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**WORLD-RENOWNED INSTITUTIONS CELEBRATE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE STRUCTURE OF DNA  
New York City heralded as home to groundbreaking discovery**

**New York, NY (February 10, 2003)** – A week of educational events, culminating in a black-tie Gala at the Waldorf Astoria, have been planned to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the double helix – the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA, the molecule that encodes genetic information.

With their 1953 Nobel Prize-winning discovery at Cambridge University in England, Drs. James Watson and Francis Crick, along with fellow scientist Maurice Wilkins, ushered in a new era in molecular biology. But the foundation for their work was laid in New York years earlier.

Nine years before the discovery of the double helix, three scientists at The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research – Oswald Avery, Colin MacLeod, and Maclyn McCarty – proved that DNA is a molecule that carries genetic information. Four years later, Columbia University chemist Erwin Chargaff confirmed the precise chemical composition of DNA. And, in 1952, Alfred Hershey and Martha Chase of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory used bacterial cell cultures and a kitchen blender to show that DNA also is a genetic material in viruses.

“The actual discovery may have been made in Cambridge, England, but much of the groundwork was done at fine institutions right here in New York,” says Dr. Watson, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory president. “The work done by esteemed scientists at The Rockefeller University, Columbia University, and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory were all important scientific contributions that led to my fascination with DNA and helped make my discovery possible.”

“It is a unique and exciting opportunity for us to honor Drs. Watson and Crick,” says Gerald Fischbach, M.D., executive vice president for health and biomedical sciences and dean of the faculty of medicine at Columbia University. “We celebrate their discovery because its reach has been so global and permeates every facet of our world – including my own medical research. Even after working with this

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incredible information for 50 years, we scientists still have only begun to explore the paths it clears for us.”

Compelling educational programs are planned both in New York and abroad for the week leading up to the Feb. 28 DNA Gala, 50 years to the day of the actual discovery. The gala is partially underwritten by lead sponsor The Dana Foundation.

“A fitting celebration of the discovery of the double helix should include public education,” said Thomas P. Sakmar, M.D., Acting President of The Rockefeller University. “DNA is probably the most widely recognized acronym in science and DNA research has wide-ranging implications for society.”

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary events include an archival exhibit at the New York Public Library on DNA in New York; a genetics art exhibit at the City University of New York; and a scientific meeting at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on the biology of DNA. After the Feb. 28 gala, there will be several other events and activities commemorating Watson and Crick’s milestone in New York and around the world. For complete listings of these events, visit [www.dna50.com](http://www.dna50.com).

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### **Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory**

Established more than a century ago, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory is a private, non-profit basic research and educational institution. Under the leadership of Director and CEO Dr. Bruce Stillman, a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a Fellow of the Royal Society (London), and Laboratory President and Nobel Laureate Dr. James D. Watson some 260 scientists conduct groundbreaking research in cancer, neurobiology, plant genetics and bioinformatics.

The Laboratory’s educational activities – including an extensive program of scientific meetings and courses program, the Watson School of Biological Sciences, the Undergraduate Research Program, the Partners for the Future Program, and the Nature Study summer camp – are recognized internationally. The Laboratory also operates the Dolan DNA Learning Center, the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, the Banbury Conference Center, and the Genome Research Center. For more information, visit Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory’s Web site at [www.cshl.edu](http://www.cshl.edu).

### **Columbia University Health Sciences**

The Columbia University Health Sciences Division includes the work of physicians, scientists and other health professionals from the College of Physicians & Surgeons, the School of Dental & Oral Surgery, the Mailman School of Public Health, the School of Nursing, and allied research centers and institutions. Columbia Scientists conduct basic research with the ultimate goal of translating discoveries into techniques for fighting disease and improving health.

Columbia University physicians and scientists achieved some of the 20th century's most significant medical breakthroughs, including Erwin Chargaff’s detailed analysis explaining the chemical make-up of DNA, one of the breakthroughs that paved the way for Watson and Crick’s deduction of its structure. Columbia University also pioneered the first blood test for cancer, the first medical use of the laser, and the first successful transfer of genes from one cell to another. For more information, visit Columbia University Health Sciences’ Web site at <http://cpmcnet.columbia.edu/>.

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### **The Rockefeller University**

Founded by John D. Rockefeller in 1901, Rockefeller University was the nation's first biomedical research institution. In 1944, Rockefeller scientists revealed that DNA is the basic material of heredity. Other university accomplishments include developing methadone for people addicted to heroin, devising the AIDS "cocktail" drug therapy, and identifying an enzyme that destroys anthrax microbes to provide a potential new treatment for people infected with the deadly bacteria. Today Rockefeller has more than 70 major laboratories in the biomedical sciences, chemistry, bioinformatics and physics, as well as a graduate education program. A total of 21 scientists associated with Rockefeller University have received the Nobel Prize in physiology/medicine or chemistry. For more information, visit <http://www.rockefeller.edu/>.

### **The Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives**

The Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives is a nonprofit organization of more than 200 leading neuroscientists, including ten Nobel laureates. The Dana Alliance is committed to advancing public awareness about the progress and benefits of brain research. It is supported by The Dana Foundation.

The Dana Foundation is a private philanthropic organization with principal interests in science, health, and education. The Foundation's current areas of emphasis are in immunology and neuroscience research, and in K-12 education, particularly the training of arts educators. For more information, visit <http://www.dana.org/>.

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