

Going Viral: LSU ID NOLA Newsletter

*LSU Infectious Diseases
New Orleans, Louisiana
Winter 2020/Spring 2021*



Inside this Issue

- 1—IDWeek Virtual Social, IDWeek activities, Halloween 2020
- 2—IDWeek Virtual Social, Academic Achievements LSU ID
- 3—Halloween 2020
- 4—Holidays, COVID-19 Vaccination
- 5—COVID-19 Vaccination
- 6—Mardi Gras 2021
- 7—Mardi Gras 2021
- 8—In Memoriam, George Risi Jr MD
- 9—George Risi Jr MD (cont'd)

Virtual Social During IDWeek 2020— Since IDWeek was totally virtual this year, we decided to have a virtual LSU ID get-together. Lee Engel '06, above, wins best Zoom virtual background for the night, and possibly the year. Thanks to Shu-Hua Wang '04 for the images. (See the other screen grab on page 2).

IDWeek 2020—was a virtual meeting due to the pandemic held 10/21/2020—10/25/2020. Here are the LSU ID contributions to this meeting:

- **Meredith Clement**—was Senior Author on “Clinical Characteristics and Outcomes of Patients Hospitalized with COVID-19 in New Orleans, LA: A Cohort Study, which was presented by **Victoria Silver, IM/EM Resident**, and **Paula Seal** was Co-Author among other Co-Authors
- **Rebecca Lillis**—gave oral abstract presentation titled “Evaluation of a PrEP Referral System: From Sexual Health Center to Federally Qualified Health Center PrEP Clinic—Co-Authors from LSU ID included **Stephanie Taylor and Meredith Clement**, among other Co-Authors
- **Lauren Richey**—was Co-Author with **Third Year LSU Medical Student Hira Hasan** on poster presentation “Contraception, Pregnancy and ART in Women of Child-Bearing Years
- **Stephanie Taylor**—gave On Demand presentation titled “The Urgent Threat of Resistant Gonorrhea: Countermeasures in the Pipeline”



Halloween 2020 COVID-style

From Left: Paula Seal, Joanne Maffei

(See more Halloween 2020 on page 3)

Virtual Social During ID Week *(Continued from Page 1)*



From Left—Top Row: Shu-Hua Wang '04 with her prized Dr. Fauci Bobble Head, Rebecca Lillis '04, Kristin Dascomb
 Middle Row: Taras Nebeluk, Second Year ID Fellow, Scott Melton '19, Joanne Maffei
 Bottom Row: Vitalis Okechukwu '06, Julio Figueroa, LSU ID Section Chief, and Juan Sarria'98

Other Academic Achievements of the LSU Infectious Diseases Section

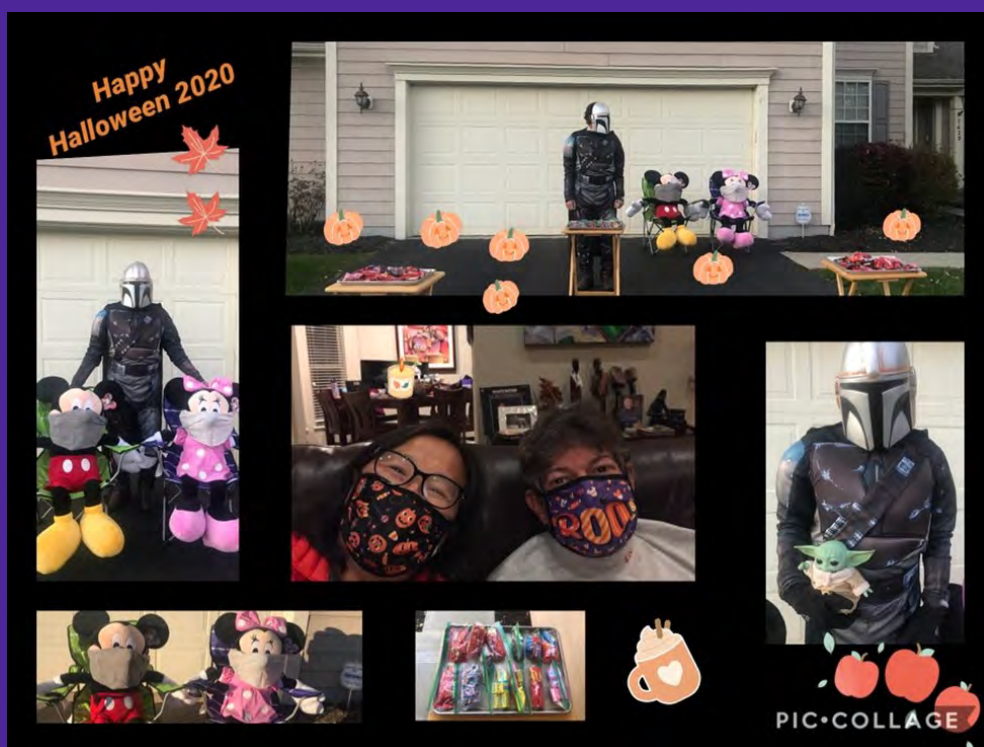
- **Meredith Clement**— was Co-Author with Ellen Eaton, UAB, on “Wave the Yellow Flag: Why We Should Prioritize Routine Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Sexually Transmitted Infection Care Now” an Editorial Commentary published in The Journal of Infectious Diseases; published online January 27, 2021; <https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiab052>
- **Lauren Richey**—was Co-Author with **Third Year LSU Medical Student Hira Hasan** on poster presentation “Anti-retroviral Therapy for Women of Child-Bearing Years” in the International Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) 15th International Conference on HIV Treatment and Prevention Adherence in November 2020.
- **Lynn Besch and Maria Frontini**— along with **Fourth Year LSU Medical Student Maren Bell**, presented a poster at 2021 LSU Medicine Research Day entitled “Characteristics and Prior Vaccine Status of patients with Invasive Streptococcus pneumoniae Infection at University Medical Center New Orleans (UMCNO) 2014-2018”
- **M. Jacques Nsuami**— is Guest Editor for the special issue “School-Based STD Screening” in *Biology* https://www.mdpi.com/journal/biology/special_issues/STDscreening

Halloween 2020 *(Continued from page 1)*



Paula Seal and family celebrate Halloween as Star Wars Characters. Top Left Photo—front row: Graham; back row: Britt, Paula, Madeline and Evan. Top Right Photo— Paula and son Evan have fun being mummies.

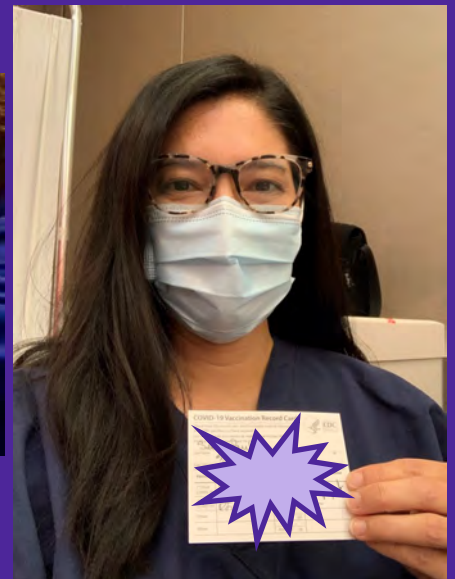
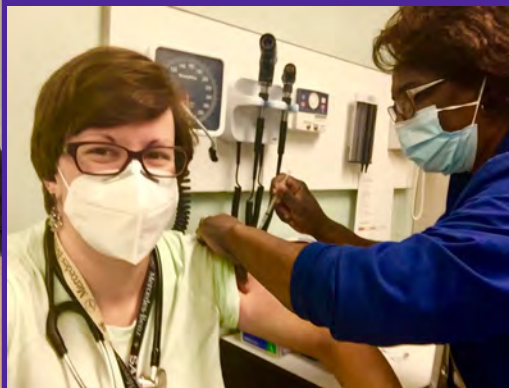
Shu-Hua Wang '04 and husband Scott celebrate Halloween 2020



Shu-Hua Wang '04
and husband Scott
celebrate the holidays



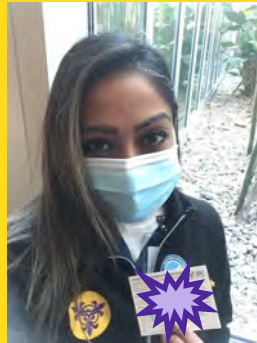
COVID-19 Vaccinations began in December 2020



From Left: Denise Friloux, RN gives Joanne Maffei and Victoria Burke (center) vaccine; Paula Seal with completed vaccination card. (See *COVID-19 Vaccination*, continued on page 5)

COVID-19 Vaccination Celebration !!! *(Continued from page 4)*

From Left: Shu-Hua Wang '04, Nisha Aravindakshan-Patel '16, Mohammed Ziada, Second Year Fellow



From Left: Kristin Dascomb in first dose press conference at Intermountain Healthcare, Utah, and receiving the vaccine

From Left: LSU Faculty Stephanie Taylor '96 and Jolie LeBlanc; Ngozi Mezu-Patel '13



From Left: LSU Faculty M. Jacques Nsua-mi; Henry Costa '96, Deme Agcaoili '96

Mardi Gras 2021

Mardi Gras was on February 16, 2021. It was different to say the least. Parades were canceled. “House Floats” became a thing and the spectators drove by (still got caught in parade traffic, though). City Park had floats from various parades in place for “Floats in the Oaks” and spectators drove by. Bars were closed for the weekend leading up to and including Mardi Gras. Mother Nature cooperated to stave off the pandemic—it was the coldest on record with a low of 32 degrees (it beat the old record from 2/14/1899 which was 38 degrees). But New Orleanians being New Orleanians, we had fun despite the obstacles. Oh, by the way, we still had King Cake!!! (See Mardi Gras 2021 continued on page 7)



Mardi Gras 2021 *(Continued from page 6)*



Paula Seal and Husband Britt had a Tricycle Mardi Gras Parade for family

In Memoriam— George Franklin Risi Jr., MD Obituary

“And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul.” - John Muir

On Saturday, December 12, 2020, George — dressed in his Rocky Mountain Pus Club T-shirt and his favorite pair of hiking shorts — stepped into the forest one last time. He died of a particularly aggressive pancreatic cancer, just one year after diagnosis. George was born in 1954 to George Franklin Risi Sr., an orthopedic surgeon, and Eugenia Risi (Vit), homemaker. He was raised with his three sisters on the beaches of central east coast Florida where he spent many days surfing, working as a lifeguard, and running cross country on the sand. Upon graduation, he attended college at Emory University in Atlanta where he studied biology and pre-med. He maintained that he joined the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity because they had fried chicken and he was making rice in a coffee pot, although he sustained those friendships until his death. In college, George was torn over continuing to study medicine versus pursuing something in the natural sciences — he ultimately chose to attend medical school at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA, where he found the answer to his dilemma in Infectious Disease (ID). George celebrated his graduation by helping his father sail from Florida to Majorca in a sailboat designed by George Sr. George chose to do his Infectious Disease residency at LSU in New Orleans. He loved New Orleans culture, of which he saw the truly colorful side while working at Charity Hospital. This was the 1980's and HIV was dominating the attention of Infectious Disease clinicians. George was instrumental in establishing a dedicated HIV ward at Charity Hospital and developed the regional core curriculum for the treatment of HIV patients. In 1990, frustration with the lack of HIV grant funding led him to think about a life reimagined. While browsing the New England Journal of Medicine one day, he spotted an ad for an ID physician in Missoula, MT. Given that his father had driven all the kids to Montana nearly every summer of their youth, and had recently himself relocated to Whitefish, Missoula seemed like a dream come true — and, it was. Shortly after arriving in Missoula, George met Willa Craig at a colleague's summer house party. Their first date was a backpacking trip in the Mission Mountains, where Willa proved her utility by catching trout for dinner and breakfast after their supplies ran low. In 1994, after a brief two-year stint together in Salt Lake City where George taught in the University of Utah Medical school, Willa and George were married under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, CA, by a ship's captain. Homesick for Montana, George and Willa left Utah and made their home in Missoula's Rattlesnake neighborhood. In 1997, they had a son, Milan Carmen Craig Risi... the bright center of George's world. In 2002, George and Willa founded Infectious Disease Specialists, PC., a clinical research practice that specialized in testing vaccines for industry and government. George believed that front-line health care workers and nurses often generate critical improvements overlooked by physicians. In this way, they were fortunate to employ numerous RN's, all of whom, George maintained, were much smarter and more capable than he. Among them are Jenn Crawford, Misti Fines, Michelle Sokoloski, Brooke Krininger, and Bev Wiazek. In 2010, George and Willa moved with Milan to London, where George achieved a lifelong dream of studying at the London School of Tropical Medicine. He completed a Master's in Immunology and made many much younger friends from all over the world. Upon returning to Missoula, a highlight of their home life was hosting international students (with whom they remain in contact to this day) from Turkey, The Netherlands, and Tokyo. George served as the Infectious Disease Clinical Consultant to the NIH Rocky Mountain BSL-4 lab in Hamilton, Montana, from 2004-2016. His knowledge of BSL 3 & 4 pathogens (including Ebola), gained from his work with RML, led him to volunteer with friends and colleagues Kate Hurly, RN and Thomas Arminio, RN in the Ebola clinics of Sierra Leone, West Africa. Their combined expertise subsequently led them to train physicians from around the US, Cuba, and the Caribbean to prepare for work in the Ebola wards of Africa. In 2016, George was recruited to move to Washington, D.C., for a consulting position as Subject Matter Expert to the government agency of BARDA (Biomedical Advanced Research Development Authority). In this role, George worked primarily on antibiotic resistance and vaccines. He was especially grateful for the opportunity to help make the COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines available to the public. Despite his advancing disease, in the last year of his life he continued to work because he “didn't want to let anyone down.” This is what George *did* in his life, but more important is the person he *was*. He was kind — that was his default setting. He was the very best kind of nerdy. In his personal life, he loved bringing people together, both romantically and professionally. Nothing made him happier than a house full of friends. He had a relentlessly curious mind. He read voraciously and broadly — environment, religion, history, politics, and biographies — but he never pretended to know more than he did. He loved his book group of like-minded eccentrics. He listened to Opera and New Orleans Blues. He was a tireless hiker, a joyful yet truly terrible tennis player, and a Master Gumbo chef. He was a patient teacher and a humble learner. He was compassionate, slow to judge and quick to forgive. Best of all, he was a wonderful husband and even better father. George (Mr. Break-it) felt acutely the loss of further adventures with his best pal Loren Stormo (Mr. Fix-it), his beloved wife and son, and his many friends and colleagues from Missoula, D.C., and around the world. He leaves behind his wife of 26 years, Willa Craig, his son Milan (lovely girlfriend Liza), and his sisters Addie Risi (Maris) of New Orleans, LA, and Pam Risi of Macon, GA. He also leaves his brothers and sisters-in-law, Brad and Robin Cockhill and Barb Cockhill of Butte, MT, Brian and Linda Cockhill of Helena, MT, as well as numerous nephews and nieces. He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Mona Dumas (Tom), of Louisiana. (See *George Risi Jr. MD, continued on page 10*)



In Memoriam— George Risi Jr. MD (Continued from page 9)

Obituary (Continued)

George wanted desperately to live. His greatest sorrow was that he knew he would not see his son marry, nor would he get to hold a grandchild. But he thought, at the very least, he would be granted the pleasure of seeing Trump marched out of the White House in 2021. That denied, he asks this of you: Wear A Mask – they really do work. Practice Social Distancing – sacrifice a little today for a better future. And, when it's available, *Take the Vaccine*. Most importantly, he would remind you to hold your family close.

Anyone who would like to honor George may consider a contribution to the environmental conservation cause of his or her choice. Due to COVID-19, a memorial service will be held outside in the spring of 2021.

Message From George's LSU ID Co-Fellows:

George Risi '87 was a part of the re-invigoration of the LSU ID Fellowship in the 1980's, along with myself, Malcom Rosenson '87 and Michael Hill '88. We were a pretty tight group and George fit in well though he was from out of state. We remember him as smart, respectful, hard-working and more serious-minded than the rest of us. This last trait made him pretty easy to tease though he took that in stride. I remember him talking about his father whom he admired greatly as an MD and sailor who published his own boat designs. He also loved the sailing trip he took with his family across the Atlantic and told how he would cook dinner on a grill in the back of the sailboat at sunset with only ocean all around. I especially remember a story he told about his mother; while in college he complained that the only bed sheets he had were from home and had Donald Duck on them. So, his mother sent him Mickey Mouse sheets – like I noted, easy to tease. We all knew George loved Montana so fully expected him to end up there. The last time I saw George was when he came to LSU and gave Grand Rounds on Ebola and the attendant safety precautions. It was an outstanding job, taking the audience from the bench to the bedside and back again. It is no surprise to us to see his professional success, and we are only glad that he also had great personal success as well.

—C. Lynn Besch '86

In the spirit of giving...

For the grateful graduate of our program interested in supporting future LSU ID Fellows: did you know that you can earmark donations within the institution to our Infectious Diseases Fellowship Program? All donations generously given to the LSU Health Foundation can be preferentially directed to the LSU ID Fellowship Program account to support our trainees. We utilize these funds to help defray costs for our ID Fellows to attend professional conferences to present their work by covering conference registration fees, travel, and lodging expenses. Foundation funds helped send both of our ID fellows to IDWeek in Washington DC in 2019 for this purpose to present their clinical research. All donations are tax-deductible through this non-profit entity and can even be used to acquire TAF points for the avid LSU sports fan. For more information, please contact Krystal Oliveira at koliveira@lsuhealthfoundation.org or visit the Foundation website <https://www.lsuhealthfoundation.org>.

Send us your thoughts on the COVID-19 Pandemic, the changing face of the HIV Epidemic, or anything else you want to share. Let us know how you, your family and your practice are doing. Next issue of *Going Viral* is the Summer issue—please send in articles by June 30, 2021 to be included.