

RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology (CDB)  
2-2-3 Minatojima minamimachi, Chuo-ku, Kobe 650-0047, Japan

### **CDB Researcher Getaway**

*October 21, 2004* – RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology scientists and staff gathered for the third annual CDB Retreat on October 18 and 19 on the island of Awaji in Japan's Inland Sea. Nearly 300 research and support staff traveled to the Yumebutai conference center for the opportunity to present and discuss their work with colleagues from throughout the Center.

This year's event, organized by Raj Ladher (Laboratory for Sensory Development), Tony Perry (Laboratory of Molecular Mammalian Embryology) and Miki Murase (Kobe Research Promotion Division), built on the success of previous retreats by introducing new scientific and social programs. Scott Gilbert (Swarthmore College, USA), as the first-ever invited speaker to a CDB Retreat, gave a thought-provoking opening lecture on the use of metaphor in describing concepts of developmental biology, and the potential risks that entails. "We all use metaphors when we talk about our science," he noted, "But we have to make sure that the ones we use don't lead to misunderstanding."



The remainder of the two-day program featured alternating sessions for poster and oral presentations, with eleven talks by postdocs and lab heads, and 150 posters describing studies from germline development in *Drosophila* to high-throughput systems biology. Speakers had additional opportunities to elaborate on and defend their work in Q&A sessions held after each talk. Poster presenters were even busier, discussing their findings with any and all comers. For many, the Retreat was the first experience of having to present their work in English, and made clear the importance of being able to express themselves clearly and convincingly to their peers.

Looking to increase the chances for interaction and fun, the organizers also included another first on the social agenda in the form of a Gaelic folk dance called the *cealidh*, which had everyone dancing and laughing the night away after the reception dinner.

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"I felt this was the best retreat to date, and I hope that others enjoyed themselves and learned as much as I did," said Ladher. "We had a great time organizing things, thanks to all the help from Miki, and we're looking forward to an even better event next year."