

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Date: March 6, 2008

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FAMED GENETICS EXPERT HEADS SPRING SPEAKER SERIES AT THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

PHILADELPHIA— A renowned genetics pioneer instrumental in mapping the human genome heads the roster of exciting speakers this spring at The Academy of Natural Sciences.

Dr. Craig Venter, whose team of scientists recently announced a major step in the creation of artificial life, will discuss his findings in a fascinating illustrated presentation on Thursday, April 10. Venter's team assembled the entire genetic code for a simple bacterium from scratch, a scientific first.

Venter's presentation is **free** and open to the public and is presented by the Academy's popular Town Square series, whose goal is to inform the public of current scientific issues through engaging speakers and events. The following presentations also are free and open to the public. Reservations are required for all events. For more information and to register, contact Roland Wall at rwall@acnatsci.org or 215 299-1108.

TOXICANTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Tuesday, March 25, 6:30 p.m.

Learn the hidden story of the things we eat, breathe and touch. Dr. Kevin Osterhoudt, Medical Director of the Poison Control Center, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, presents the background on the toxins that lurk in our environment. Don't miss this opportunity for information that could save a life. Reception at 6 p.m. Presentation at 6:30 p.m.

AMERICAN CHESTNUT – THE LIFE, DEATH AND REBIRTH OF A PERFECT TREE

Wednesday, March 26, 7 p.m.

Author Susan Freinkel discusses the fascinating story contained in her newest novel, "The Life, Death and Rebirth of a Perfect Tree." Learn about "chestnut blight," the ecological epidemic that killed nearly four million trees across America and reshaped its landscape. Freinkel will discuss how the fight against this catastrophe serves as inspiration for today's environmental struggles. Freinkel will sign copies of her book following the talk.

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AN EVENING WITH GENETICIST CRAIG VENTER
Thursday, April 10, 5:30 p.m.

Meet one of America's most influential scientists, Dr. Craig Venter, and learn about his latest project that resulted in a scientific breakthrough. Venter is a pioneer in mapping the human genome as well as president of the J. Craig Venter Institute and former president of Celera Genomics. In 2003 he launched the Global Ocean Sampling Expedition, which involved assessing microorganisms to produce alternative fuels for the future. Most recently he and colleagues made unprecedented progress on assembling from scratch the DNA chain of the Mycoplasma Genitalium bacterium. Scientists believe this could lead to new medicines and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. For more information, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/05/science/05angi.html?scp=2&sq=craig+venter&st=nyt>

The Town Square series is made possible, in part, by generous funding from the Claneil Foundation and the Environmental Associates of The Academy of Natural Sciences.

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The Academy is located at 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and weekends until 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children ages 3–12, seniors, students with college I.D. and military personnel, and free for children under 3. There is a \$2 fee for "Butterflies!"

Founded in 1812, The Academy of Natural Sciences is the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the Americas and is a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. The mission of the Academy is the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences.