

BioPREP Summer Program Celebrates Another Year of Teaming Students and Scientists

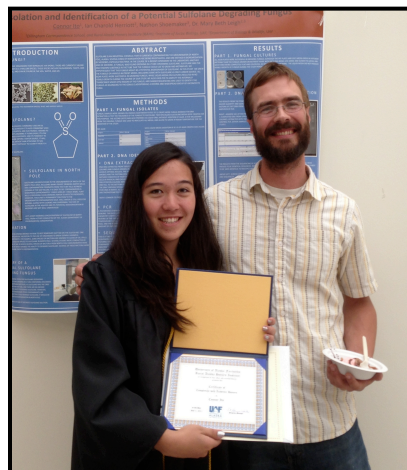


Student Whitney Walker assembling an assay as part of her 2008 RAHI Research study (Photo by Sue Hills).

Summer 2013 marked the seventh consecutive year that Alaska BioPREP has sponsored the Rural Alaska Honors Institute (RAHI) Research program. RAHI Research is an intensive six-week residential program for Alaskan junior and senior high school students. The program places motivated high school students into the laboratories of faculty at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

UAF researchers train and mentor students in the program as they perform a well-defined research project and report their results. *"RAHI Research was an absolutely fantastic opportunity!"* said 11th grade student Connor Ito of **Dillingham, Alaska**. *"I especially enjoyed knowing I was doing real science that might actually affect people someday."* Ms. Ito's project, "Isolation and Identification of a Potential Sulfolane Degrading Fungus", was conducted in the lab of Dr. Mary Beth Leigh, whose research focuses on pollutants in the environment and their remediation by plants and microbes.

Dr. Leigh's lab also hosted Whitney Walker, a 2008 RAHI Research alumna, originally from **Bethel, Alaska**. Walker is now a junior at Stanford University studying zebrafish development in the lab of Dr. James Chen. She plans to attend graduate school. Regarding her RAHI Research experience, Whitney says, *"I don't think I would be where I am now if it wasn't for RAHI. RAHI helped me realize my dream of doing academic research and realizing that the lab is the place where I belong. It helped give me the tools and education which helped me get to the research I'm now doing."*



Student Connor Ito and BioPREP staff and mentor Ian Herriott, stand in front of their poster at the 2013 annual project presentation of RAHI Research (Photo by J. Paige Ruesch).