“Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Who Inspires Us
Dear colleagues,

Our June newsletter provides insights on “who inspires us”: The heroes in our community. We will learn about extraordinary actions of ordinary people, acts of courage, enthusiasm, empathy, and selfless authenticity. We will learn about people who are immensely passionate about their job or their life, people who can see new possibilities and new potential in others, and people who choose the right path over the easy path.

Sometimes, it helps to understand a certain concept if we see the antagonist. In this case: Who does not inspire us? Perhaps someone who is egocentric, dishonest and/or hurts others? Mediocrity? Someone who uses political plots rather than integrity and hard work to achieve their goals? Someone who values material wealth more than love and compassion?

Every great novel, every great movie and every religious narrative follow a similar story -over and over again. I hope our newsletter can help us recognize it, share it and ultimately live it! Welcome to our own epic story!

Heike E. Daldrup-Link, M.D, Ph.D.
Associate Chair for Diversity
Department of Radiology
The outcome of a more positive outlook goes beyond just a healthier individual, it helps to create a happier family and a more positive community. The power of positivity can be overlooked by the cliché of its name. Keeping it positive is easy to say but hard in practice as in all words of wisdom. But if we are going to infect those around us with either apathy and anger or passion and positivity, why not choose the latter. Positivity can attract and draw others in to an alternate perspective of a familiar situation and thereby, can elevate the way in which we work, interact, and live.

I swing by the grocery store after work as a weekly activity, most of the time absentmindedly as I'm caught in my thoughts or emails or reflecting on patients I've taken care of. However absentmindedly, I find myself steered to the same bright cheerful cashier. Her job is the same for all of the cashiers, but her outlook is different. She always greets the customers with an authentic smile and seems genuinely interested when she asks, "How are you?". I leave a little bit more cheerful myself. If such brief encounters can brighten us up even a little, then how many opportunities do we have throughout the day to bring a little positivity into those who work with us and live with us on a day to day basis?

People with positive outlooks on life are not always those that have it all. Many times people with great outlooks are facing immense struggles on a personal level. I remember a conversation with a hospital staff, who always seems to be happy and is always the first to lift up anyone who is having a bad day. That conversation surprised me to learn of the unusual struggles he faces in life, including cross continental separation of his family, tragic loss of a family member, and other situations I would have never guessed he's had to face.

As humans, we live with the memories of our past, the tensions of the present and a plan for the future. We cannot alter our past, but we have the ability to alter how we live and drive our future. I can certainly think of a number of famous figures that inspire me in a traditional sense. However, it is these small encounters with ordinary people, each of them fighting their extraordinary battles, that are open, willing to engage, and positive, that I find particularly inspiring in our community.

Taiyo Shimizu, MD

Clinical Assistant Professor
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
Who inspired me? My instructor Ying at VivAsia dance aerobics class at the YMCA! Precision Health initiatives focus on predicting and preventing disease. Lifestyle management and physical recreation are important components of precision health. One of the harder things to do is to get people to exercise. I think Ying figured out the secret how to do so successfully. Ying’s class is easily filled with > 100 students. I haven’t done a rigorous analysis of what makes Ying’s class so successful, but I think there are two main elements. First, Ying is very creative in combining music and moves from diverse cultures from hiphop to zumba to kungfu. Perhaps it is the diversity of the music that engages and connects with students from different backgrounds. Second, Ying always wears a big smile, and is always energetic. Despite the large class size, she seems to have no problem connecting with individual students especially beginners. She makes everyone feel welcome and encourages us to just “keep moving” even if we can’t follow every twist and turn in the routine. She has created an inclusive and supportive environment that brings together women from different demographics towards a common goal of staying active and healthy. I think that Ying and her class could be a good case study as we continue to think about how to motivate people to participate in precision health initiatives.

Sindy KY Tang, PhD

Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering and by courtesy of Radiology (Precision Health and Integrated Diagnostics) Stanford University
It always seems cliché to use this answer when asked who your biggest inspiration is, but for me it definitely has to be my dad. My grandfather passed away early in my father’s life which left him, his mother, and his siblings in absolute poverty in a third world country. While his family managed to make ends meet, my father saw this as motivation to put himself and his family in a better position through his education.

Parents and grandparents always tell stories about how they used to have to walk 10 miles to get to school “back in their day.” My dad’s version involved traveling long distances for his education, staying late to tutor students to earn some money, and then spending the night at a family friend’s store instead of traveling back home. This trend of hard work continued through his university education leading to him becoming one of the top students in his entire country, earning a graduate school position at Vanderbilt University, and eventually becoming a citizen of the US.

Being born and growing up in the US, I never understood what my father went through to put us and our family in the position we are in today. But after hearing about it as an adult, I was amazed at how far he had come through his hard work. Knowing he reached his goal through his hard work and dedication, no matter how tough it was, makes it easier for me to stay positive in the deep trenches of call and the challenges of residency. My father taught me that even in the face of overwhelmingly challenging odds, anyone with the right mindset will come out on top.

Amit Kumar Chakraborty, MD
Resident PGYIII
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
I am inspired by those individuals of our community that choose to be great mentors. Mentors, and especially great ones, are inspiring because of the unique individuals that they are, and because of the network of talented individuals that they create. Although dispensing advice to their trainees is common, great mentors know when to push and when to hold back, are good listeners, and will sometimes make sacrifices of their own to enable their mentees to advance in their careers and life. The network of former mentees created by these good mentors can also be a powerful family from which to draw support, inspiration, and friendships. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to be trained by, and work with, some wonderful mentors. I am also proud to be a part of such a family of former mentees, from which I draw strength. I am greatly inspired by these good mentors to create a similar environment for my trainees to pay forward the great mentorship and a supportive family I have received.

My former thesis advisor, Dr. Gregg Trahey, is an amazing and inspiring mentor. He is unique in his style of mentorship in that he individually seeks out each of his trainees every day and converses with them about both their everyday lives and the research/training they are involved in. I am completely inspired by this style, yet I find it uniquely suited to him because it is almost impossible to replicate. In his style, Gregg creates a positive work environment that is not demanding, yet inspires his mentees to be amazingly creative and productive. He claims that it is “because he has been lucky with the students he has recruited,” yet clearly this is a product of his mentorship because nobody is lucky enough to have and produce so many talented and warm-hearted mentees. By his mentorship, he has created a welcoming family of former mentees that span two generations and all of them remain good friends and colleagues. Clearly, Gregg has created a bond with each of his mentees, and I have seen how strong it is by his emotional response to one of his former mentees passing away. I have also seen him sacrifice opportunities for his career or laboratory in order to allow his mentees to launch their own careers and laboratories.

I have also had the opportunity to work side-by-side with a great mentor; own former colleague, the late Dr. Juergen Willmann. In working with Juergen and his mentees and having the responsibility and honor to mentor his trainees after his passing, I have both learned much about this great mentor and I have also been indirectly mentored by him. Juergen, much like Gregg, had a unique mentorship style that is hard to replicate. Although he was a very busy individual and had a commanding presence, he was able to create a welcoming and supportive environment for his trainees. Juergen knew how to push his trainees when they needed it, and when to hold back to allow his trainees to grow and explore on their own. Like Gregg, he was able to produce talented individuals that have a strong connection to each other as well as to himself.

Both Gregg and Juergen have inspired me to pay this mentorship forward.

While it is impossible to replicate the styles and capabilities of these amazing mentors I have learned from, I can create my own style that works for myself and my own mentees. It is not always an easy thing to mentor people of different experiences, personalities, and backgrounds and there are certainly times when I have to have difficult conversations with my mentees. But having the background experiences with these great mentors has allowed me to draw ideas from to create an environment and family that my mentees can thrive in.

Jeremy Dahl, PhD
Associate Professor
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
When I think of the Stanford community, I often look back to when I was a PhD student here at Stanford and what impacted me. My wife Amy and I met at Stanford when we were graduate students, and one individual stood out to us for his tireless efforts for the grad community – Ken Hsu. Ken was, and still is, the director of the Graduate Life Office, which serves the Stanford grad student population (and their families) by providing comprehensive guidance and information related to all aspects of life as a grad student, including their well-being and academic success. To many grad students, the GLO creates a sense of community through its services and programs and is in fact centrally located in the Graduate Community Center (GCC) between the large graduate housing communities of Escondido Village (EV) and Rains. Many may recognize the GLO from the annual welcome for new students, monthly newsletter about the many resources and events for grad students, and other programs throughout the year.

Amy and I interacted with Ken in different ways. Amy was a Community Associate (CA) for several years while living in EV. As a CA, she was responsible for creating a sense of community in her neighborhood by planning welcome, social, cultural, and educational events throughout the year. The GLO, and in particular Ken, is responsible for overseeing the CA program. Ken brought boundless enthusiasm to the program, which was near contagious. His passion for creating community was an inspiration to Amy and the CAs, and a key part of the program’s success.

I had a slightly different perspective with Ken. It turns out there are over 600 student organizations and clubs at Stanford, ranging from recreational to professional to service to cultural. Ken and his team support many of these organizations, particularly the ones for grad students. And while Ken isn't directly involved with all of them, he is well connected and can help students find something based on their interests. I was a regular member of the Asian American Graduate Student Association (AAGSA) (which was mostly an excuse to meet friends over tasty food!). Ken was incredibly supportive of our organization, and was kindly a guest speaker in a workshop I organized on “Resources and Advice on Navigating Stanford: How to Stay Sane as a PhD Student”. He led an open, earnest, and thoughtful discussion on some of the challenges facing grad students.

So to all of our current and future grad students – I hope you have a chance to interact with Ken and the GLO (glo.stanford.edu). They are wonderful folks and a fantastic resource!

Adam S. Wang, PhD
Assistant Professor
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
Who Inspires Me

My father and my son have served as true inspirations to me. My father’s life was an inspiration to me during my childhood. At a very young age, my father was separated from his father and lived with my grandmother in China until he was 16 years old. At the age of 16, my father and my grandmother immigrated from China to America to be reunited with my grandfather. He finished high school in San Francisco and then went to Kansas University for his undergraduate degree and then continued to obtain his Master’s in Los Angeles. Later on his life, unfortunately he was diagnosed with lymphoma and passed away in less than a year after his diagnosis. My beloved father - in his infinite wisdom - valued family, education and life. He would state that, “there’s always something new to be learned every day, and mistakes help you grow.” He always pushed my two brothers and myself to our ultimate capabilities.

Because of my parent’s immigration, I am fortunate to have grown up in the heart of the Silicon Valley. I worked for companies like Cisco Systems and Apple with innovative and visionary leaders, such as John Chambers and the late Steve Jobs. These corporate cultures taught me to think outside of the box and continue to strive to improve in the demanding fast paced technology industry.

My eldest son, who is now 17, is my current inspiration. When he was 6 years old, he caught a virus and was in a coma for two weeks. Because of the virus, he suffered from encephalitis. When he came out of the coma, he was diagnosed with cortical vision impairment and bi-nasal hemianopsia. In the ER at Stanford, one of the first doctors to treat my son was Dr. Keith Van Haren. Dr. Van Haren’s compassion during this difficult time was extraordinary. My son received the best care under the amazing team of Stanford physicians. Dr. Van Haren continues to be his Pediatric Neurologist and follows his care.

My son continues to overcome his everyday struggles and challenges. He always strives to push himself and he looks for opportunities to leverage technology and re-invent himself, he is my hero! His perseverance and self-advocacy push me to be a better person. He has an invisible disability, and strangers constantly question his learning abilities and behavior, but his ability to self-advocate and overcome his doubters is a true inspiration to me.

Stanford’s care and research inspired me to work at Stanford. Under the leadership of Dr. Sam Gambhir and Yun-Ting Yeh’s “to push the boundaries... in the years to come”, I want to help improve the quality of healthcare and preventive medicine. I continue to strive to learn the academic culture with the caring support of the leadership team. It’s a pleasure to be a part of the Stanford Radiology family and to be a part of a special vision.

Jessie Leong
Director of Administration
Stanford Medicine | Radiology
People with disabilities are the largest minority in America. Yet, regardless of whether the disability is visible or invisible, people with disabilities are often invisible in discussions about diversity and underrepresented in the field of medicine. Disabilities are not just those that you can see. In fact, there are a variety of disabilities, including physical, hearing, visual, psychological and learning. Moreover, two people may share the same disability but be impacted quite differently and have vastly different experiences. Those experiences are shaped by their communities, both inside and outside of work. In the workplace, the person with the disability may encounter barriers and supports, the balance and nature of which depends on the institution's structure, as well as on culture and climate. Supportive structural arrangements include access to appropriate accommodations, ease of access to those accommodations, knowledgeable disability service providers, and rich personal networks with dedicated student and faculty organizations. Cultural and climatic attributes that can improve the lives of those with disabilities focus on ongoing professional development, awareness, and openness [1]. Specific considerations may include the regular assessment of institutional policies, services, and space; the incorporation of disability into diversity and inclusion initiatives; openness to disability in admissions and recruitment; and deep leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion, among others.

In the fall quarter of this academic year, Dr. Peter Poullos, a Body Imaging Radiologist at Stanford joined the School of Medicine's Faculty Senate Subcommittee on Diversity, led by Dr. Iris Gibbs. The subcommittee realized that disability was one of the underrepresented groups at the medical school without representation or affinity groups. Thus, the subcommittee decided to focus on disability as their lead project for 2019. Shortly after, Dr. Poullos attended the “Future of Disability at Stanford” event sponsored by the Stanford Disability Initiative, where he learned about campus-wide initiatives aiming to incorporate disability as a fundamental part of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Through
these two separate organizations, he recognized that the School of Medicine needs an organization to promote community, support, and advocate for students, trainees, faculty and staff with disabilities.

To fill this void, he founded the Stanford Medicine Abilities Coalition (SMAC). SMAC is composed of people who have disabilities and their allies. SMAC aims to foster and advocate for the equal treatment and well-being of everyone at Stanford Medicine, regardless of differences; to promote collaboration between people who are passionate about disability at Stanford Medicine; and to advocate for accessibility, resources and disability services at Stanford Medicine, above and beyond that required by law. The organization does not enforce legal requirements, rather the focus is towards actively welcoming and even recruiting people with disabilities. This is a fundamental shift in emphasis away from merely making "reasonable accommodations," to realizing that those with disabilities have a unique perspective on the healthcare system and on life in general, which is necessary to include in an organization devoted towards caring for others. Who better to understand our patients than those who are both healthcare providers and healthcare recipients?

Dr. Poullos has had a disability since 2003 when a bicycle accident caused a spinal cord injury. No longer able to perform endoscopic procedures or practice independently, he came to Stanford in 2004 to start over with a second residency and fellowship in radiology. He joined the faculty in 2009, at which time he became Associate Radiology Residency Program Director, a role he performed until 2016. Having transitioned successfully into his new field, he turned outward towards diversity advocacy and later this disability work which led to the formation of SMAC. Having not worked with disability groups at Stanford, he had much to learn. Luckily, he was able to connect with Zina Jawadi, the chair of the Stanford Disability Initiative, and with Richie Sapp and his fellow medical students in the Medical Students with Disability and Chronic Illness (MSDCI) group. They educated him on disability organizations and issues at the University and at the School of Medicine. He turned to unraveling the alphabet soup of disability organizations, including the DAO, OAE, SLC, OFDD, and the COE (Diversity & Access Office, Office of Accessible Education, Schwab Learning Center, Office of Faculty Development and Diversity, and Center of Excellence in Diversity in Medical Education). In March, with sponsorship from the Dean's Office and the OFDD, SMAC representatives joined the National Coalition for Disability Access in Health Science Education and flew to Washington D.C. to attend their Annual Symposium. There, they were able to connect with national leaders in this field.

**SMAC’s Accomplishments**

SMAC held its launch event in April, an informational session and mixer with MSDCI. Over 70 guests, including Dean Lloyd Minor and the Chair of Radiology, Dr. Sam Gambhir came together to engage in critical conversation about disability inclusion. The event brought together a diverse group of people from the School of Medicine, united in the common cause. SMAC held its first dinner and brainstorming meeting in May. We hosted a booth at the Second Annual Diversity and Inclusion Forum and Fair. Most importantly, SMAC now has a seat in the School of Medicine Diversity Cabinet, only the second “identity group” after the LGBTQ+ /SGM to be represented in this fashion. Still, we are at the early stages of forming the organization, currently building organizational leadership, social media presence, and outreach. SMAC is active on social media with a Facebook group, Facebook page, Instagram page, Twitter account, and a YouTube channel. On a practical level, we have been working with the Clark Center management to make the Peet’s Coffee and classroom area more accessible for people with physical disabilities.
Moving forward, SMAC will host quarterly events and monthly meetings. So far, we have three committees who will focus on supporting disability service providers in medical education, address issues related to residency and fellowship, and fostering an inclusive institutional culture for faculty and administration. We will continue to serve as mentors for MSDCI. Dr. Poullos will be participating in a panel discussion on diversity at the Department of Radiology Diversity Fair in September. Lastly, we are currently putting together a survey about the state of disability at Stanford School of Medicine, set to be launched in October.

We hope for our work to motivate individuals with disabilities and their allies to become involved with our initiatives. At the same time, we would like to highlight that society often portrays people with disabilities in the lens of inspiration simply for completing the same daily routines as someone without a disability. We want to avoid this pitfall, seeking to inspire but not be inspirations or inspirational per se. The distinction is small but important. We are extremely excited about the future of SMAC, because it has the potential to transform the lives of the largest minority in Health science. Most importantly, we hope to make disability an integral part of diversity and make visible an otherwise invisible community.

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Sources:
1. Lisa Meeks and Neera Jain, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Action in Medical Education: Lived Experiences of Learners and Physicians with Disabilities, AAMC March 2018
   https://news.aamc.org/diversity/article/paving-way-med-students-physicians-disabilities/
   https://youtu.be/SxrS7-I-sMQ

We would like to thank Dr. Lisa Meeks, an Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan and an expert in Disability in Medicine, for reviewing this article
“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.”

— Maya Angelou