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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Maynard Olson receives \$500,000 Gruber Genetics Prize and reflects on personalized genomics

October 24, 2007, San Diego, California – The human genome would have been an impossible jigsaw puzzle without the work of Maynard Olson.

Today at 3.30 pm he will receive the Gruber Genetics Prize at the American Society for Human Genetics Conference in San Diego.

Olson created a way of breaking genomes into manageable pieces, applied it to the yeast genome, and made the human genome project a possibility. Now he is working to apply genome science to real biological problems—starting with the bacterium that kills many people with cystic fibrosis. And he's continuing to fight for the public ownership of genome information.

In his acceptance speech Olson will talk of the drivers of the genomic revolution and of the benefits and risk of the 'personal genome'.

"Within a few years, sequencing of new human genomes will be routine and inexpensive," he says. "We have no idea how useful, or even dangerous, the resultant information will be. Not since the dawn of the space age has there been a transition in knowledge and technology that had this kind of potential to change the way people think about themselves."

"When he assembled his physical map of the yeast genome, Maynard developed a new way to piece together the genomic puzzle. He allowed us to mechanize, computerize and organize the process," says 2003 Gruber Genetics Laureate, David Botstein. "Maynard was one of the top two or three key brains behind the Human Genome Project. And he is a mentor—not just for his students, but for whole institutes."

The Genetics Prize honors leading scientists for distinguished contributions in any realm of genetics research. The Foundation's other international prizes are in Cosmology, Neuroscience, Justice, and Women's Rights. Nominations for the 2008 prizes are now open and close on December 31, 2007.

Also announced today, Dr Molly Przeworski of the University of Chicago will receive the Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Award for her work on human evolution. By modeling the evolution of human and primate genomes she is working to understand the genes and genetic architecture which underlie particularly human abilities, such as bipedalism and cognition. She was selected from 142 applications from around the world. The award is worth \$75,000 over three years.

Profiles of Olson and Przeworski, photos, background information and nomination details for 2008 are available online at www.gruberprizes.org.

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