

IBSAR

The Newsletter of the Initiative for Biodiversity Studies in Arid Regions Issue No. 2 February 2003

Editorial

In the fall of 2001 I went to Ohio to meet with the future partners of the Mercy Corps Biotech project. After a long flight delay caused by bad weather conditions I finally arrived to Toledo and was met at the airport by an older Lebanese couple Mr. And Mrs. Shousher. During my stay I was offered the opportunity to reside with the Shoushers. I gladly accepted and this allowed me to learn about the efforts of an individual who has committed his life to community service. Born in Lebanon (Qaraoun) Mr. Shousher emigrated with his family to the



U.S.A. He became very active in his community and has worked hard at promoting the image of Lebanon and inter-religious/ inter-racial harmony. Why am I talking about Mr.

Shousher? He was instrumental in helping us receive the funds for the Mercy Corps Biotech. Project. Mr. Shousher sent us these photographs of Hala and Samar that he took during Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Racial Unity Celebration At the University of Toledo, Ohio, on January 20, 2003. Even then he made it a point to promote our program and our students...



S. N. Talhouk

For your precious contribution to this invaluable newsletter, including the editorial section contact M. Daouk at me11@aub.edu.lb
Submission deadlines 20th of each month.

News

New Faculty member joins IBSAR.

K. Bouhadir received his M.Sc. degree in Pharmacal Sciences and PhD in synthetic organic chemistry from Auburn University. Afterwards, he spent over four years at the University of Michigan as a postdoctoral and assistant research scientist synthesizing biocompatible and biodegradable biomaterials for tissue engineering and drug delivery applications. He joined the Chemistry Department at AUB in October 2000 and has since been developing chemical pathways to construct synthetic DNA analogs. Kamal's expertise in organic chemistry will complement the multidisciplinary expertise available at IBSAR. He will be involved in the chromatographic separation and chemical characterization of the major organic components of plant extracts. This will potentially lead to the isolation and chemical identification of the major active components of the plant extracts under investigation.

Three Msc. Students receive scholarships from the Mercy Corps Biotech Project.

Name: Abed AlRahman Itani
Advisor: N. Saliba
Research topic: Chemical profiling of native plants with potential biological importance

Name: Asma Lakkis
Advisor: A. Abdallah, P. Zghaib
Research topic: Biodiversity and Ecotourism

Name: Elie Samaan
Advisor: H. Mohtaseb, R. Talhouk
Research topic: Not yet decided

Meetings, contacts & Seminars

Meeting with Pharmaline. As a follow up to a preliminary link between B. Saab and Pharmaline, F. Homaidan, N. Saliba, and S. Talhouk visited the facilities of the pharmaceutical company.

They met with the general manager (C. Abi Karam) and the Vice president (G. Saraf) to discuss prospects for collaboration. The partners introduced IBSAR's mission and overall research activities. The initiative was received very positively by Pharmaline and it was agreed to conduct follow up meetings to elucidate prospects for collaboration (minutes on the web)

A database is being developed by N. Abou Ghazale, G. Catacora, A. Lakiss and K. Sleem who are compiling a list of contact persons involved in natural plants and plant products. These include farmers, producers, middlemen, importers, exporters and suppliers (More on the web)

IBSAR meetings. IBSAR meetings are scheduled every 2 weeks starting February 27, 2003. (Schedule of speakers on the web)

Strategic planning for IBSAR.

During their last meeting IBSAR partners decided to hold a retreat to develop a strategic plan for IBSAR. This effort will be coordinated by K. Abdallah (Minutes on the web)

Meeting of 27 February. S. N. Talhouk gave a presentation on "The Eight-Step Change Process, in A Collaborative Model for Leading Academic Change" and proposed to use this approach as a model to be followed by IBSAR (minutes and presentation on the web)

Workshop: 'Legislation and Biodiversity Opportunities in Lebanon'.

A multi-institutional committee has developed the full strategy to adopt for the preparation of the workshop. The workshop is planned for March 27- 28, 2003 and is jointly coordinated by IBSAR, the Ministry of Environment and EARTH (Costa Rica) (Committee members include:

AUB: N.Abu Ghazale, E. Barbour, H. Mohtaseb, B.Saab, and S. Talhouk.

Earth University: J. Zaglul

Ministry of Environment: L. Chamas, S. Malek Azar and L. Samaha
UNDP: Amal sabra) (More on the web)

Fund Raising

Funds received!

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Proposals Submitted

S.N. Talhouk submitted a pre-proposal for the UNDP: United Nation Development Program "Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring in the Protected Areas

Phase 1" (submission date Feb. 2003, members included: R. Baalbaki, K. Knio, R. Sadek, and R. Zurayk)

Three proposals were submitted to the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research under IBSAR. "Extraction and Characterization of Essential oil: A rejuvenated Approach for Agricultural, Economical and Industrial growth in Lebanon" by N. Saliba (Members included: K. Bouhadir and S. Talhouk), "Aqueous extracts with anti inflammatory bioactivities from indigenous Lebanese plants: Insights into their mode of action in vivo and in vitro" by R. Talhouk (Members included: E. Barbour, M. El Sabban and F. Homaidan), "Developing production strategies for endemic ornamental bulb species" by S. Talhouk (Submission date February 2003)

F. Homaidan coordinated the preparation of a Planning grant submitted to "National Institute of Health" under the context of the "International Cooperative Biodiversity Groups". The overall goals of the program are drug discovery, biodiversity conservation and economic development. This funding is divided into 2 phases. Phase one: Planning award which provides support for up to \$150,000 per year direct costs up to two years for developing the partnership plans, access and benefit-sharing framework, specific

aims, and preliminary data. Phase two: a completion of the first phase a Comprehensive Award which will support awards of up to \$600,000 per year direct costs for up to five years to carry out the full spectrum of the ICBG research and development activities. This proposal was submitted in collaboration with the Stevens Institute of Technology. SIT is known to provide a unique educational environment where students, faculty and industry work closely together, sharing ideas and nurturing technology from innovation to implementation.

(Submission date February 2003. Members included: E. Barbour, M. El Sabban, H. Mohtaseb, N. Saliba, R. Talhouk, S.N. Talhouk).

Publication from IBSAR

Nothing yet? Again!
