

Have Young Children? You Can Still Attend the ASCB Annual Meeting

The Women in Cell Biology (WICB) Committee is pleased to have a role in enabling parents of dependent children to attend the ASCB Annual Meeting. For the third year, the ASCB will offer Childcare Grants. These will again be made possible by an Elsevier Foundation grant, which has been augmented by a donation from a generous anonymous Society member.

Balancing Parenthood and Career

When we're lucky, the practical challenges of raising a child predominantly boil down to a succession of demands on our time and money: getting the child to school, making arrangements when a child is sick or has an appointment, attending events at and outside of school, and ensuring safe and healthy care when we are away or have schedule conflicts. But people sometimes give up on or compromise a promising, demanding career when they become parents. They usually offer as explanation the overwhelming sense that they couldn't satisfactorily serve the needs of both their child and their career simultaneously.

Attending the ASCB Annual Meeting can be an important event in a scientific career. Often it is the first time that a graduate student or postdoc presents her or his work at an international forum. Both the formal mechanisms (posters, symposia) and the informal ones (discussions, networking) often provide an early, critical step to advancing an individual's research. For most attendees, of course, going to the meeting requires travel away from home. Thus for parents of dependent children it adds the burden of childcare to the other many demands for their financial and emotional resources.

User-Friendly Application and Grant

In designing the grants, members of the WICB Committee Subcommittee on Childcare (Ursula Goodenough, Elizabeth Marincola, Inke N athke, Lynne Quarmby, and Jenna Roecklein-

Canfield)—all parents themselves—realized that two elements would be critical to optimizing the cost–benefit of the awards: coverage of reasonable costs and ease of application.



Elizabeth Marincola

Photo credit: Stacey Z. Goldberg Photography

The first critical element is that the grants cover any reasonable childcare arrangement. We explicitly state that we will pay:

- For a caretaker at home
- For a relative/caretaker to travel to one's home
- For children to travel to a relative
- To retain childcare at the site of the Annual Meeting
- For extended daycare hours
- To bring a caretaker (related

or not) to accompany the parent (especially a nursing mother) to the meeting

There is also an "other" category, leaving open the possibility that there are other creative, legitimate childcare solutions that parent-applicants may wish to propose.

The second critical element is that the application itself not be, or be perceived as, a barrier to seeking help. By definition, those applying have limited time, so the Subcommittee sought to eliminate requests for unnecessary data. The application is basically, "tell us how many children you have; how old they are; how you would apply money if granted; and how much you are requesting." The Subcommittee estimates that the application takes 15–20 minutes to complete.

Once an application is received, the Subcommittee validates that the circumstances are consistent with and limited to the intent of the grant. (No, the grant will not cover the cost of a separate hotel room for grandma and baby.) It checks that airfare requests are appropriate. The great majority of successful applicants receive most or all of the amount of their request. Applicants are required to submit a poster for presentation at the meeting to qualify for a grant, and they must remain for the duration of the meeting. Grants reimburse documented expenses up to the awarded amount.



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Those We Have Helped

In the first two years that the WICB Committee offered childcare grants, 29 awards were made to parents from five countries, including multiple grants to cover each of the arrangements described above.

Zhiqing Zhu, a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame, received an award in 2009 and said, "I really appreciate being selected to receive a childcare award from WICB. It made it financially possible for both [my wife and me] to attend the meeting, reducing the additional cost of traveling with our new daughter. Moreover, it allowed us to concentrate fully on the meeting."

Another 2009 awardee, University of California, San Francisco, postdoc Laurie Littlepage, said, "This year was an important year for me to present my research to other scientists at the ASCB Annual Meeting. However, the childcare award is the only reason I was able to go to the meeting this past year. My baby is very young, and I haven't spent much time away from him. By having the childcare award, I was able to bring my mother along to care

"[T]he childcare award is the only reason I was able to go to the meeting this past year."

for my little boy nearby. During the day I could focus on the science and still see them during the off hours without having any guilt about being away from my little one. Each night I was able to put him to bed, which was priceless. Thank you so much for this opportunity!"

Lecturer Yee Ling Lau traveled to the ASCB Annual Meeting from the University of Malaya in Malaysia last December. She said, "The childcare award allowed me to bring along my six-month-old baby, who completely relies on breast milk. It would not be possible for me to attend the conference without the financial aid."

Parents (especially early-career investigators) who have dependent children, are ASCB members, are submitting an abstract to the 50th Annual

ASCB Meeting, and will incur extra expense to attend the meeting are encouraged to apply for an ASCB WICB Childcare Grant.

Applications are at www.ascb.org/meetings/WICB/wicbgrant.cfm. The application deadline is September 1, 2010. ■

—Elizabeth Marincola for the Women in Cell Biology Committee

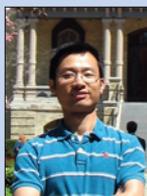
Some Recipients of 2009 ASCB Childcare Grants



Yee Ling Lau



Laurie Littlepage



Zhiqing Zhu

ASCB Grants for Childcare Costs

The ASCB Women in Cell Biology (WICB) Committee, with funding from Elsevier Foundation and private donations, is accepting applications for grant support to help offset the cost of childcare. ASCB grants enable scientists with dependent children to attend the ASCB meeting. Applicants must be ASCB members and are required to present a talk and/or poster at the meeting and to submit receipts. Only one parent of a child or children may apply. Priority will be given to students and early-stage scientists. Please visit www.ascb.org/meetings to complete the application.

Application deadline: September 1, 2010.