The Mentor Awards: For All We Know

By Margaret Ragni, MD

In Greek mythology, Odysseus chose his trusted friend Mentor to serve as the tutor for his son Telemachus in Homer's *Odyssey*. Yet, a mentor is more than a tutor: a mentor is a close, trusted, and experienced guide who can provide guidance and insights and help shape careers. Having a good mentor is recognized as a critical determinant of success, yet mentoring is rarely acknowledged or awarded, at least not until this year at ASH.

Spearheaded by the ASH Trainee Council and Dr. James George, ASH past president, the Mentor Awards are being inaugurated to recognize outstanding mentorship in clinical investigation and in the basic science of hematology. After a rigorous review process, ASH announced yesterday that the recipients of the 2006 ASH Mentor Awards are Sam E. Lux, IV, MD, of the Children's Hospital of Boston, for mentorship in clinical investigation, and Deane F. Mosher, MD, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for mentorship in basic science.

Dr. Lux is Professor and Chair, Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, Children's Hospital, Boston, and was nominated by David G. Nathan, MD, and mentees George Q. Daley, MD, PhD, and David A. Williams, MD. His trainees recognize Dr. Lux for his legendary role in educating and mentoring pediatric residents and hematology fellows and developing the careers of trainees and junior colleagues. Among the many inspiring "Sam stories" were the late-night phone call on a pressing project or manuscript and the long hours spent helping a trainee perfect his slides, down to the font and color schema.

Dr. Mosher, Schilling Professor of Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison, was nominated by John Sheehan, MD, and mentees Bradford Schwartz, MD, and Joanne E. Murphy-Ullrich, PhD. His trainees recognize Dr. Mosher for his selfless and genuine desire for his over 50 trainees to succeed, a goal he places over his own achievements, and for which they claimed he was "hard-wired." The personal attributes for which he is praised include his openness, approachability, and exceptional talent to facilitate scientific as well as personal development of trainees into future clinician scientists, 90 percent of whom are in academic positions.

The selection process for the Mentor Awards was rigorous. Nominees were evaluated by a study section who ranked them on 18 criteria, including advocacy, advising, teaching, critiquing, promoting, and role modeling. "We formed a Mentor Award Study Section," said Elizabeth Hexner, University of Pennsylvania, and past Chair of the ASH Trainee Council. Dr. Hexner and colleague Dr. Lisa Hicks originated the idea, and worked with ASH colleagues Drs. Linda Burns, Scott Gitlin, Beverly Mitchell, Kanti Rai, and Ed Benz to refine the review process. The Study Section selected the top five nominees, and a professional interviewer further evaluated the nominees through structured phone interviews of the nominator and two mentees.

The Mentor Awards are the most recent addition to the prestigious ASH career awards. These include the Stratton Medal (for a long, distinguished career in hematology), the Dameshek Prize (for recent oustanding contributions to hematology), and the E. Donnall Thomas Lecture and Prize (for pioneering achivement in hematology), which are conferred each year. The Mentor Award winners receive $5,000 and a commemorative plaque.

When you take a moment to think about that mentor who helped you along the path to your chosen career, consider submitting a nomination for future awardees. The application deadline is May 4, 2007. The application is posted on the ASH Web site.