



# ORACLE

*To further the achievements of women practicing thoracic surgery by providing mutual support and facilitating professional advancement*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



**Nora Burgess, MD - WTS President**

As we reach the midpoint of the fiscal year, the membership of WTS is well on its way to matching the unprecedented growth of 2008. Candidate membership has increased dramatically, due in part to the large number of scholarship applicants for 2008, which allowed us to identify interested women in school and in clinical training. We will continue to reach out to the coming generations of surgeons across all years of education, beginning in secondary school and extending into subspecialty training. The 2009-10 Women in Thoracic Surgery Scholarship Program is already in process: please see page 2 of the Oracle for details.

This outreach will also be advanced by two new partnerships: The Joint Council on Thoracic Surgery Education's "Best and the Brightest" subcommittee and the Women in Cardiology Council of the American College of Cardiology.

Women in Thoracic Surgery will be working closely with the Joint Council on Thoracic Surgery Education's "Best and the Brightest" subcommittee to support their goal of attracting the best and brightest to the specialty. WTS board member, Dr. Cindy Herrington, Associate Program Director, University of Southern California and Children's Hospital Los Angeles Fellowship in Congenital Heart Surgery, is already actively engaged with the subcommittee.

With 78 active members and more educational institutions becoming WTS Institutional Benefactors, we had numerous members and friends stopping by to visit at the WTS Reception during the AATS 89th Annual Meeting in Boston. Some pictures from this event appear on page 6 of the Oracle – check them out!

In addition, the Women in Cardiology Council of the American College of Cardiology has appointed the President (or designee) of WTS as an ex-officio member of their leadership group. Women in Cardiology, with funding from the ACC Foundation, sponsors a professional career development

seminar every other year and has invited Women in Thoracic Surgery, as well as other women's surgical sub-specialty professional societies, to help design and sponsor content. Their next career skills seminar is tentatively planned for 2010. Presently, there are 2,900 women in the field of cardiology nationwide, including both residents and fellows.

On a special note, WTS is also partnering with the National Institutes of Health to sponsor an upcoming traveling exhibit, tentatively entitled "Evolution of a Medical Device: The Heart Valve." The exhibition traces the arduous efforts to develop mechanical heart valve prostheses, and recognizes the pioneering and unique contributions of Dr. Nina Braunwald in this area.

### Please save the date!

At the January 2010 Women in Thoracic Surgery general membership meeting, WTS will be privileged to host Dr. Julie A Freischlag as our invited guest speaker. Dr Freischlag is the William Stewart Halsted Professor and Chair, Department of Surgery at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. She will be speaking on professional skills that support women surgeons in being successful in both academic and private practice environments.

To make it more convenient, this year, the meeting will be held on Monday, Jan. 25, rather than the usual Sunday evening. Please mark your calendars, we hope to see you there.

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

*Dr. Jessica Donington explains why she suggested that Pat Grant become a WTS associate member:*

When I was practicing at Stanford University, Pat Grant, RN, was my nurse coordinator on thoracic surgery service and was an integral part of my practice. She is an absolute professional whose knowledge and commitment to patient care and resident education was equal to that of the attending surgeons in our division. She has 17 years of experience in the care and treatment of thoracic surgery patients and taught me a tremendous amount about thoracic surgery and patient

communication in the early portion of my career. Her incredible knowledge base made up for many of the gaps from my training regarding outpatient pre- and post-operative care. I found her to be organized, independent, reliable, meticulous and exceedingly knowledgeable on general thoracic surgery. At the same time, my patients found her to be warm, compassionate, approachable and always available for them. She has a strong commitment to continued medical education, and has an amazing ability to keep abreast of new technology and treatment protocols. She was usually the one educating the surgeons and keeping

us up-to-date. I have always considered her as a colleague who was my equal and therefore feel that she has a place in any professional organization of which I am a member.

Pat was my “right-hand-man” throughout my time at Stanford. She has been a strong advocate of my career and of the professional development of women residents in our program. I suggested that Pat join Women in Thoracic Surgery as an associate member because I believe WTS will benefit from Pat’s energy, enthusiasm and tremendous knowledge in thoracic surgery.

### Who are Associate Members?

WTS depends on new membership for its continued growth and leadership role in providing quality patient care, mentorship, and education for generations to come. WTS members are encouraged to invite distinguished people such as Pat Grant, RN to apply for associate membership. Potential associate members are allied health care professionals who have demonstrated a commitment to the field of thoracic surgery and outstanding support of women in the field.

David Robinson  
*Oracle Associate Editor*

### Pat Grant explains why she became an Associate Member

It was a very pleasant surprise when Jessica Donington asked if I was interested in joining WTS as an associate member! Jessica sponsored my associate membership in STS and I feel grateful for this incredible invitation. Before Jessica came to Stanford, where I had the privilege of working as her nurse, I knew little about women as thoracic surgeons. Jessica changed that; she became an important role model for the faculty, fellows, residents, staff and a model of excellence for the patients. I was proud to collaborate with her as she mentored the residents, educated our patients and their families, and bolstered the confidence of the staff. In time, Jessica, who began as the “quiet storm”, stole the show and turned the service into a thriving, active practice. She won the admiration of her colleagues, the friendship and devotion of the nurses, the respect of the residents and the love and trust of her patients

with whom she bonded. She taught us all without restraint. She was the first thoracic surgeon I knew who really talked to her patients about smoking...and they listened! Many of them quit smoking to ensure that she would be their surgeon. She was the incentive to produce and improve educational materials for our patients and smooth the rough edges of the clinic experience. In my 35 years of nursing, my years at Stanford with Jessica were the most productive and enjoyable. I left Stanford not long after Jessica’s departure. Without her, there was emptiness that could not be filled. I chose to join two CT surgeons in the community because Jessica gave me the confidence to add a new facet to my career, cardiac surgery. With Jessica as my inspiration, I plan to continue my devotion to and strong support of CT surgery through WTS. Many thanks for this opportunity.

Pat Grant, RN

## THE SEVEN DEADLY ROADBLOCKS TO SUCCESS – BY CHRIS WIDENER

When traveling down the road it is always good to beware of roadblocks! You don't want to crash and burn, do you? The same is true in our journey toward success. We need to beware of those things that will keep us from our destination! What are the most common? Here they are:

### 1. Fear.

Fear is one of the worst enemies of success. When fear wraps its tentacles around you and keeps you in bondage, you will never be able to reach for your dreams. We must confront our fears, see them for what they are, toss them to the side, and pursue our dreams with relentless passion. Conquering fear and stepping forward to reach new lands and new ideas is what makes success possible. What are you afraid of today? What fear must you conquer to be able to achieve your dream? When you realize what it is, take an action that is diametrically opposed to that which you fear. This will confront and conquer the fear by giving you the first step in the right direction.

### 2. Lethargy.

Quite frankly, what keeps most people from success is that they simply don't have the energy, or make the energy, to do what it takes to move to the next level. They get to a point that is comfortable and then they settle in for a nice, life-long nap! Don't get lethargic; get going! Force yourself to wake up from the slumber and move!

### 3. Lack of perseverance.

Often times the race is lost because the race is not finished. Success is often just around the sharpest corner or the steepest hill. Persevere. Keep going. One more hill. One more corner! In real estate they say the three most important things are "location, location, location." In success the three most important things are "perseverance, perseverance, perseverance."

### 4. Pessimism.

The saying is that you can achieve what you believe. Ask yourself what kinds of beliefs you hold. Are you an optimist or a pessimist? If you don't believe that you can achieve then you won't. Your pessimism will prove you right every time. You will find that you subconsciously undermine yourself. Develop your optimism. Look for ways to believe that you can achieve success.

### 5. Not taking responsibility.

I am the chaplain for the local police department. The other day I went with an officer as he took two prisoners to court. Time after time the prisoners made excuses as to why they hadn't yet done what the judge had ordered (she didn't buy it, by the way). After dropping the prisoners off, I said to the officer that unsuccessful people and prisoners have the same bad habit – they won't accept responsibility for their lives. You are responsible. When you accept that, you are on the road to success.

### 6. Picking the wrong people to hang out with.

We can easily become products of our environment. This is why it is essential to hang around people who will spur you on not hold you back! What about the people you have surrounded yourself with? Are they quality people who will encourage you and strengthen you in your quest for success? If not, move on!

### 7. No vision.

Those who succeed always see their success months and years before they live it. They have the ability to look ahead, see the future, imagine the good that can and will come from their lives, families and work. To not have vision is a tremendous roadblock. Sit down and work on seeing the future – and make it good!

*This article is by Chris Widener, author and motivational speaker. For more information about Chris Widener, please visit [www.chriswidener.com](http://www.chriswidener.com)*

**THE ABTS BOARD  
CERTIFIED A  
RECORD HIGH OF  
16 FEMALES THIS  
PAST JUNE.  
CONGRATULATIONS!**



## CARING FOR CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD



Dr. Joanne Starr and Dr. Caixia Liu, a female congenital heart surgeon in training at the International Beijing Childrens Hospital

Although cardiac surgery is readily available in the United States and in most economically well-off countries, in the majority of the world, children born with congenital heart defects have no or few surgical options. WTS member Dr. Joanne Starr is working to change that. In her practice in the United States, she has cared for a number of children from developing countries who have been brought to the US by the Rotary Club Gift of Life Program. Joanne, however, has gone above and beyond that, taking full surgical teams to other countries for the dual purpose of providing immediate care for children who would otherwise die, and training the local health care team so that they can gradually increase the number and complexity of children they can help.

In March of this year Joanne accompanied the International Childrens Heart Foundation on a mission trip to Beijing Children's Hospital, where she met Dr. Caixia Liu, pictured above, a congenital heart surgeon from Shanxi Province Children's Hospital.

Most recently she was lead surgeon with a group from DC Childrens Hospital in a trip to Kampala Uganda. WTS thanks Joanne for her hard work and holds her up as an example of how each of us can do something to make the world better.



Uganda children  
Dr. Joanne Starr and her team

*Dr. Liu-*

*I hope this finds you well. It was very good to meet you. I wonder if you could explain to me the training and requirements you have to go through in China to become a pediatric cardiac surgeon and where you are in your training. Thank you.*

*Dr. Joanne Starr*

Dear Dr. Joanne Starr,

I am sorry for the delayed reply. Recently I have been busy in my PhD graduation. I have achieved the degree. I have been back to our hospital-Shanxi Province Children's Hospital.

That is a good time with you. I am surprised to find that you are studying Chinese. You are great! I think it may be difficult.

In China these are necessary to become a pediatric cardiac surgeon. First, getting the medical bachelor degree in medical university, pediatric bachelor degree is the best. Second, clinical training, particularly in pediatric surgery and cardiac surgery.

I got the pediatric bachelor degree in Shanxi Medical University and did training in Shanxi Province Children's Hospital, Shanghai Children's Medical Center, Beijing Fuwai Cardiovascular Hospital and Shanghai Thoracic Hospital.

With best regards

Yours sincerely,  
Dr. Caixia Liu

## WTS INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Is your institution a WTS Benefactor Member? With sponsorship becoming more difficult to obtain in the current economic climate, it is more important than ever that Women in Thoracic Surgery expand its membership to supplement funding for scholarship and outreach efforts. During the meeting in Boston, many members agreed to approach their institutions about becoming Benefactor Members. While CT program directors were previously solicited, a personal word from you may close the deal and ensure your institution is among those featured on [www.wtsnet.org](http://www.wtsnet.org).

A WTS Institution Benefactor membership application form is added to the end of this newsletter, dues are \$500 per year. WTS members should consider personally shepherding this application through your institution's administrative process. If more members had the support of their home

educational institutions, WTS could afford to fund many more scholarships in the coming year.

As members know, WTS is taking great strides to advance the cause of women thoracic surgeons, from providing valuable resources for women CT residents and women just beginning their practices, to those well established as women surgeons. Through its scholarship program, WTS has been a pioneer in reaching out to female medical students and general surgery residents encouraging them to consider CT surgery as a specialty. And as always, WTS provides extensive networking opportunities for women residents and surgeons, helping them to enhance leadership skills and build the collaborations so important to success.

Almost 50% of medical students today are women, and more than 29% of

general surgery residents are women. Institutional membership in WTS is one of the best ways a program can assist with the good work WTS is doing and support the role of women in cardiothoracic surgery today and in the future. WTS also provides residents, especially women residents, valuable access to mentoring and networking opportunities that can enhance their residency experience and ultimately further their careers. Urge your institution to apply for Institutional Benefactor membership today!

## WTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

WTS will again offer scholarships for women with an interest in becoming cardiothoracic surgeons to attend to the STS 46th Annual Meeting and STS/AATS Tech-Con in Ft Lauderdale, Jan 24 – 27, 2010. The scholarship will cover registration, travel expenses and a three night hotel stay. The scholarship is open to all women in medical school or residency who have a desire to become cardiothoracic surgeons.

The application is now available online at [www.WTSnet.org](http://www.WTSnet.org). **The deadline is Oct. 1.**

In recent years, this program has been a great success at encouraging talented young women to join us in this challenging and rewarding career. Please get the word out to all the women you know that might like to apply.

### WTS would like to thank the following Benefactors for their support:

- University of Michigan Medical School
- Medical University of South Carolina
- Oregon Health & Science University
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine
- The University of Arizona College of Medicine
- University of Minnesota



## AATS 89th ANNUAL MEETING IN BOSTON



## PLEASE PASS TO A COLLEAGUE

# Women in Thoracic Surgery

## Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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► Please provide the following information:

- Type of practice (*circle one*): Academic Private Practice Other
- Type of surgery (*circle all that apply*):  
Adult Cardiac Pediatric Thoracic Other
- Your areas of interest (*circle all that apply*):  
Membership Education Scholarship  
Newsletter Mentoring Other (*please specify*): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### DUES PAYMENT INFORMATION

► U.S. Active - \$150 International - \$75 Residents/Students - No charge

Make check payable to: Women in Thoracic Surgery (*Tax ID#: 30-0003353*)

To pay by credit card: \_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_ American Express

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp date: \_\_\_\_\_

Card billing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name *as it appears on card*: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please note the credit card charge will show The Society of Thoracic Surgeons.  
If you have questions, contact Nancy Puckett at 312.202.5819 or [wts@wtsnet.org](mailto:wts@wtsnet.org).*

► Submit this form one of the following ways:

Mail: 633 N. Saint Clair St., Suite 2320, Chicago, IL 60611 USA

Fax: 312-202-5829

E-mail: [wts@wtsnet.org](mailto:wts@wtsnet.org)



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**Women in Thoracic Surgery (WTS) is an international organization of thoracic surgeons whose purpose is to:**

- Provide quality care to our patients
- Mentor young women interested in pursuing careers in thoracic/cardiac surgery
- Provide educational opportunities for our members
- Educate the public, especially women, regarding cardiac and pulmonary health and disease



Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Dues Payment Information** Corporate Benefactor Membership: \$1,500

Make check payable to: Women in Thoracic Surgery (Tax ID#: 30-0003353)  
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Please note the credit card charge will show The Society of Thoracic Surgeons.

**Submit this form to  
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Women in Thoracic Surgery  
633 N. Saint Clair St.  
Suite 2320  
Chicago, IL 60611 USA

**Via fax to:** 312-202-5829

**Via e-mail to:** wts@wtsnet.org



Become a Corporate Benefactor of

## Women in Thoracic Surgery

JOIN US!

Women in Thoracic Surgery (WTS) was founded in 1986 with a mission to enhance the quality of medical care given to patients of its members, to mentor young women thoracic surgeons, to enhance the education of patients about heart and lung diseases, and to expand educational opportunities for women thoracic surgeons.

surgery. WTS, with the partnership of its Corporate Benefactor Members, hopes to help revitalize cardiothoracic surgery for the future.

WTS is taking great strides to advance the cause of women thoracic surgeons and extends its appreciation to individuals and organizations whose support makes it possible for WTS to fulfill its mission.

Today, almost 50 percent of medical students are women, and more than 29 percent of general surgery residents are women. If cardiothoracic surgery is to thrive, the specialty must cultivate this important source of talent.

The best and the brightest are out there, and many of them are women whose creative minds can be inspired by the exciting work of cardiothoracic



Corporate Benefactor Membership is open to corporations and organizations that wish to demonstrate their support and dedication to the WTS mission. This investment will be critical to the ongoing success of WTS scholarship and mentoring programs that support the next generation of cardiothoracic surgeons. With the help of its Corporate Benefactor Members, WTS can continue to support, encourage, and educate these young women to ensure a strong and vital future for cardiothoracic surgery.

### BENEFITS

- ▶ WTS Corporate Benefactor sign for booth display
- ▶ One set of WTS Member mailing labels prior to the January General Session
- ▶ An invitation to attend the WTS General Session in January
- ▶ Prominent recognition on the WTS Web site home page, [www.WTSnet.org](http://www.WTSnet.org)
- ▶ Recognition within the CT surgery community as a company that supports women CT surgeons and the future of the specialty
- ▶ The genuine appreciation of WTS members and all women in the cardiothoracic surgery community

WTS Corporate Benefactor Membership is one of the best ways your company can assist with the important work WTS is doing and support the role of women in cardiothoracic surgery today and in the future.

WTS invites your company to demonstrate support for the community of women thoracic surgeons and the WTS mission.

Become a Corporate Benefactor of Women in Thoracic Surgery. See reverse side for an application.

*Since 2005, WTS has awarded 22 scholarships to female residents with an interest in thoracic surgery. Your company's support as a WTS Corporate Benefactor will allow WTS to continue activities like this — and many more.*

#### ▶ Contact us

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