

STATEMENT FROM OUR STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Dear GSBS Community,

Welcome to the official relaunch of our GSBS Community Outreach newsletter. The original publication, titled “Seeds”, was started in 1989 by GSBS alumni, Amy Ridall, PhD and Kendra Woods, PhD. A special thank you to our very own Kate Cho, who had the inspired idea to bring this back. This new iteration, “Curious Minds”, is a true labor of love and will be released bi-annually. In this issue and in those to come, we hope to share all the work we do each year, within and outside the limits of the Texas Medical Center. Moreover, we hope to demonstrate the kind of impact that we, as a scientific community, can have on the world around us.

With this 2023-2024 academic year coming to a close, I want to take this opportunity to reflect back on a wonderful year for Outreach. From hosting our annual Science Night, to participating in events with MD Anderson and local schools, to judging a local science fair, we have found multiple avenues to bring science to our community. And with our Summer Biomedical Academy (SBA) and other upcoming summer events, we still have even more to look forward to!

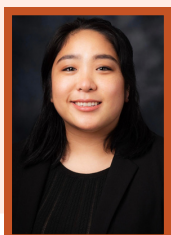
As we all continue to find our footing again amidst many changes since the COVID-19 pandemic, my hope for us this past year was to grow as a student community and to expand and rebuild our connections around the Houston area. It is my great pleasure to say I truly believe we accomplished this and will continue to do so, coming out of this year as a stronger community.

Of course, none of what we do is remotely possible without the efforts of many incredible people, each of whom share a mutual passion for science and education and a belief that access to both can change lives, especially for young people. To my fellow student leaders across all GSBS student organizations and programs, our graduate student coordinators and volunteers, administrators, and faculty advisor, Keri Schadler, PhD – your support, time, and dedication are the fuel that drive Outreach. My gratitude knows no bounds. Another goal of this newsletter and of our recent Outreach socials is to express that gratitude, and I hope you feel even a fraction of how celebrated and appreciated you are.

Outreach is a way to engage with, better understand, and contribute to our communities. When I moved to Houston and joined the GSBS, I only hoped to find such opportunities – and I found it here. It has been an awesome privilege to lead and to work alongside you all. I am inspired by your fervor for science and community. While we do not know who our new student leaders for the coming year will be quite yet, I am certain that we will only build upon this momentum, and I cannot wait to see to what heights we take Outreach next. And in the spirit of continued growth, I extend an invitation to you all to consider volunteering with us this summer at SBA and in the new academic year or, with this newsletter, to just follow along.

Until next time,

Gema Sunga
GSBS Community Outreach President, 2023-2024



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Co-Editors: Kate Cho, Gemalene Sunga, Amanda Warner

A YEAR IN REVIEW

2023-2024

SEPT 2023
Outreach
Back-to-School
Meeting

OCT 2023

Houston ArBOOretum
Halloween Event

MD Anderson Halloween
Spooktacular

DEC 2023

MD Anderson
Breakfast with Santa

Outreach
End-of-Year Winter
Social

JAN 2024

Outreach
Science Night

MAR 2024

Mark Twain Elementary
STEAM Night

APR 2024

Berean Academy
Science Fair

This 2023-2024 academic year began with the coming together of our GSBS Community Outreach members. We enjoyed the warmth of familiar faces, introduced our new officers, and welcomed new members. We kicked off the year with hopeful discussions about events for the coming year. Looking back now, the year turned out even more wonderfully than we could have imagined!



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Every October, the Houston Arboretum hosts ArBOOretum, with many fun fall activities for local families. GSBS Outreach volunteers decorated Houston's only Trick-or-Treat Nature Trail and helped families make their way down the path. It was such a joy for us to see the kids in their costumes, excited about trick-or-treating. This event is a wonderful opportunity for us to get out of the lab and meet our community in a different environment. This event also coincided with a solar eclipse! What a way to usher in the fall!



We closed out the Halloween season with the Spooktacular, an event hosted by MD Anderson at The Galleria. We came dressed in our Halloween best, ready to show young kids how fun and easy science can be. They made slime and chromatography flowers and played with smokey dry ice bubbles. Seeing everyone excited and involved in our science activities was a real treat.

(This collaboration with MD Anderson also led to us making more slime with kids at their Breakfast with Santa holiday event in December!)

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To close out 2023, we invited all GSBS Outreach folks to share in holiday cheer. Together, we had a cozy night off, decorating gingerbread houses, enjoying hot chocolate, and making holiday cards for our dearest family and friends, as well as for our pediatric friends at MD Anderson.

It was so wonderful to celebrate our GSBS Outreach community and the end of 2023 together at this special time of year!



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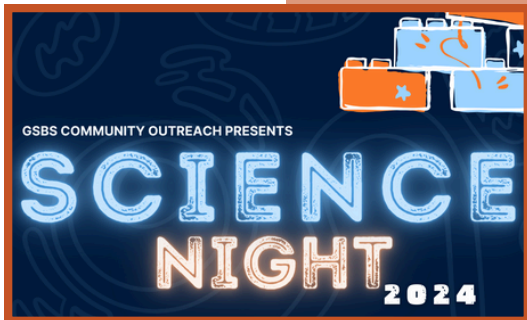
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Our biggest event of the year was a success! With the help of GSBS programs and student organizations, we hosted over 250 families for Science Night this year. Young students got to engage in various science activities, including tumor surgery (Cancer Biology), DNA bracelet-making (Genetics & Epigenetics), bench-to-bedside drug discovery (Therapeutics & Pharmacology), image-guided surgery (Medical Physics), and many more. In sharing fun and cool science, we hope to help inspire the next generation of scientists.



A very special thank you to each program and student group that makes this event possible every year. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!



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Science Night is an incredible opportunity for us to see and be seen by our local community. We are happy to share that we have had a number of schools and organizations reach out to us this year to work together.

This March, we were invited to participate in Mark Twain Elementary School's Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) night. Our volunteers showed students how to swab their cheeks and stain cells, view stained skin tissue under a microscope, generate electrostatic charge using a Van de Graaff machine, among other activities. Everyone had a great time, and we look forward to doing more work with local schools in the future!

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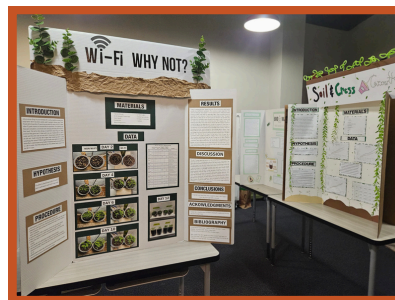
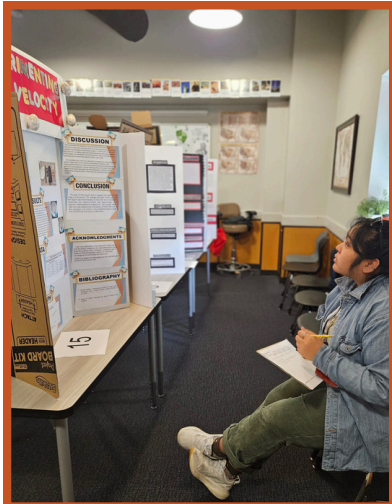
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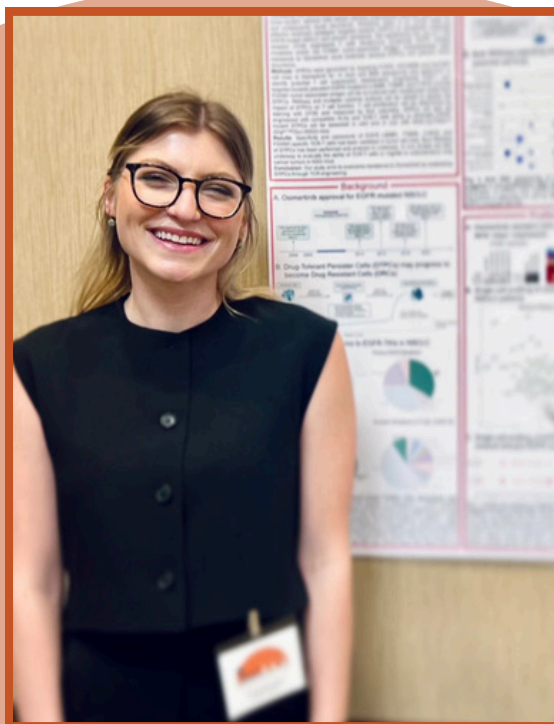
We were invited by GSBS alum, Patty Hewitt, PhD, to judge science fair posters at the Berean Christian Academy in Katy, TX. Her 7th and 8th grade students designed and performed their own experiments, with projects spanning a range of subjects in either biological or material sciences.

Armed with pencils and a thorough rubric to guide us, we diligently made our way through 23 different posters. The posters showcased the tremendous amount of effort these students poured into their projects. We had a blast seeing their work and giving them feedback to help them think more critically about science.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



EMILY BONTEKOE

Emily is a rising 4th year PhD student in Immunology and a first-time Outreach coordinator.

Why did you join Outreach?

I joined Outreach because I saw it as a wonderful opportunity to engage with my community, as well as connect and interact with fellow graduate students. I wanted to contribute to the work Outreach does in fostering a supportive community dedicated to inspiring and exciting the next generation of scientists. Being a part of Outreach has been such a privilege as it provides others with fantastic opportunities to explore and engage in fun, interactive activities that promote scientific curiosity. It has been such a joy to work with fellow graduate students so passionate about educating the community about the science and work we do, and I can only hope to contribute to the meaningful contributions they make.

What events did you participate in this year?

ArBOOretum and Halloween Spooktacular — and am very much looking forward to participating in many more!

What takeaways do you have after a year with Outreach?

Being a part of Outreach has been such a wonderful way for me to give back to the community with activities that I myself truly enjoy! But I think the major takeaway is having the chance to see just how excited, curious, and supportive our community is in our work and learning more about science. Seeing their excitement for science also excites me, and I truly believe Outreach is doing a wonderful job in instilling this enthusiasm into our community!

If you would like to see a special volunteer featured in our Volunteer Spotlight for the good work they do, please [email us!](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

DEBAKEY CELL LAB INTERNSHIP



The Health Museum
JOHN P. MCGOVERN MUSEUM OF HEALTH & MEDICAL SCIENCE

DEBAKEY CELL LAB INTERNSHIP

For the first time, GSBS Community Outreach will be one of several local groups to collaborate with The Health Museum, located nearby in Houston's Museum District. We will be participating in the pilot program of their DeBakey Cell Lab Internship.

This is a six-week summer program for high school students to delve into the world of biomedical science, to gain hands-on exposure to different areas of science and research, to build skills in science communication, and to receive guidance in professional development.

With GSBS Community Outreach, GSBS students will lead one week's session at The Health Museum, where we will host a panel of graduate students to demonstrate the diversity in research areas and discuss the graduate school experience. We will also lead various lessons and activities to exhibit the breadth of our work in biomedical science. Finally, we will facilitate on-campus laboratory visits in the TMC for the high school student participants.

Please visit The Health Museum website to learn more about [their mission](#) or other [internship opportunities](#) they offer, or to see how else you can [get involved](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

SUMMER BIOMEDICAL ACADEMY

Summer

BIOMEDICAL ACADEMY

The Summer Biomedical Academy (SBA) is our annual program for high school juniors and seniors interested in careers in science, medicine, and research.

This year, SBA will be held in the Texas Medical Center on:

AUGUST 1-2
9 AM - 4:30 PM

(volunteers)

**GSBS STUDENTS CAN SIGN
UP TO VOLUNTEER HERE.**

DEADLINE: MAY 31



**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
CAN APPLY HERE!**

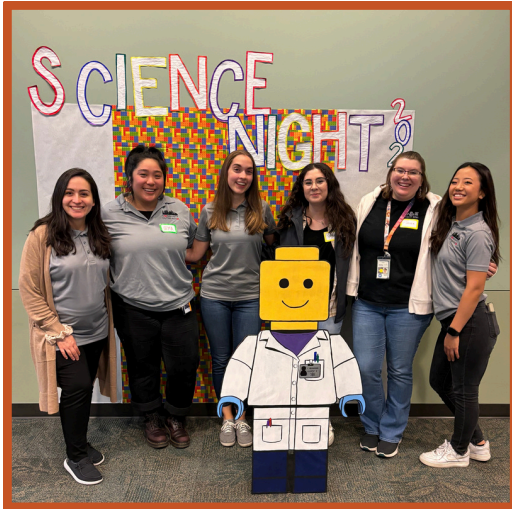
DEADLINE: JUNE 30



(high school students)

GETTING INVOLVED

MEMBERSHIP POSITIONS



Thank you to all the volunteers and coordinators who served this year!

If you are interested in getting involved, please consider these positions:

COORDINATOR

Looking to take more of an active role within GSBS Community Outreach? Then a coordinator position is right for you! Coordinators take on more responsibility within Outreach to help the officer team plan and execute events.

Requirements:

- Attend monthly planning meetings
- Vote on opportunities that Outreach participates in
- Assist in planning and setting up for Outreach events
- Volunteer for at least two GSBS Outreach events during the academic year

VOLUNTEER

Looking for a position with more flexibility while still allowing for great opportunities to participate in science outreach events in the community? Then a volunteer position is right for you!

Volunteers have fewer responsibilities within Outreach and mainly assist with executing events. For example, we have many students from the GSBS programs and organizations that volunteer for various Outreach events throughout the year to make them successful.

Requirements:

- Volunteer for at least one GSBS Outreach event during the academic year

Please email us if you are interested in joining Outreach in either capacity.

GETTING INVOLVED

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

PRESIDENT — GEMALENE SUNGA

What is your favorite part about Outreach?

To me, Outreach is about community-building. So my favorite part about it is getting to bring what we can, in our unique positions as students and scientists in the biggest medical center in the world, to best support those around us.

Why did you decide to run for Outreach President?

Even before coming to Houston, I was active in my community back home. Finding similar opportunities with Outreach has helped make this feel like home. I ran for President because I wanted to help facilitate the building up of our own community to do the same for other students who share in this passion and responsibility for giving back.

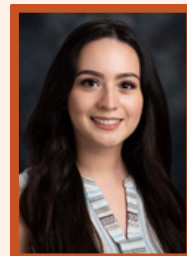
VICE PRESIDENT — ANDREA HERNANDEZ

What led you to run for Outreach Vice President?

I decided to run for Vice President because I wanted to grow as a leader. Outreach's mission also aligns with one of my important values, serving our community.

What would you say to other students interested in joining Outreach?

Whether you decide to join Outreach as a coordinator or volunteer, be ready to be fulfilled! Being part of Outreach has truly been a wonderful and valuable experience.



SECRETARY — AMANDA WARNER

What is your favorite part about Outreach?

My favorite part is seeing children become excited about science during our events with hands-on science demonstrations. I am grateful to give back, as I was introduced to science through a similar type of event.

Why did you decide to run for Outreach Secretary?

I volunteered to have a more active role in Outreach, to learn about how science communication events are planned, and to give back to the Houston community.



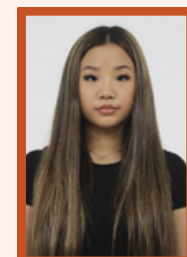
MEDIA RELATIONS COORDINATOR — KATE CHO

What led you to run for Outreach Media Relations Coordinator?

I wanted to be involved with Outreach because building a strong community through service and science has always been a passion of mine. As Media Relations Coordinator, I had the privilege of sharing our events with the community to increase engagement.

What would you say to other students interested in joining Outreach?

Outreach provides you with valuable opportunities to interact with future scientists and share the excitement of science. The involvement of so many staff and student groups at our events has shown me what a strong community we have at GSBS.



Nominations for officer positions are currently open until May 15.

Please email us if you or someone you know might be a good fit and is interested in participating.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

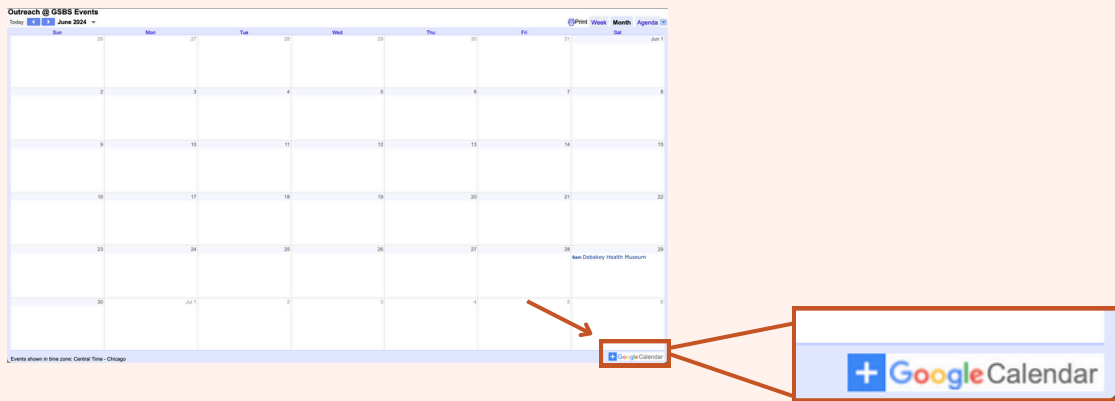
OUTREACH CALENDAR

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR CALENDAR

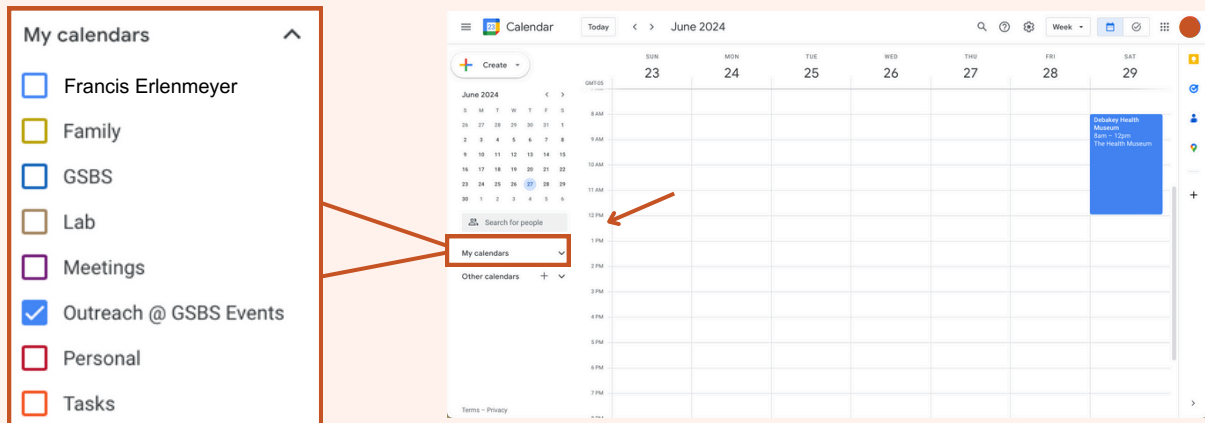
Keep an eye out for our upcoming events by subscribing to our new [Outreach calendar](#)!

To subscribe (using a computer or mobile browser):

1. Click [here](#) to access the Outreach calendar.
2. Click the “+” button in the bottom right corner to subscribe to the calendar.



3. This will open your personal Google calendar(s) in a new tab/window. The Outreach calendar will be automatically added under “My Calendars”. Check the box to view.



Our first event this summer is a morning session at The Health Museum with the Debakey Summer Internship program. (See also page 9 for more information.)

Select the event to see further details, including location and who to contact if you are interested in volunteering.

We also hope to have this agenda-style calendar on our [Outreach website](#) soon to make it easy to volunteer, so stay tuned for that website update!

Outreach tends to plan many of our events well in advance, so this is the easiest way to see what we are up to and what is coming up!

Courtesy of Caitlynn Barrows

AROUND THE COMMUNITY

USEFUL RESOURCES & LINKS

Future publications of our GSBS Community Outreach newsletter will be released BI-ANNUALLY.

Keep an eye out for future issues!

KEEP UP WITH US!

Visit our website [here](#).



gsbs_outreachprogram@uth.tmc.edu



[gsbs_outreach](#)



[GSBS_Outreach](#)

“AS SCIENTISTS, WE STEP ON THE SHOULDERS OF SCIENCE, BUILDING ON THE WORK THAT HAS COME BEFORE US - AIMING TO INSPIRE A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS TO CONTINUE ONCE WE ARE GONE.”

- STEPHEN HAWKING

ON THE RADAR

- **ComSciCon** (Science Communication Conferences in Houston), which is typically held within the Texas Medical Center, will be held next year in January 2025.

LOCAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer Houston and the City of Houston's Volunteer Initiatives Program are excellent resources to help you find all types of volunteer opportunities happening around the city that might resonate with you.

Some examples of local programs include:

- **Houston Food Bank** – packing, sorting, or delivering food
- **Sleep in Heavenly Peace** – building beds for children in need in Houston

If you have suggestions or favorite places you volunteer with in Houston, please [let us know](#) so we can add them to the next Newsletter!

Issue published May 2024.

This newsletter is published by the GSBS Community Outreach student organization at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHHealth Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in Houston, Texas.

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