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Florida, Louisiana Students Win SE BioGENEius Regional Finals

ATLANTA, GA (March 9, 2010) – Georgia Bio (GaBio) congratulates **Muna Oli** of Eastside High School, Gainesville, Florida, and **Stephanie Axelson** of Airline High School, Bossier City, Louisiana, for winning the Southeast regional competition of the sanofi-aventis International BioGENEius Challenge, conducted by the Arlington, Va.-based Biotechnology Institute.

Ms. Oli and Ms. Axelson will represent the Southeast in the finals of the BioGENEius Challenge, held in Chicago in conjunction with the 2010 Biotechnology Industry Organization's (BIO) International Convention, May 3-6. They will be competing against 13 other regional finalists from the United States, Canada, and Western Australia. The first place winner receives a \$7,500 cash award. Other awards are \$5,000 for second place, \$2,500 for third place, and \$1,000 for fourth place. Each remaining finalist will receive a \$500 Honorable Mention Award.

Ms. Oli's biotechnology research project is titled "*A Novel Interdisciplinary Application for Personalized Tumor Treatment Using Nanothermal Radiation.*" Ms. Axelson's project is "*Identification of a New Link in Gene Silencing: Acetylation of the Methyl Binding Protein MeCP2.*"

The two were among nine high school students from Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and North Carolina who competed for two Southeast regional finalist titles Monday in Atlanta. The BioGENEius competition recognizes high school students who demonstrate an exemplary understanding of biotechnology through research projects. GaBio, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Shionogi Pharma, Inc. hosted the Southeast regional event at the CDC's Tom Harkin Global Communications Center.

Denise Koo, MD, MPH, Acting Director of the Office of Workforce and Career Development at CDC, presented the awards. The CDC, Shionogi Pharma and Aderans Research Institute provided the judges. Judging from the CDC were **Alexandre J da Silva**, Ph.D. and **David M. White**, D.V.M., Ph.D. From Shionogi, the judges were **James M. Corbitt**, Ph.D; **Rania Jalal**, Ph.D.; and **John W. Sharkey**, Ph.D; and from Aderans Research Institute, **Michael Ensslin**, Ph.D.

Georgia Bio also congratulates all the state finalists who competed in the Southeast regionals:

- **Florida** -- Morgan Monroe, Episcopal High School of Jacksonville, Jacksonville; *Fuel from Fermentation: Combining Clostridium Acetobutylicum and Waste Biomass to Maximize Hydrogen*
- **Georgia** – Anne Wang, George Walton Comprehensive High School, Marietta; *Developing a pH-Sensitive Fluorescent Dye (GFP) in E. coli for Screening Ionophoric Antibiotics*
- **Georgia** – Evan Davies, Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science and Technology, Duluth; *Palladium Catalysts applied to Organic Synthesis*
- **Louisiana** – Stephanie Terhoeve, St. Joseph's Academy, Baton Rouge; *Rescue of Malformations Caused by Nucleolar Failure in Drosophila melanogaster; a Model for the Human Treacher Collins Syndrome*
- **Mississippi** - Nickolas Whitehead, Oak Grove High School, Hattiesburg; *A Plasmid Construct For The Generation of a Green Fluorescent Protein-Tagged Carboxysome Mutant of Halothiobacillus Neapolitanus*
- **North Carolina** – Stefanie Schwemlein, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, Durham; *Peptide Ligands as Therapeutic Chelators for the Treatment of Mercury Poisoning*
- **North Carolina** – Andrew Blonsky, Price Creek Independent School, Chapel Hill; *Changing Exhaust Into Oxygen: Could Algae Survive in a Tailpipe?*

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The sanofi-aventis International BioGENEius Challenge is an annual competition for high school students that recognizes outstanding biotechnology research in healthcare, agriculture and forestry, food processing, mining and the environment, and forensics.

The Biotechnology Institute, which conducts the BioGENEius Challenge, is dedicated to educating teachers, students and the public about the promise and challenges of biotechnology. Through year-round programs, the Institute is creating a base of understanding and awareness about biotechnology among teachers and students –and building the next generation of leaders in the industry. Founded by the biotechnology community in 1998, the Biotechnology Institute is an independent, national nonprofit organization based in Arlington, VA.

Georgia Bio (www.gabio.org) is the private, non-profit association representing more than 300 pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device and diagnostic companies, healthcare systems, universities, research institutes and other organizations involved in the research and development of life sciences products that improve the health and well-being of people, animals and the environment worldwide.

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