

NCTR receives national recognition

By Jennifer Baker
OF THE COMMERCIAL STAFF

The National Center for Toxicological Research has had a lot of good news over the past year. In February, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Arkansas Regional Laboratory at the Jefferson Laboratories of the Federal Drug Administration. The laboratory is co-located with the FDA's NCTR facility at Jefferson. The new facility is 146,400 square feet and was built by the FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs.

Scientists at ARL will be testing products regulated by FDA to ensure compliance with the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, and other laws and regulations. FDA regulates products manufactured in the United States and those imported from other countries. These products include food and animal feed, human and animal drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, and biologics such as vaccines and the blood supply.

An employee at NCTR had good news this year. The results of a new study led by Dr. S. Jill James, a biochemist at NCTR, found a possible link between Down Syndrome and lower maternal folic acid levels. The results of this study "lends additional support for the recent FDA decision to fortify grain products with folic acid," said Dr. Jane E. Henney, the commissioner of Food and Drugs. The preliminary study published in an issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, found that mothers of children with Down Syndrome show biochemical and genetic evidence of a functional folate deficiency that possibly may be reversed by increased consumption of folic acid.

In other news at NCTR, chemists were granted a pending U.S. Patent Application entitled, "Methods for Predicting the Biological, Chemical and Physical Properties of Molecules From Their Spectral Properties." NCTR officials consider this patent application a way to help provide rapid, reliable, accurate and inexpensive methods for estimating toxicological endpoints.

Also, NCTR has been recognized for excellence in energy conserva-

tion. NCTR received two 1999 Energy and Water Management Awards. Members of the contracting and engineering staffs were recognized for the Entergy Alternative Financing Project. The special financing capabilities they negotiated for NCTR with Entergy, will permit the center to complete \$6.8 million in infrastructure improvements without additional FDA funding, save about 30 percent of NCTR's annual energy budget and attain complete payoff in approximately six years.

The second energy award was for the installation of Electrical Power Factor Correcting Capacitors that

used third-part funding to install an electrical capacitor bank resulting in electrical demand savings of about \$8,000 per month.

Other awards were given to Drs. Dwight Miller and Jon Wilkes from *Popular Science* Magazine for an invention that detects spoilage in food which was named "Fresh Tag." The invention was also one of the few new products highlighted by Diane Sawyer on ABC television's Good Morning America program. The device received one of the magazine's top 100 "Best of What's New" Awards for 1999, winning one of the 20 awards given in the science and technology category.

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+ Jill, Dwight, Jon,
Ted, Bruce Rice

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