

# Dr. Frederick A. Murphy Selected 2009 Penn Vet World Award Recipient

“**Y**ou must never forget where you came from.” These words are at the heart of the long and successful career of noted virologist Dr. Frederick A. Murphy, who was selected as the 2009 recipient of the Penn Vet World Leadership Award. Dr. Murphy is the James W. McLaughlin Professor in Residence, Department of Pathology at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) at Galveston.

The timing of the \$100,000 award could not have been better. In September 2008, Hurricane Ike devastated the island city of Galveston, Tx. “It seems that human nature is such that people who do not see the remaining damage every day tend to forget about it,” said Dr. Murphy. “But, as with Katrina, recovery is a long-term matter.”

Dr. Murphy had left for a meeting in Washington, D.C., when the evacuation order was issued before the hurricane struck. “I came back as soon as it was possible—that was when reality set in. The media did not really capture the true level of destruction and human tragedy,” he said. “My condo was fine, but many friends suffered substantial damage to their homes. Worse off were the poorest people in town, those living in older, lower houses, many of which were destroyed.

“The university suffered great loss, too—an estimated \$710M—resulting in layoffs of hospital staff. We are rebuilding UTMB, but there is a long way to go. One bright spot was the Galveston National Lab, which had been dedicated a few weeks before the hurricane hit. It is the first academic large maximum containment lab in the country—it suffered no damage and rapid progress is being made in occupying it and starting up its emerging disease and biodefense research programs.”

Dr. Murphy plans to contribute some of the prize money toward Galveston’s recovery. “My beloved wife, Irene, who died in 2000, taught me to focus on the most needful among us, and now I will do more in this regard. Also, I had been wondering where I could find some money to support my habit, my seemingly never-ending professional life—now I will not have to wonder,” he said. Dr. Murphy has been working on a history project called *The Foundations of Medical and Veterinary Virology: Discoverers and Discoveries, Inventors and Inventions, Developers and Technology*. Available on the Web at [www.utmb.edu/ihii/virusimages/index.shtml](http://www.utmb.edu/ihii/virusimages/index.shtml), the project, now better funded, will be used for teaching.

Dr. Murphy’s greatest impact on the future of the veterinary profession is his expertise in the field of infectious disease; in particular, he has played a leadership role in viral pathogenesis and has articulated clearly the role of animal pathogens in new and emerging diseases. “As an internationally acclaimed authority in comparative virology, Dr. Murphy is a pioneering researcher, respected advisor in health policy and outstanding



spokesperson for the veterinary profession, which has led to his unparalleled contributions to veterinary medicine,” said **Dr. Joan C. Hendricks**, the Gilbert S. Kahn Dean of Veterinary Medicine. “We are proud to recognize his vast and impressive achievements with this year’s Penn Vet World Leadership Award.”

The Penn Vet World Leadership Award is given annually to a veterinarian who has dramatically changed the practice and image of the profession and substantially influenced the lives and careers of others. The award provides the recipient with \$100,000 in unrestricted funding, the largest monetary award in veterinary medicine, underwritten by the Vernon and Shirley Hill Foundation.

“Shirley and I are pleased to support the prestigious Penn Vet World Leadership Award, which recognizes the outstanding individuals whose achievements have significantly advanced both the veterinary profession and humanity,” said Vernon Hill. “Dr. Murphy truly exemplifies excellence in the critical global health arena. We are honored to underwrite this award to help advance Dr. Murphy’s important research.”

Dr. Murphy has made significant contributions that benefit society and advance the veterinary profession through his research work on viruses impacting animals and humans; highlighting the critical importance of new and emerging diseases of animal origin as the major cause of these new illnesses; leadership at national and international levels, publications, speaking engagements around the world; and mentoring and teaching of young scholars.

“I share this honor with my family; everything that has been good in my life is grounded in my family life,” he said. “My four sons, my four daughters-in-law and my five grandchildren are the joy of my life.

“I would also like everyone to know how proud I am of the veterinary medical profession and the veterinarians I have known around the country and around the world. They are the salt of the earth. In thinking of all my colleagues in academic veterinary medicine, public health, international health and comparative medicine, I feel that my colleagues are serving the public interest very well, indeed—serving the needs of animal health, human health and environmental/ecological health. I am lucky to be living my life among these men and women,” he said. ♣