Message from the BNC President

As my tenure with the Brandeis National Committee winds down, I am grateful for the opportunity that has brought me both personal growth and learning experiences. One of the things I loved most was visiting BNC chapters across the country — meeting our leaders and members, seeing how chapters function and marveling at how diverse we are.

I am proud of the accomplishments of our national board and committees. Together, we completed the Visioning project, which resulted in a finely detailed strategic plan for the BNC. We launched the Sustaining the Mind: Scientific Research and Scholarships fundraising campaign, new approaches for membership and a renewed emphasis on social justice. A handbook and a working model to assure leadership training for our future as well as a new website format for chapters will be made available in the next few months.

The Student Ambassador program has expanded, resulting in an official club on campus and a direct connection between students and BNC members. The University on Wheels program continues to bring Brandeis faculty to our chapters across the country.

Representing the BNC on the university’s Board of Trustees has been an honor. I have been proud to share BNC updates with the trustees.

Thank you to my National Executive Committee, my officers and the National Center staff for their contributions to my tenure.

Best wishes,
Leslie Pearlstein, National President

BNC to Honor Steve Whitfield with Sachar Award

Steve Whitfield will receive the Brandeis National Committee’s highest honor, the Abram L. Sachar Medallion, on Wednesday, June 5. This award, a special tribute to Brandeis’ founding president, is given to a person of outstanding achievement in the field of education.

Whitfield, the Max Richter Professor of American Civilization, is recognized for his commitment to education, and dedication to teaching and mentoring. His generous spirit and uncommon collegiality to all are valued by Brandeis University and the Brandeis National Committee.

As a creative historian, scholar and educator, Whitfield writes about American popular culture in a manner that is academically sound, yet readable and entertaining. As a most cherished friend to the BNC, he has visited every chapter throughout the country. In addition, he has written materials for BNC study-group programs and is always available to help whenever and wherever needed.

Steve Whitfield has rightly been described as a “man for all seasons.” We are so pleased to honor him.

GET INVOLVED!
MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Support social justice, and continue the legacy of Louis Brandeis.

It all starts here: www.brandeis.edu/bnc.
Working Toward a Cure

Bud Schenker met his wife-to-be, Sylvia, at a UCLA party. Recently released from the U.S. Navy, Bud had fallen in love with the California weather and was pursuing a career as a business teacher.

He and Sylvia married, raised three daughters and stayed very involved with their community. Bud never forgot his responsibilities; his mantra was “I’ve got to take care of my girls!”

But at 55, Bud started to show signs of lethargy, forgetfulness and confusion. Though his doctors at first dismissed the signals, it was, in fact, early Alzheimer’s. Bud was diagnosed at age 60 and admitted to the University of California, San Diego’s Alzheimer’s Research Center.

Sylvia recalls two particular moments during Bud’s care. First, she saw a 35-year-old woman suffering from Alzheimer’s, which opened her eyes to how many people the disease affects. Second, she remembers her husband pointing to a flower on her blouse and saying, “It’s beautiful.” Bud succumbed to the disease at age 79.

Today, Sylvia, a BNC member in the San Dieguito Chapter, is happy to donate to the Sustaining the Mind: Scientific Research and Scholarships campaign. The $3 million drive was instituted by the BNC to raise funds for science research and scholarships. In laboratories at Brandeis, faculty researchers, along with undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral students, study how the brain works.

“I donated to Sustaining the Mind for my family and friends who have suffered from insidious neurological diseases,” says Sylvia. “Although there is no Alzheimer’s cure currently in sight, I am hopeful that research at Brandeis will move things along. It is important that answers be found. Brandeis is making this possible.”
Positive Feedback Loop for Undergraduate Research

Why Brandeis?
Despite being a small institution, Brandeis has excellent infrastructure supporting undergraduate research. There is a palpable commitment to involving undergraduates in research here, and I know many students who have benefited from that commitment. The opportunities, training and experience I have been given through Avital Rodal’s lab have been instrumental not only in my academic career but in my professional development as well. Avi continues to inspire me with her knowledge, warmth, guidance and passion for teaching.

What is a typical day for you?
When not attending classes, I am most often working on my project in the lab. I use my knowledge of fruit-fly genetics, cutting-edge microscopy and biochemistry to explore how a protein related to Alzheimer’s disease is released from neurons. Fragments of this protein aggregate outside a cell and form plaques, which are characteristic of Alzheimer’s. Knowing how to stop this process might be beneficial in the pursuit of a cure.

Name one moment in the lab that has inspired you.
My most inspiring research experience came when I was trained by Avi to view actual neurons using our state-of-the-art microscope. The first time I saw a real neuron with my own eyes, I realized it was far more beautiful and intricate than any illustration I had seen in a textbook. That experience made such an impression on me that I printed out some of the images I took that day and hung them on my bedroom wall.

Why Alzheimer’s?
For me, the underlying cellular mechanisms that contribute to the death of memory-forming neurons are really fascinating. In addition, the incidence of Alzheimer’s disease is on the verge of becoming a public-health epidemic. I have a really great opportunity in my work; it’s a privilege to work on a problem with such far-reaching consequences.

Why do you believe in the Brandeis National Committee?
The BNC’s efforts and publications provide potential donors with the chance to directly affect the state of neurological disease research at Brandeis. By influencing the research climate, donors can directly enrich the education of undergraduate scientists-in-training.

How to Make a Gift to the Sustaining the Mind Campaign
It’s now easier than ever to make an online donation to the Brandeis National Committee’s Sustaining the Mind: Scientific Research and Scholarships campaign.

To make a gift on our secure online giving site, visit www.brandeis.edu/bnc/philanthropy/sustaining-the-mind.html or call 781-736-4160.

Or visit the BNC website at www.brandeis.edu/bnc. Just one click on the Donate to Sustaining the Mind button on the home page will let you make a gift to honor or memorialize someone in your life.
1. Eduardo Keane ’14, student ambassador and member of the BNC Executive Board, with Lois Kahn, Miami-Dade Chapter president, at a UOW program.

2. Don Katz, associate professor of psychology, with Sarasota Chapter members. From left: Pam Gordon, Fran Spring, Don, Shari Paler and Sharon Nassau.

3. Donors to BNC’s Sustaining the Mind campaign learned about neurodegenerative disease research at Brandeis during a recent UOW program at the Los Angeles Chapter. From left: Shirley Pollock; Jo Kierman; Anita Karbelnig; Gladys Fellman; Melissa Kosinski-Collins, associate professor of biology; David Kavner; and Irv Kierman.

4. Judy Jacobson, Palm Desert Chapter UOW chair, with David Cunningham, associate professor of sociology. Cunningham discussed “Truth, Justice and the Ku Klux Klan” at a Palm Desert UOW program. He also visited the Las Vegas, San Dieguito and Rancho Bernardo Chapters.

5. The Florida Region hosted Jen Cleary, senior lecturer in theater arts, and her father, John, at a UOW in Delray Beach. From left: Lois Feldman, Trails Chapter president; Marcia Mermelstein; Jen; and John. Student ambassador Hayley Browdy ’13 was also featured at the UOW.

6. Jonathan Sarna, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History, visited the Santa Clara Valley Chapter in San Jose, Calif. From left: Phylis Davis, Helen Ibsen, Jonathan, Judy Marlin and Judy Stein.
What makes this fruit fly so beautiful to Brandeis researchers?

A fruit fly’s neuron transport system is similar to the human spine, and its genes are easily manipulated. Understanding the fruit fly could be key to unlocking the mysteries of devastating neurodegenerative diseases.

Join us to support neuroscience research at Brandeis through BNC’s Sustaining the Mind campaign: www.brandeis.edu/bnc/philanthropy/sustaining-the-mind.html.