Advanced Technology Core

San Diego Center for AIDS Research

September 2026 *Monthly Newsletter*



YANELI GUERRA HERNANDEZ

Yaneli is originally from Sacramento, CA and completed her undergraduate studies at Duke University in North Carolina before making her way back to the West Coast. She is now a second-year student in the Biomedical Sciences PhD program at UCSD. During her first year, most of her rotations were focused on virology, which ultimately led her to the Advanced Technology Core. After completing a rotation under Nadia, she joined her here!

Outside of the lab, Yaneli loves trying matcha spots, spending time with her cat, and going on hikes with friends. She is working her way toward completing a 10-mile hike and is always looking for new trails to explore, so any recommendations are welcome. Yaneli often travels between the East and West Coasts to visit her boyfriend and friends. After spending her undergraduate years in North Carolina and now living in San Diego, she has plenty of people and places she loves on both sides of the country and is always planning another trip.

Another favorite hobby of hers is watching movies. Over the last few months, she has been making the most of the theater by going at least once a week because, in her words, cinema has been "on a generational run lately." Some of her recent watches include The Drama, The Odyssey, Spider-Man, Insidious, and more. She's always excited to see what's coming out next, so if anyone in the lab is ever looking for a movie buddy, let Yaneli know!

Between research, hiking, traveling, matcha runs, and her frequent movie-theater trips, she has plenty keeping her busy outside of graduate school. She is really happy to be part of the core and is looking forward to getting to know everyone better, both in and outside of the lab. She's excited for everything the next few years at UC San Diego have in store and for all of the research, experiences, and friendships that will come along with them. We are excited to have you here, Yaneli!

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

PMID: 42687014
Pradipta Ghosh et al., 2026

Congratulations to the Last Gift Program and the HUMANOID Center of Research Excellence led by Dr. Pradipta Ghosh with colleague Dr. Sara Gianella on their recent publication in Nature Methods, **"Human stewardship in the age of organoids."**

This paper argues that organoids and other human-derived new approach methodologies (NAMs) are rapidly transforming research by providing increasingly realistic models for disease, toxicology, drug development, and regulatory decision-making, but that ethical frameworks have not kept pace with their scientific advancement. Because organoids can remain viable, be expanded, repeatedly reused, and retain donor-specific genetic information for many years, the authors advocate for a model of "stewardship" rather than ownership, emphasizing ongoing responsibility, transparency, accountability, and donor trust. This is especially important for living biobanks and organoids derived from patient samples or rapid research autopsies, whose future uses may extend beyond what donors originally anticipated. Key ethical concerns include the limitations of one-time informed consent, long-term genomic and clinical data use, incidental findings, commercialization, material sharing, and responsibilities to deceased donors and their families. The authors call for dynamic consent, dedicated oversight of living biorepositories, clear policies for genomic findings and family communication, meaningful donor and community involvement, and harmonized standards. Ultimately, the paper emphasizes that ethical oversight must evolve alongside organoid technology to preserve donor trust and ensure that these increasingly powerful research tools are developed and used responsibly.

Last Gift - Autopsy 41



Thank you to our wonderful Last Gift team for the long night of focused collaboration. None of this could be possible without our teamwork!





SD CFAR RESEARCH DAY 2026

"BEYOND SURVIVAL: REDEFINING LONGEVITY IN THE ERA OF HIV"

Join the San Diego CFAR on October 9, 2026, for a dynamic full-day symposium highlighting groundbreaking discoveries that are transforming the landscape of HIV research, treatment, and prevention.

Registration & Breakfast: 8:30 – 9:00 am
Research Day Events: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Location: The Great Hall, UCSD Campus

Research Day will be held in person only and will not be recorded or streamed.

SCAN TO REGISTER!

Keep an eye out for some presenters you may recognize, such as Aleksander Georgian, Dr. Elena Barone, Dr. Douglas Richman, and more!

A rising star awardee will be revealed, followed by their presentation. Also, make sure to drop by the art displays to see our Last Gift Quilt featured!

COMING UP

Oct 12: Indigenous People's Day

Oct 31: Halloween

All October: Breast Cancer Awareness month
Kids Free October: children ages 11 and younger get free admission to the San Diego Zooand Safari Park when accompanied by an adult with a valid ticket or membership

Birthdays

10/1 - **Brady**
10/7 - **Martina**
10/15 - **Brendon**
10/16 - **Tara**
10/20 - **Anadela**
10/26 - **Nikki C.**

Labbiversary

10/1 - **Sara G's 17th year**
10/14 - **Tara's 2nd year**
10/21 - **Luana's 2nd year**
10/21 - **Nicole's 2nd year**

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Happy Birthday Sara!



Thank you for everything you have done for the HIV research community! We are so grateful to work alongside you. Wishing you all the best!



CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Victoria Olivares, our high school student volunteer, for the manuscript accepted by the Journal of Infectious Diseases titled **"The Power of Storytelling in Science: Perspectives from Two Students and a Community Member."**

This paper explores how storytelling can humanize scientific research by connecting scientific data to the people whose lives and generosity make research possible. Drawing on the experiences of a Last Gift participant's wife, a high school student, and an undergraduate student, the authors describe how involvement with the Last Gift Program transformed their understanding of HIV research by emphasizing that every tissue sample represents a person with a unique life, family, and story. The Last Gift Quilt serves as a central example of how participants' identities and legacies can be preserved alongside their scientific contributions. The paper emphasizes that scientific rigor and humanity are not opposing values; storytelling can strengthen science by ensuring that researchers remember the people behind the samples and honor the trust and generosity that make scientific discovery possible.

Podcast: Laura Cain After Dark

Episode title: "The Last Gift Won an Emmy!"



"We sit down with the incredible people behind the now Emmy-winning short documentary "The Last Gift: Jim's Courage, Our Hope"—a beautiful, heartbreaking, and deeply inspiring story about one man's extraordinary final gift to HIV research."