ExComm holds elections
The Y Student Executive Committee selects new members and officers
by Heather Bixby, Student Activities Coordinator

New ExComm members
Three new members have been elected to the Caltech Y Student Executive Committee (ExComm). The new members are:

Veena Chavakula ‘12 — a freshman majoring in Biology and a member of Lloyd House from Agoura Hills, California. Her favorite part about ExComm is having the opportunity to work with people who are extremely dedicated to their tasks and aim to strive in whatever they do. She also enjoys the variety of activities offered to cater to the diverse tastes of ALL members of the Caltech community.

Elaine To ‘10 — a junior majoring in Biology, Pre-pharmacy and a member of Ruddock House from North Hollywood, CA. When asked why she chose to join the ExComm, she stated, “I think that the programs and events which the Y organizes for the student body play an integral role in the enhancement of student life at Caltech. Although I know that I could help out without being on ExComm, I wanted to join so that I could contribute more, as a voting member.”

Michelle Jiang ‘11 — a sophomore majoring in Mechanical Engineering and Business, Economics and Management, and a member of Lloyd House from Vancouver, Washington. She has been regularly attending ExComm meetings for a year now. During this time, she has really grown to appreciate the cooperativeness and passion that everyone at the Y shows for enhancing the student experience outside of academics at Caltech. “Being at the Y reminds me of the side of life beyond the usual textbooks and homework – it gives me the joy of doing community service and in leading fun programs that benefit the growth of Caltech students as people.”

New ExComm officers
Here are the newly elected officers, who will be the next round of Y ExComm student leaders:

President: Leon Liu ‘10
Vice President: Sunny Chun ‘10
Secretary: Michelle Jiang ‘11
Treasurer: DK Lim ‘11

Congratulations to all of you – we are all looking forward to a great year!
Recent Events (Feb)

First Veritas Forum at Caltech a great success
Afternoon discussion and evening lecture held February 5

by Sunny Chun ’10, ExComm

As publicity director and program planner for this public event presented by the Veritas Forum (VF) and co-sponsored by the Caltech Y, I had a nerve-wracking day as we were unable to predict the attendance or success of our planned events. From 2-3 pm, a public interview “Genomics and the Future of Medicine” was hosted by the VF at Caltech and BUSAC (the Biology Undergraduate Student Advisory Committee) between our Nobel Laureate, Millikan professor of Biology, and former Caltech president David Baltimore and former Human Genome Research Institute director Francis Collins at Baxter Lecture Hall. My initial apprehension was dismissed as the lecture was filled with students and entire lab groups from the Biology Department.

The discussion was technical – which met the expectations of the listeners – as it focused on the logistics and hardships of coordinating a worldwide project to sequence the human genome and the ethics of personal genome sequencing for patients, doctors, and employers. Interspersed in the interview were also many details about Dr. Collins’ rather unusual path to research in biology and unique experiences such as watching his character being portrayed in a play about the beginnings of the National Human Genome Project. The interview was captivating and was followed by a lively Q&A session. We were able to meet the intelligent and untringly inquisitive outlook of a scientist with great achievements still conducting research in the lab rooting for the future of medicine.

The main public event was held at Beckman Auditorium, 8-10 pm. The Veritas Forum (www.veritas.org) is a national organization enabling students to host interactive forums that explore truth and beauty in life and explore the person of Jesus Christ. Since their beginnings at Harvard University in 1992, the Veritas Forum has presented many forums at leading universities worldwide tackling both abstract questions and tangible issues. Topics that have been addressed by Veritas forums range from artificial intelligence (MIT) to suffering in third world countries (Columbia U).

This first Veritas Forum at Caltech was “The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief” – also the title of Dr. Collins’s book. Dr. Collins respectfully presented his view that faith in a personal God and science do not conflict. He addressed topics including the Moral Law, his personal journey to accepting a Christian faith, the gaps in Intelligent Design, theistic evolution, and scientifically inexplicable acts of altruism. Such topics are not easy to discuss in the classroom setting so it was exciting to see so many students in the crowd – 1,228 people undeterred by rain, according to Public Events. The Q&A session was the best part as Dr. Collins answered questions without alienating anyone and sympathized with the concerns of the questioner.

Attendants of different backgrounds were generally very inspired by the forum and speaker since such discussions do not occur at Caltech. I also heard comments from scientists and non-scientists alike that their eyes had been opened about their personal views. Informal discussion groups spontaneously sprang up in undergraduate houses after the forum, which is a goal of the Veritas Forum – to facilitate the open discussion among students about the hard questions of life. These events were altogether successful and this day will stay with me forever.

Explore LA Series has two outings to “Phantom of the Opera”

by Michelle Jiang ’11, ExComm

On Feb 17 and 18, the Caltech Y Explore LA Series sponsored two trips to see the Phantom of the Opera at the Pantages Theatre in downtown L.A. Over fifty tickets were given out to Caltech-affiliated students, although news of the lottery for the tickets drew a large crowd of sign-ups – in fact, ExComm members had to deny interested parties tickets to the show due to the high demand of the musical. In addition, faculty members were in attendance as well and offered transportation for several of the students. For those who were not able to provide their own transportation, the ExComm members led a whopping four-hour roundtrip Metro expedition to the Pantages theatre.

Although seated in the Mezzanine, the view of the stage was spectacular and the students and faculty members enjoyed themselves immensely. The lavish stage set-up and amazing on-stage special effects complemented the talented singers and actors well, and truly made both nights unforgettable experiences for all who were in attendance.
**Recent Events** (continued)

**Winter Friends Dinner – A memorable evening with Kelly Perkins**

**An ExComm student and a Board member report on the outstanding event**

**Student Report**

*by DK Lim '11, ExComm*

The Caltech Y Friend's dinner was great!

There was a nice socializing period in the Athenaeum where a few ExComms were stationed around posters relating to the Caltech Y's various activities, ready to talk to the Friends and Board members about their experiences.

After the wonderful dinner, Ilia Shadrin and Jonathan Tsai gave touching speeches, showing their deep felt appreciation for the Y Board members and Kelly Perkins.

Then, it was time for the awaited talk by Kelly Perkins and her husband. Her story was truly a difficult climb. She explained the emotional aspects of her experience starting from the surprise news that her heart was failing despite her healthy habits. Her husband also helped her in the talk by explaining the experience he went through with Kelly, showing that Kelly was never a lone climber. I was very stunned because I thought, after the heart transplant, everything would be functional, but I learned that Kelly had to constantly deal with her body’s rejection to the foreign heart and the lack of her heart's connection to her brain.

It was truly moving when the Perkins told their story at the top of Mt. Fuji, where Kelly read a letter from the daughter of her heart's donor and liberated her donor's ashes. The happy couple said they are going to continue climbing and motivating people to donate their organs and raise awareness of the wonderful climb of her life that she is determined to continue.

**Board Member Report**

*by John Gee, Y Board*

The Caltech Y winter Friends Dinner on Feb 19 featured a most remarkable couple – Kelly and Craig Perkins. During the reception in the Lounge, Kelly and Craig met and talked with many of those attending. The dinner was excellent with Betty Sirri doing her usual magic with the chef and staff. The turnout was great with over 100 Friends, Board members, and students attending.

Ilia Shadrin, student ExComm President, gave a fine talk summarizing the Caltech Y student activities during 2008-09. More importantly Ilia described the efforts of the student ExComm in reviewing all of the Y student programs to determine where savings could be achieved in view of the difficult economic conditions and a reduction in available funds in the coming year. This review and the ExComm actions assure the Caltech Y's ability to continue the best of their activities in "providing resources and enrichment of student life."

Kelly and Craig made a superb presentation in telling their story and Kelly's tale as a mountaineer and heart transplant recipient: "The Climb of My Life." The story of her contracting a virus in her heart and the difficulties of treating it is quite a story in itself. This resulted in a downhill ride of three years to the brink of heart failure. The rescue was a heart transplant at UCLA Hospital. This was also a story of the support of her husband, Craig, and their families.

The Climb, after the heart transplant to regain health and strength, became a monumental effort and dedication leading to becoming a world-class mountain and rock climber.

The videos and photography put together by Craig were spectacular, and graphically showed what Kelly had to overcome to reach her and their achievements.

I would certainly rank Kelly's and Craig's presentation and story one of the most outstanding Friends Dinner Programs. They took questions after the talk and while Kelly signed copies of her book, "The Climb of My Life". Kelly's and Craig's parents were present for their talk.

Their climbing experiences, while promoting awareness of organ donations, and the example Kelly shows of the benefits are most heart warming. The mountains climbed include Mt Whitney, Half Dome, Mt. Fuji, Kili-manjaro, Matterhorn, El Capitan and more to come.

Thank you Kelly and Craig for a marvelous evening and for sharing with us your amazing and inspiring story.
Recent Events (continued)

**PALAC-Caltech Connection has another great success**

"Neuroscience and Dual Mind Theory"

by Jonathan Tsai ’10, and Norri Sirri, Y Board

On Feb 24, Abdul Ahad ’09 and Jonathan Tsai ’10 led another successful PALAC-Caltech Connection discussion group regarding the fundamentals of neuroscience and the dual mind theory, which included moral decisions as well as economic decisions and some basic ideas about free will and human nature.

Everyone was very much interested in the topic and grew fascinated by the ethical considerations in understanding how we think. The discussion also served to encourage participants into further reading and research.

One participant (who received a PhD from Caltech many years ago) said the paper for the discussion was “perfect” because he learned about something he didn’t realize was being done.

Another participant, with no technical or scientific background whatever, commented that Jonathan and Abdul made the discussion itself so pleasant and informative that not understanding some words in the paper was not important.

Abdul Ahad and Jonathan Tsai did a great job, and the PALAC people were extremely pleased and applauded Abdul and Jonathan at the end.

The Y enjoys collaborating with PALAC and hopes to continue to have more great discussions in the future.

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**Coming Events** (Mar-Apr)

**Alternative Spring Break at two venues**

The Caltech Y Alternative Spring Break is designed to place Caltech students, faculty and staff in various communities to engage in volunteer service and experiential learning. This year there will be two venues:

**Salinas, CA**

(March 23-27)

by Leon Liu ’10, ExComm

Salinas is an agricultural center in Central California, known for being the hometown of the Nobel Laureate for Literature, John Steinbeck. This year, the Caltech Y Alternative Spring Break Trip to Salinas will focus on the issues of hunger and homelessness. The purpose of this trip is to expose and educate ourselves about these issues by immersing ourselves in the community and also make a tangible difference through our work.

We’ll be working and staying for four days at Dorothy’s Place, an organization that serves the poor and homeless in the largely migrant and farmer community. We’ll participate in a variety of volunteering activities such as preparing and serving meals, tutoring and playing with kids and special projects in the community centers and gardens. Additionally, we will have the chance to visit migrant camps, food bank, organic farms or the John Steinbeck Museum, and have a talk with the mayor. At the end of the trip, we will spend an entire day exploring the San Francisco Bay Area. More information about Dorothy’s Place can be found at:

http://www.dorothyysplace.org/

**San Diego, CA**

(March 25-28)

by Ilia Shadrin ’09, ExComm and Christina Wong ’11, ExComm

The waters of San Diego are bursting with marine life. It is, thus, of utmost importance to keep both the environment and the waters of San Diego as clean as possible. This year, the Caltech Y is hosting an ASB trip to San Diego to focus on the issues surrounding marine life and preservation of the environment. One of the purposes of this trip is to educate the volunteers on the importance of clean water for the many species of marine life living along the Southern California coast.

We will be staying for three nights at a hostel located right on the beach (Ocean Beach). Throughout the four days of the trip, we will be joining organizations, such as San Diego Oceans Foundation, Surfrider Foundation, and Animal Protection and Rescue League, in order to learn about environmental issues and perform useful volunteer work. Activities will include pen maintenance and fish handling at a white seabass growth center, hiking along the Tecolote Canyon in search of sewage spills, and a beach cleanup at the Coronado City Beach. We will also have the chance to visit the Birch Aquarium at Scripps as well as several other hot spots in San Diego.

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**Other Coming Events**

- **Outdoor Event** – A camping trip to the Redwood Forest will also occur during spring break from March 26-29.
- **Decompression** – The traditional Decompression event will be on March 14, the Saturday before finals week.
- **Explore LA Series** – A performance of The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning landmark American musical “RENT” will be experienced at the Pantages Theater on March 7
- **Make-A-Difference Day** – MAD Day will be held on Saturday, April 11.
Meet the ExComm

Each month the Caltech Y News interviews a member of the Student Executive Committee (ExComm)

Leon Xueliang Liu '10

by Heather Bixby, Student Activities Coordinator

Meet Leon Liu, a junior majoring in applied physics and a member of Avery House from Cerritos, California. He has been involved with the Caltech Y for two years, and decided to join the ExComm board so that he could become more involved in the planning and execution of the Y activities. Apart from the Y, he is also a violinist in the Caltech-Occidental Symphony Orchestra and enjoys participating in sports and music activities.

He enjoys working at the Y because it offers him the ability to implement new ideas easily, participate in great events, make new friends, develop valuable social and leadership skills, and strengthen friendship and bonds with other members. He stated, “It is an awesome supplement to the academic life at Caltech!”

He has taken the lead in a number of activities ranging from Dinner In the Park to the Explore LA visit to the Griffith Observatory. Currently, he is on the planning committee for the 2009 Alternative Spring Break service trips. He is looking forward to leading more programs and continuing to propose new ideas for fun and interesting projects.

Leon was recently elected the new President of the ExComm.

Greetings from an Ex ExComm

Jim Fruchterman '80

I recently was invited to give a talk at my alma mater, Caltech. The talk was hosted by the Caltech Y, as well as by the local chapter of NetImpact and the Alumni Association, as part of their Social Activism Speaker Series (SASS). I was particularly thrilled that Martin Luther King was an earlier speaker hosted by the Y in the area of social activism! Not that I'll ever be in that league! It's just an honor to be in a talk series where the brochure features MLK.

One of the board members from the Y, Gunilla Hastrup, heard me waxing eloquent about why I loved the Y as a student and why I still do. And, I agreed to write up why I am so enthusiastic.

The Y used to be part of the YMCA but severed the formal connection long ago. It doesn't have a pool or a gym, but it does provide Caltech students, staff and faculty with a vibrant link to the outside world. Caltech is such an intense place; it's helpful to get some perspective. As a student, I loved Decompression, which was and is still held during every Finals Week, where you can relax (decompress) after taking one of your finals or to carbo-load before more studying or taking the next final. (Because of Caltech's Honor System, which was heavily weighted to take-home timed tests, I ended up taking most of my finals from 11 pm to 2 am). The Y also organized hikes and other recreational activities. I was particularly fond of the talk series, where important policy makers and leaders would come to Caltech and talk to 15 or 20 people at the Y and drink Mountain Chablis! I remember sitting in a small group with the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Most of all, the Caltech Y was my starting point for social involvement. I joined the ExComm, the student programming committee, which worked with the actual Board of Directors to chart the course for the Y during the year. It was my first volunteer board service, and little did I guess at the time that I was destined to be a social sector leader and sit on nonprofit boards! Like many college students, I knew I wanted to be engaged in society, and the Y offered multiple avenues for exploring that interest.

The morning after my talk (which went over well), I had another example of where the Y is going. The leadership
Fred Shair [Caltech Board member] had been my faculty interviewer back in 1976, when Caltech interviewed most serious prospective students with faculty who would fly out to your town and talk to you. It was great, and a reminder of what makes Caltech great as one of the only top universities that is tiny numerically. I got to know quite a number of faculty personally, and it made a world of difference to me in my education and, frankly, my formation from a youth to an engineer eager to make a positive mark on the world.

So, that’s why I love the Caltech Y: it makes an incredible difference to a group of intensely bright and powerful technologists, exposing them to the larger context of the society, which ultimately an institution like Caltech exists to serve.

Voices of the Y Board

Richard Beatty ’77
Y Board Member

My connection with Caltech goes back a long way: My parents met there in 1946, when Dad was a grad student in EE and Mom was a post-doc in astronomy. Their wedding reception was at the Athenaem, and it was always the goal for both my brother and me to attend Caltech. (Due to some glitch in the Admissions Office, they let me in, and I graduated with a BS in mechanical engineering in 1977.)

I wasn’t highly involved with the Y as an undergrad. While I participated in some of the Y’s programs, most of my extracurricular efforts were focused on the Men’s Glee Club, the ASCIT Board, and Ruddock House events. Nevertheless, I do remember fondly Wes Hershey and Walt Meador, Y directors, who always had time to help me untangle the confusions of Tech life. I did graduate studies and short-term appointments at several universities around the country, but never found an organization quite like the Caltech Y. Only then did I really appreciate the uniqueness and greatness of the Caltech Y.

Having worked many jobs and been involved in a variety of community activities, I’ve come to appreciate that being fully engaged in life involves a lot more than the technical excellence that is central at Caltech. Over the years I’ve helped several organizations get started (such as the Triangle Project, a foster-parent training and advocacy group, and the Gay & Lesbian Alumni of the University of Notre Dame/St. Mary’s College), and currently I’m on the Board of the Caltech Associates and the Gnome Club, chair the annual fundraising campaign at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, and spend summers in Malawi (east Africa) with the Global AIDS Interfaith Alliance. But I especially value being part of the Caltech Y Board, and supporting its mission of "making a world of difference."

Everything the Y does – from the SASS, to MAD Day, to Decompression prepares Techers to make an even better world for the future – and have a lot of fun in the process!
# CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Note: See [Caltech Y website](http://www.caltechy.org) for additional information and schedule updates.

## March 2009

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**The Caltech Y**

The Caltech Y is an independent 501c3 organization formally affiliated with the California Institute of Technology. The Y mission is to enrich student life and challenge students to grow into responsible citizens of the world.

**Contact Information**

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Website: [http://www.caltechy.org](http://www.caltechy.org)

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- Athena Castro - Executive Director  
- Greg Fletcher - Student Activities & Community Service Director  
- Christopher Kealey - Marketing & Development Director  
- Alycen Chan - RISE Coordinator  
- Heather Bixby - Student Activities Coordinator  
- Carmelita Hearn - Administrative Assistant

**Executive Committee**

- Carolyn Ash - Chair  
- Peter Mason - Treasurer  
- Leon Liu - Student ExComm President  
- Susan Murakami - Vice Chair  
- Connie Kofahl - Secretary

**Members** (* indicates Student Executive Committee)

- Richard Beatty  
- Abel Bourbois  
- Donald Brown  
- Pradeep Bugga*  
- Bill Burrows  
- Veena Chavakula*  
- Marshall Cohen  
- Shirley Cohen  
- Sunny Chun*  
- Frank Dryden  
- Dean Elzinga  
- Daniel Erickson  
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- Samantha Foster  
- Steve Frautsch  
- Barbara Gee  
- John Gee  
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- Gunilla Hastrup  
- Rolf Hastrup  
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- Shankar Kalyanaraman*  
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- Tom Mannion  
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- Abdul-Ahad Tariq*  
- Candace Rypisi  
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- Fred Shair  
- Susan Shen*  
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- Norri Sirri  
- Tony Smith  
- Douglas Smith  
- Elaine To*  
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- Jonathan Tsai*  
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- Dorothy Tyson  
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**The Caltech Y News**

Editor: Gunilla Hastrup

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