

For Immediate Release
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Dedication and Opening of the Becker Science Center at Austin Jewish Academy

Becker & Associates Consulting, a prominent scientific consulting firm based in Washington, D.C., has identified Austin Jewish Academy as its partner in creating the newest development in the Academy's core curriculum: The Becker Science Center. The Center was developed through collaboration between Becker & Associates Consulting and educators from Austin Jewish Academy. The founders were brought together on the shared premise that an outstanding introduction to the basic sciences is a fundamental element of a competitive contemporary education. The expectation is to create what will become the standard for K-8 science centers in the country.

The formal dedication of the Becker Science Center at Austin Jewish Academy will take place from 6:30pm – 8:30pm on the Dell Jewish Community Campus, on Wednesday, January 28th, 2009 in conjunction with the annual Austin Jewish Academy Science Fair. The evening's program will include: display of student Science Fair projects, presentation of student awards, dedication of Becker Science Center at AJA, and keynote address given by Dr. Michael Jaff.

Dr. Jaff is the Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School and Medical Director of the Vascular Diagnostic Laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital, and is considered the foremost authority on vascular medicine in the United States and an expert on the role of emerging medical technologies in managing vascular disease - the number one killer of Americans. Dr. Jaff's remarks will describe recent advances in vascular medicine and their expected, specific impact on patients at risk for diabetes, heart disease or stroke.

Karen Becker, PhD, Clinical Pharmacologist and Founder of Becker and Associates, said "We are excited to have AJA as our partner in providing an outstanding science education for our children. The goal of this collaboration is to provide not only a rigorous science curriculum, but also to foster a life-long appreciation of questioning assumptions, and the value of examining original ideas."

The Becker Science Center at AJA will offer students an exceptionally advanced, comprehensive and constructive introduction to the basic sciences, and will foster an expanded understanding of and respect for scientific thought, scientific methods and the scientific principles of integrity and precision.

"The Becker Science Center will position Austin Jewish Academy as a leader in science education in the Austin area," remarks Bernice Tabak, Head of School. "We are grateful to the donors for their wisdom, foresight and commitment to providing excellence in educational opportunities to Jewish day school students."

The Becker Science Center at AJA will be composed of three elements: 1) Infrastructure – through the funding of advanced instruments, tools and facilities 2) Exposure – to scientific methods through an optimized curriculum supported by funding for guest lecturers and dynamic field experiences and 3) Experimentation – through the funding of professionally judged scientific events and a student-run grant process for the procurement of equipment.

Jeni Tubbs, the Academy's Director of General Studies, expressed how the Becker Science Center will "truly elevate how our students approach the study of science." She and Jesse Castro,

the Middle School Math and Science teacher at Austin Jewish Academy, are currently working with students to help them identify this year's science fair projects. With the new Becker Science Center infrastructure, Tubbs expects this year's student projects to "reach new levels of depth and complexity." Tubbs and Castro are thrilled to be able to work with the project founders to develop this program. Castro remarked that the Center will give our students "an opportunity to explore science in a whole new way. The resources and expertise which will be available to our students will give them a real-world science experience."

The day to day management of operations will rest with the Academy, while an advisory board of educators, scientists and professionals will provide guidance via organized advisory board meetings. In 2009, the Advisory Board will be chaired by Ron Ginor, MD, a medical technology innovator credited with, amongst other things, helping to develop the leading coronary stent platform in the USA. "I believe that all AJA students will benefit from Dr. Karen Becker's vision," said Dr. Ginor. "The concept of offering younger students a university-like introduction to the sciences is something I am very excited about and proud to be a part of."

Dr. Jaff commented, "It is an incredible opportunity for me to participate in the grand opening of such an important and prestigious Center in Austin. I look forward to highlighting the importance science has played in my professional career, and to learning from the scientists of tomorrow!"

The event will be open to the public. For more information about the Becker Science Center at Austin Jewish Academy, please contact Jodye Friedman, AJA's Director of Advancement, at 512.735.8374.