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WARREN CENTER
FOR NEUROSCIENCE DRUG DISCOVERY
at Vanderbilt University

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2023 - A Year in Review

At the [Warren Center for Neuroscience Drug Discovery \(WCNDD\)](#) a part of Vanderbilt University, our academic researchers and industry scientists work tirelessly to advance treatments for neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, and dystonia.

Despite the many challenges in an academic drug discovery center, 2023 has been another successful year for us. Under the leadership of our Executive Director, Craig W. Lindsley, we have reached major collaborative accomplishments. Just to highlight a few successes, the center has released the award winning film/documentary 'Speaking Through Me', received a Gates Foundation Award, filed 30 patents, published 23 papers, 12 new issued US patents, extended critical partner collaborations, currently in negotiation of new licensed/sponsored research, and introduced a promising novel therapy for schizophrenia. To date, the WCNDD has advanced three compounds—with three different mechanisms—into human clinical testing. These are exciting times with a whole new approach to treating these types of neurological diseases.

The WCNDD is dedicated to advancing game-changing and life-saving interventions. "We have built a powerful model for advancing drug discovery through high-risk creative approaches that are not always viable in commercial settings" said Lindsley. Together with our collaborators, sponsors, and donors we can further extend this model. You too can be a part of making these developments come to light. Today, you can make an investment that will impact the lives of those suffering from these debilitating diseases. Additionally, qualifying gifts from donors can currently double their impact through the [1:1 Match](#) launched by Vanderbilt to support this vital work. The match will run until Dec. 31, 2024, or until the match dollars—totaling up to \$2.5 million—are fully realized. Be sure to [subscribe](#) to our bi-monthly newsletter to stay up to date with our progress!

*Happy
Holidays
from us at
WCNDD!*



Advocacy and Outreach



The educational documentary, *Speaking Through Me*, was honored with the Jury Award for “Best Amateur Documentary < 40 minutes” at the Raw Science Film Festival (RSFF) in Los Angeles, CA. The RSFF is the “science version” of Cannes or the Sundance Film Festival which celebrates both professional and amateur films that master science storytelling. As stated by their website, “The mission of RSFF is to humanize science and bring fact-based experts to the forefront of popular culture by celebrating the best science storytelling in the world.” What an honor for the WCNDD to receive this award for our film! In March, we have been selected to screen and be interviewed about the making of *Speaking Through Me* at the Tromsø Educational Film Festival in Norway. In total so far, *Speaking Through Me* has had 5 “selections” to screen, 6 semi-finalist selections, 1 finalist selection, and 1 Jury award during its film festival circuit.



Our Outreach game, “Just the Facts”, was taken for a test drive on the 5-8th grade students at University School of Nashville (USN) in middle October. The game teaches children peer-reviewed scientific research regarding substance use and the developing brain using an exciting Jeopardy/Family Feud theme. The WCNDD Outreach Director, Kristen Gilliland, and the Assistant Director, Morgan Estess, were joined by a team of Vanderbilt neuroscience students and WCNDD researchers who helped with the enthusiastic 320 students that day. Dr. Randi Days, the USN Head Middle School Counselor, shared this after our visits with the USN students, “Thank you so much for your work in middle school to date. Both teachers and students were raving about the experience and would love another lesson.” We are set for a lesson in synaptic pruning, neuroplasticity, and resilience at USN on January 24.

In late October, Kristen was interviewed about the WCNDD Outreach Program by David Plazas from the Tennessean as part of his Tennessee Voices video podcast. Kristen was also invited to present again at the [Rx Summit](#) in Atlanta in April 2024 and asked to serve on the Advisory Council for the 2025 Rx Summit in Nashville. In November, Kristen presented to the 9-12 grade students at Harpeth Hall and later to the students’ parents about the impacts of stress and substance use on the developing brain. December 12, Kristen traveled to Detroit to screen the documentary through an invitation from CARE of Southeastern Michigan. After the film, Kristen followed with commentary and dialog regarding cannabis and the developing brain, as well as managing grief during the holidays. The film is now available to [view](#) on our website. There is no fee to watch the documentary, but [donations](#) are greatly appreciated and supports our mission.

Lastly, get excited! The Applied Drug Design & Development (AD3) certificate program courses are taking shape. We are excited for the program launch in July of 2024!!