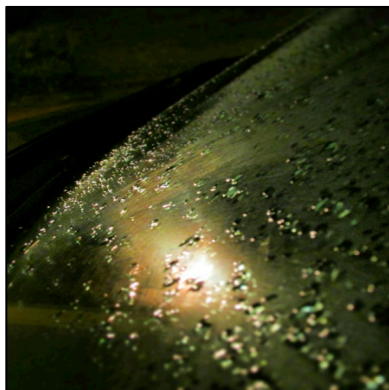


# AWIS

ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

*Gulf Coast Houston*



Photos by Autumn Rae Stewart, freelance photographer

## AWIS GCH Events 2013

<b>April 3rd</b>	<b>Spring Outstanding Women in Science Seminar</b>
	<b>Speaker - Dr. Elizabeth Travis, UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center</b>
<b>April 25th</b>	<b>5th Annual Greater Houston Conference for Women</b>
<b>Date TBA</b>	<b>Spring Networking program – Wine-tasting/Meet and Greet</b>
<b>May 18th</b>	<b>Career Development Opportunity – 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Young Inventors Showcase</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Fall Outstanding Women in Science Seminar - Speaker TBA</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>Fall Networking program TBA</b>
<b>November</b>	<b>Fall Career Development Opportunity TBA</b>

**More info on page 4**

## AWIS Gulf Coast-Houston Chapter is... Back in Business!

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**Check out our new website!**

[WWW.AWISGCH.ORG](http://WWW.AWISGCH.ORG)

**We are also on .....**

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM)

[WWW.LINKEDIN.COM](http://WWW.LINKEDIN.COM)

[WWW.TWITTER.COM/AWISGCH](http://WWW.TWITTER.COM/AWISGCH)

## + Letter from the AWIS GCH President

“We are off to a great start but we need your help.”

Greetings AWIS Gulf Coast Houston Chapter!

Last year, Cindy Simpson, former AWIS Director of Programs and External Relations, asked me to consider assuming the position of president of the AWIS GCH chapter as the officer positions have been vacant for several years prior to 2012. After giving it much thought, I accepted the position. As a member of AWIS and featured writer of *AWIS Magazine* from 2008-2010, I had the opportunity to become familiar with the goals of AWIS and have benefitted from the initiatives that the national organization has developed.

Based on research done by nationals, the number one reason that individuals join AWIS is to network with other members. Specifically, members join to network with local members found within chapters who have at least one common goal – success in STEM disciplines. Therefore, one of the overall goals for this chapter is to increase networking and support for career development and advancement.

The Gulf Coast-Houston Chapter was one of the first AWIS chapters founded but the activities of the chapter declined significantly over the more recent years as the number of officers declined. Initially, it was only Amy Hurwitz, our First VP, and I working together as a board last summer and now that number has increased as you will see on page 3. We are very excited about our progress. The officers have been working very hard behind the scenes to bring our chapter back to life, so-to-speak. We are revamping the chapter activities, increasing membership and member involvement.

With a small number on our executive board, we decided that the best approach to revitalize the chapter is to set small, attainable goals and build up from there. Briefly, the main goal for the remainder of this year is to increase communication, support, and interconnections amongst chapter members. In order to do this, we need to expand our active membership by increasing visibility, activity of the chapter, and member participation in chapter events.

Therefore, we have:

1. created an AWIS Gulf Coast Houston Chapter flyer to be distributed (electrically, etc.) by officers and members alike
2. created an AWIS Gulf Coast Houston Chapter Facebook page [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM)
3. created an AWIS Gulf Coast Houston LinkedIn page [WWW.LINKEDIN.COM](http://WWW.LINKEDIN.COM)
4. **launched our chapter website!** [WWW.AWISGCH.ORG](http://WWW.AWISGCH.ORG)
5. created an AWIS Gulf Coast Houston Twitter account [WWW.TWITTER.COM/AWISGCH](http://WWW.TWITTER.COM/AWISGCH)

These tools will help make our chapter more visible to the public for engaging those interested in joining our efforts. Please check them out! Feel free to post on, "Like" our pages, and invite others (both members and non-members) to connect with us.

As an executive board, we created a survey for members. This helped us determine what was needed from the chapter. With this survey, we can better organize programs/events that are themed according to members' interests and issues of concern. While we cannot address all of your concerns at once, we will do our best to do so overtime. If you haven't already filled out a [survey](#), please do so and send it to [awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com](mailto:awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com). We would love to hear from you!

We decided to host one event per committee (one Programming, one Outstanding Women in Science Seminar, one Career Development) in the spring and one event per committee (including one Fundraising) in the fall for a total of up to seven events for 2013. We may consider offering more programs in the future with increased available funds.

Our first event organized by Anne Hart, our Outstanding Women in Science Seminar Series Chair, will be held this **Wednesday, April 3, 2013 at 6 p.m.** at United Way of Greater Houston Community Resource Center honoring Dr. Elizabeth Travis of UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center as an outstanding woman in science. We hope that you are as excited as we are about this event and we look forward to seeing you there!

Lastly, we would really love your involvement in chapter leadership! There are vacant positions that we wish to fill (see page 4). Please contact me at [awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com](mailto:awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com) if you are interested in serving the chapter in any capacity or if you have any questions, concerns, suggestions you would like us to consider.

Again, thanks for your willingness to help and participate! I look forward to meeting you on Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>!

Amber Mathews, M.S., Ph.D. Candidate  
AWIS GCH President



Photos by Autumn Rae Stewart, freelance photographer

## Meet your 2013 officers! These ladies are working hard behind the scenes for AWIS GCH!



### **Amber Mathews, M.S., Ph. D. Candidate – AWIS GCH President**

Amber received her M.S. in Biology with a focus in immunology from Louisiana State University in 2010. Afterward, she began the Immunology Ph.D. Program at UTHealth and UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center Graduate School for Biomedical Sciences. Her current research focus is investigating the signaling mechanisms within intestinal epithelial cells that regulate intestinal inflammation and tumorigenesis. She is passionate about biomedical investigation and promoting better understanding of science to the youth. Amber has been involved in AWIS since 2008 and was a featured writer in the national *AWIS Magazine* from 2008-2010. She enjoys volunteering and learning new languages and cultures.

### **Anna Pietarila Graham, Ph. D. – AWIS GCH Treasurer**

Anna Pietarila Graham received her Ph.D. at University of Oslo in astrophysics after earning her M.S. degree in Physics and Environmental Science from Lund University. She is currently working as a research geophysicist for a company developing seismic data processing software. She only recently switched from astro- to geophysics. Prior to moving to Houston in December 2012, she worked as a solar astrophysicist at the National Solar Observatory in Tucson, AZ.



### **Amy Hurwitz, Ph. D. Candidate – AWIS GCH First Vice President**

Amy Hurwitz is a predoctoral fellow at Baylor College of Medicine in the Translational Biology and Molecular Biology Ph.D. program. She earned her B.S. in Biochemistry at the University of Southern California with a minor in business law, and worked as a Research Associate at the University of California, Los Angeles before moving to Houston. She is a founder of Enventure ([www.enventure.org](http://www.enventure.org)), a nonprofit community for Houston's medical & life science entrepreneurs, and has been a member of the AWIS GCH chapter since 2011.

### **Anne Hart, Ph.D. – AWIS GCH Outstanding Women in Science Seminar Series Chair**

Anne Hart is Assistant Editor for the journal *Learning & Memory* and Program Manager at the UTHealth Neuroscience Research Center. She received two B.S. degrees in Biology and Chemistry from the University of Kentucky and received her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. She is passionate about making scientific and medical concepts accessible to the public and supports programs that encourage health and science education in the community. She enjoys volunteering in the Houston community through multiple outlets and has been actively involved with AWIS since 2006.



### **Amanda Chadee, Ph.D. – AWIS GCH Fundraising Chairperson**

Amanda is a biology faculty member at Lone Star College in Houston, TX where she lectures and guides students in lab techniques. She earned a Ph.D. in Cellular and Molecular Biology at the University of Texas Austin. She next carried out her post-doctoral work at UT Health Science Center in Houston. She is passionate about science education, science policy and improving the retention of women in science.

### **Lory Z. Santiago-Vasquez, Ph.D. – AWIS GCH Career Development Co-Chair**

Lory Z. Santiago-Vázquez is an Assistant Professor at the University of Houston-Clear Lake in the Biology and Biotechnology Programs. Her research in Marine Biotechnology focuses on how stressors affect soft corals and their associated bacterial symbionts. She also has an interest in the microbial influence corrosion of oil field pipelines. She holds a B.S. in Marine Biology from the University of Puerto Rico-Humacao and a Ph.D. in Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology with a focus on Marine Pharmacology from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. She has been a member of AWIS since 2010. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, scuba diving, and spending time with her daughter and husband.



### **Simran Madan, AWIS GCH Career Development Co-Chair**

Simran is a doctoral candidate in the Translational Biology and Molecular Medicine graduate program at Baylor College of Medicine and a University of Texas Austin Alum. Her primary research focus is metabolic disorders and cancer cell metabolism. She attends to pediatric patients at Texas Children's Hospital in a weekly metabolic clinic with her mentor and is on the organizing committee for the annual research symposium for her graduate program. Outside of research, Simran enjoys cooking, traveling, DIY projects, latin and swing dancing. Simran has immense admiration for women entrepreneurs and would someday like to start a non-profit organization.

### **Amanda Hendrix, M.S., Ph.D. Candidate – Former AWIS GCH Career Development Chair**

After graduating with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Oklahoma State University, Amanda worked four years as a pipeline engineer for ExxonMobil Pipeline Co. in Houston, TX and Baton Rouge, LA. She then pursued a M.S. in Biological Engineering from Louisiana State University, during which she greatly enjoyed teaching freshman engineering students. Afterward, Amanda began the Ph.D. program in Translational Biology and Molecular Medicine at BCM. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate investigating an inducible immunotherapy vaccine against lung cancer. In her free time, she enjoys decorating and crafting projects and sings in the Aurea Houston choir for young adult professionals.







Pictured Right – AWIS GCH executive board at our first official board meeting (December 2012.) From Left to Right – Anna Pietarilla Graham (treasurer); Anne Hart (OWIS chair); Amber Mathews (president); Amy Hurwitz (First Vice President); not pictured Amanda Hendrix (former career development chair)



## Opportunities for AWIS GCH members

AWIS GCH Chapter Outstanding Women in Science (OWIS) Seminar Series with speaker Dr. Elizabeth Travis of UT M. D. Anderson – **April 3, 2013** at United Way of Greater Houston Community Resource Center, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston, TX 77007 at **6 p.m.** (See [AWIS GCH](#))

AWIS GCH Chapter Career Development opportunity – judge the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Young Inventors Showcase of Houston on **May 18, 2013** at The Children's Museum of Houston (See [Inventors Showcase](#))

Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference for Women themed "No Limits" – **April 25, 2013** at Hilton Americas, Houston, TX from **8 a.m. - 6.30 p.m.** ([Houston Conference for Women](#)); two tickets available for AWIS GCH (Contact [awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com](mailto:awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com) if interested (first-come, first served))

Women Executives in Science and Health (WESH) Spring Executive Leadership Summit ([WESH Summit](#)) – **May 3-5, 2013**

Volunteer opportunity - Houston Walk of Hope - **May 18, 2013** at **8 a.m.** (See [Houston Walk of Hope 2013](#) to register)

## How to join or renew membership in AWIS GCH Chapter

You can become an official AWIS Gulf Coast Houston Chapter member for an additional \$5 to your national AWIS fee. Click [here](#) to join or to renew AWIS GCH membership if you haven't already done so. This would place you on our chapter's email list for shared information, opportunities, programs and events.

## AWIS GCH Chapter Leadership - Open Positions

To enhance your professional development and networking and leadership skills, please volunteer to chair or participate in AWIS GCH committees. We need your help! The following positions are currently open:

- chapter secretary
- second vice president (membership)
- newsletter contributors and/or committee chair
- anything within our mission that you are passionate about seeing your AWIS GCH chapter do!

## Acknowledgements

As acting [AWIS GCH Newsletter](#) editor, I'd like to thank the AWIS GCH officers for biography submissions, opportunity submissions and feedback and Autumn Stewart for submitted photos. To contribute to the newsletter, please contact [awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com](mailto:awisgulfcoasthouston@yahoo.com).