

THE *Current*

June 15, 2011

[Andrea Estrada](#)

Dream Comes True for 17-Year-Old Louisiana Student

Caroline Roy has plans, and she won't let a little thing like life-threatening illness get in her way. The 17-year-old high school student from Baton Rouge, La., wants to study marine biology, and after much research decided the place where she wants to do it is UC Santa Barbara.

Despite a diagnosis of recurrent pleomorphic adenomas -- cancer of the salivary gland -- when she was 11 years old, and three surgeries to address subsequent recurrences, Caroline is determined to pursue her dream of becoming a scientist.

Yesterday, she and her family -- parents Karen and Phillip, and younger brothers Austin and Joseph -- spent the day at UCSB touring the campus's Marine Science Institute (MSI), meeting with marine biologists and learning about the diverse research being conducted in the Department of Ecology, Evolution & Marine Biology. Their visit also included tours of three research laboratories in the Marine Science Building, and stops at Campus Point and MSI's Research Experience and Education Facility (REEF).

Caroline's trip to UCSB was made possible by Dreams Come True of Louisiana, Inc., a nonprofit organization that fulfills dreams for children with life-threatening illnesses. Following a welcome by Mark Brzezinski, MSI director, and Dan Reed, a research biologist and MSI deputy director, Caroline and her family learned about three areas of research at MSI. Andy Brooks, an associate project scientist, discussed the Moorea

Coral Reef Long Term Ecological Research project; Shannon Harrer, a research associate, discussed the Santa Barbara coastal Long Term Ecological Research project; and Gretchen Hofmann, professor of Ecology, Evolution & Marine Biology, gave a presentation on her laboratory group's focus on the ecological physiology of marine organisms, particularly invertebrates.

"If they'll have me, I want to come here," Caroline said during her visit to UCSB. I thought we'd have a campus tour, but I never expected people to invite us into their labs and spend so much time with us and show us so many things."

The significance of the experience was not lost on Caroline's mother. "She was just glowing when anyone was speaking to her," Karen Roy said. "The university's been amazing with everything they've done for us. With tragedy come huge blessings, and that's what she's experiencing here."

Discussing Caroline's visit to UCSB, Brzezinski said: "This was something we really wanted to do. To do anything less wouldn't be fulfilling a dream." He noted that his goal was to give Caroline a broad overview of marine biology and emphasize the ways UCSB involves undergraduates in research. "We wanted to stress the importance of attending a research university."

At Campus Point, the family played on the beach and met with Marine Science Institute researcher Jenny Dugan, who shared her research on coastal marine ecology and conservation. Their visit to UCSB concluded with a tour of MSI's REEF interactive aquarium with REEF director Scott Simon.

The family's trip to Santa Barbara also includes a whale watching expedition on Wednesday, June 15, courtesy of Sea Landing and Condor Express at the Santa Barbara Harbor.

[\[RETURN TO TOP\]](#)

† Top photo: Caroline Roy on the beach at Campus Point with Jenny Dugan, left, a researcher at MSI, and Mark Brzezinski, director of MSI.

†† Middle photo: Caroline and her mother, Karen, and little brother, Joseph, look over a brochure in the lab of Shannon Harrer.

††† Bottom photo: A researcher in the lab of Gretchen Hofmann shows Caroline, her brother, and her father, Phillip, a sea urchin.

Credit: All photos by George Foulsham, Office of Public Affairs, UCSB

Related Links

[Marine Science Institute](#)

[Dreams Come True of Louisiana](#)

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society.

All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.