one and all. Keep in mind that's a goal **we** set, something we've already **accomplished** for most state scientific supervisors, and a **tangible, realistic target for the rest of us**. There's always a debate on how best to get there, but the vehicle is CAPS. I'm proud of the time I have spent as your servant, and I will continue to devote my best efforts on your behalf.

Fortunately, we have a great group of elected CAPS leaders, and an outstanding staff. There are limitations on what we can accomplish, and those are the same ones that stymie the efforts of many others: fiscal limitations and policy differences. We must continue to stay focused and work together for common goals. Getting the recent MOU in place was a good start, even with its obvious drawbacks. But it is a step in the right direction, and I appreciate the widespread support for getting it ratified. It serves as a good foundation for full salary equity in 2018, before Governor Brown leaves office.

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ENCAPSULATIONS



SPB DENIES HEARING ON SENIOR ES APPEAL.

After months of review, the State Personnel Board finally responded to CAPS' request for hearing on its Merit Issue Complaint concerning the reporting relationship of a Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialists) at CDFW. The SPB denied the hearing, claiming that **"...the SPB continues to believe that an exercise of its jurisdiction over the reporting relationship between the two class specifications does not appear justified. The reporting or work direction requirements are frequently left to the judgment and province of the appointing authority. If revisions are required to the class specifications, that process should be initiated with CalHR."** CAPS legal staff is reviewing this reply, which can be viewed on the CAPS webpage. This is the final step of the administrative appeal process. CAPS will be considering an appeal to the California Superior Court on a Writ of Mandate in order to force the SPB to conduct a formal hearing to decide the CAPS appeal on its merits.



ZIKA FEARS GET ATTENTION.

Fear of the Zika virus heading north is one of the recent public health challenges facing California and other states. It's been front page news in newspapers across the country of late, and the lead topic of many news broadcasts. The professionals responsible for coordinating California's response are at the Vector Borne Disease Section of the Infectious Disease Branch of CDPH. That Section employs many Public Health Biologists represented by CAPS. California has an excellent public safety net devoted to mosquito control and containment of the diseases they spread, including Zika. This includes state, federal and local agencies. They are already devoting a significant amount of time preparing for and preventing the spread of this virus. CAPS was recently in touch with the Infectious Disease branch to discuss Zika preparations. Information about the Zika virus and prevention can be found on the CDPH web page: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/>.