



## PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **PTEI's Fourth Annual *Tissue Engineering* Summer Camp** A Starfish Can Do It, Why Can't I?

PITTSBURGH, July 9<sup>th</sup> through July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 – A starfish can grow a new arm and so can salamanders, but a human can't. Or, at least not yet. However, Pittsburgh researchers and researchers worldwide are tackling the complex challenge of tissue and organ regeneration, and their findings are the basis of an innovative educational program sponsored by the Pittsburgh Tissue Engineering Initiative (PTEI). The regenerative properties of starfish and other living beings, including humans, will be studied in a four-day Tissue Engineering Summer Camp for middle school students from the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the McKeesport Area School District and other school districts across southwestern Pennsylvania. Twenty-two middle school students and seven high school camp counselors will take part in the camp, held July 9<sup>th</sup> through July 12<sup>th</sup>, at the University of Pittsburgh Center for Biotechnology and Bioengineering and other labs and facilities in the Oakland area.

Now in its fourth year, the summer camp is an intensive, hands-on learning experience for students in grades 6, 7 and 8, with classroom activities and experiments to help them learn about tissue engineering and its potential for treating disease and injury. Tissue engineering, and the broader field of regenerative medicine, is focused on creating functional, healthy, replacement tissues and organs for those that are damaged, diseased or missing.

The summer camp uses this exciting and rapidly growing field of biomedicine as the basis for a rich science learning experience. The goals of the summer camp are to increase students' process skills across disciplines, enhance their appreciation of science and technology, increase their awareness of

educational and career opportunities in the sciences in the Pittsburgh region, and increase their awareness of Southwestern Pennsylvania's role in cutting-edge biomedical science.

“Pittsburgh is one of the leading international centers of research and technology development in tissue engineering and the broader field of regenerative medicine,” says Joan Schanck, PTEI Director of Education. “We want to expose as many of our region’s students as we possibly to the wonders and promise of this cutting-edge field, the remarkable work going on here, and ongoing secondary and post-secondary educational opportunities available to them if they are interested.”

The format of the summer camp emphasizes hands-on learning, which Ms. Schanck says is the cornerstone of enhanced understanding of the scientific process and the relevance of science to everyday life.

“Students who are actively engaged in a hands-on approach to learning will be most likely to remember material,” she explains. “It also encourages them to think by requiring interpretation of observed events, rather than rote memorization.”

The summer camp is also a lot of fun. “By its nature, tissue engineering is a really cool field of science, which makes for an innovative and fun field of study,” Ms. Schanck says.

The middle school students will be taught by science teachers who, themselves, are participants in PTEI’s teacher professional development program, with assistance from high school students who are summer high school interns and who simultaneously serve as “camp counselors” to the younger children.

Launched in 2004, the Tissue Engineering Summer Camp is partially supported by the Catalyst Connection through and a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

PTEI is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of individuals by establishing the region as an internationally recognized center of excellence in research, education, and commercial development for the advancement of tissue-related medical therapies. PTEI’s educational programs span K-12 through postdoctoral training. For more information, visit the PTEI web site at [www.ptei.org](http://www.ptei.org).

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