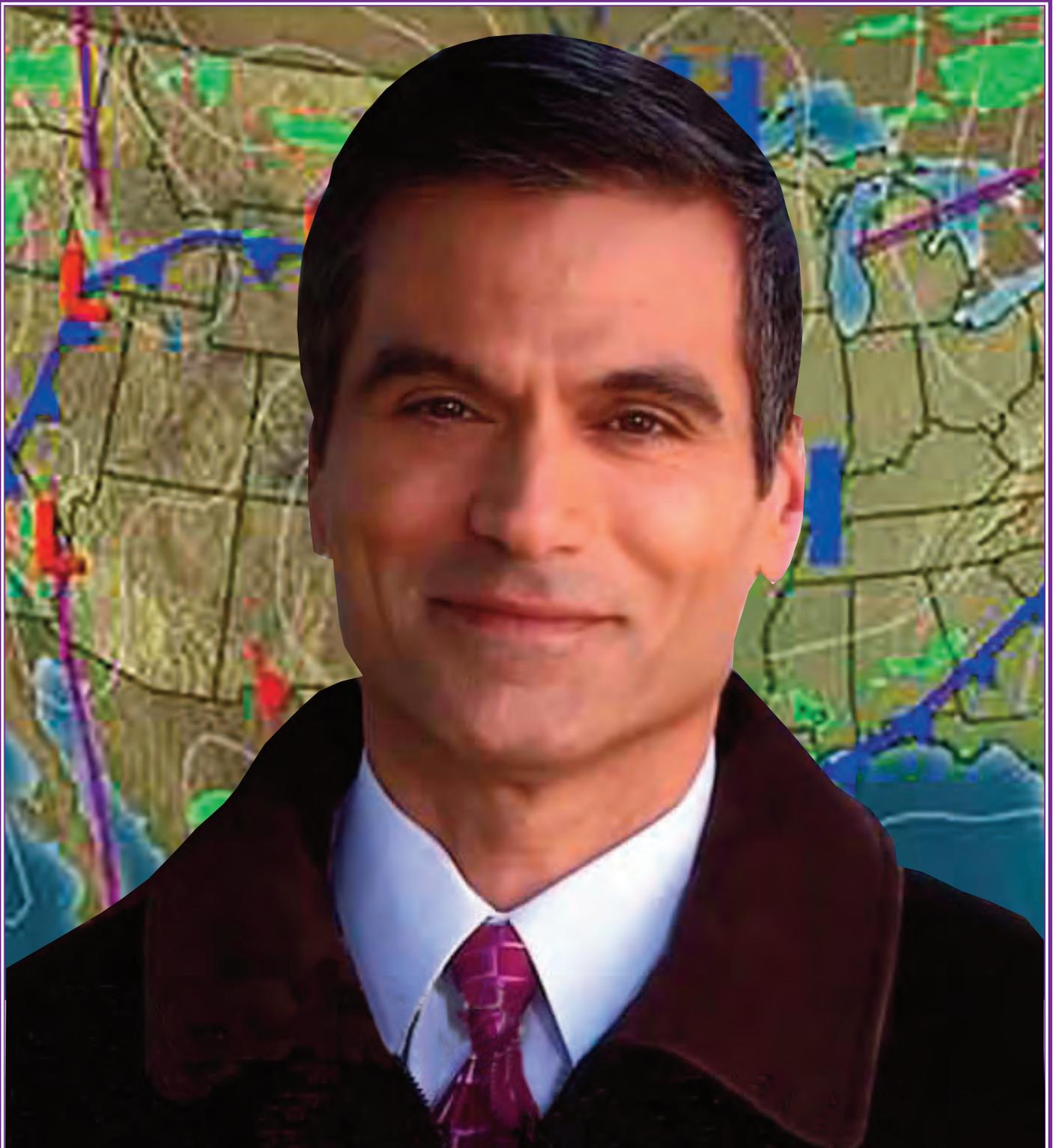


The City College
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Chris Cimino '83

Top TV Meteorologist on 'Today in New York'



Anas Atieh, at right, and Katya Zelentsova, at left, are partners as Fellows in the STEP-GTE program. Here they are seen working together at the Hebrew University School of Dentistry in Jerusalem.

By Kim Kronenberg

“Give me your tired, your poor...” are the words on the Statue of Liberty at the entry to New York City. CCNY gave her tired and poor an education, empowering them to advance their lives, serve their communities and help build our nation.

Allen Taylor '67 was one of those poor kids from an immigrant family in the Bronx. He credits CCNY for providing him with the opportunity for a college education, and a ticket to a future career as a scientist. Taylor now heads the Laboratory for Nutrition and Vision Research at Tufts University Health Sciences Campus, where he does research on how to prevent or delay diseases of the eyes through improved nutrition.

Fast forward to 1999, when Taylor's reputation and expertise led to a year-long position as a senior Fulbright scientist at Tel Aviv University in Israel. Taylor fell in love with the region and its peoples. But he was troubled by the violent conflict and political environment that kept Israelis and Palestinians estranged to the point of dehumanizing each other.

How can there be peace when people only know one other as enemies?

Taylor combined his desire to make a difference in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with his experience in the world of science. “Science knows no borders,” he says. “When curious minds are engaged together in scientific quest, then nationality, ethnicity and politics fade toward the background.” And so, Taylor started STEP-GTP (Science Training Encouraging Peace—Graduate Training Program.) STEP funds the pairing of Israeli and Palestinian graduate students in advanced academic programs in the health sciences so they can work together to advance their careers and serve their communities.

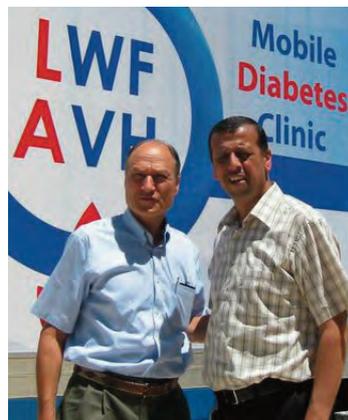
Taylor and I—associate director of the program and his wife—began to speak to Palestinians and Israelis to gather ideas and input about what they saw as the needs the program could fill. They then secured the commitment of three academic institutions that serve as the organization's guiding umbrella: Tufts University in Boston, an American institution where STEP is based; Al-Quds University, a Palestinian institution, and Ben Gurion University of the Negev, which is Israeli. Finally, the organization secured the participation of Nobel laureates and world scientific and educational leaders to serve as the steering committee.

Bringing Israeli and Palestinian Health Science Graduate Students Together As Partners

When STEP was first introduced to *Alumnus* readers four years ago, in the February 2011 issue, it was a new organization. It started by bringing pairs of Israelis and Palestinians together for short-term international courses. Today, STEP Fellows are completing Master's and PhD programs at Ben Gurion University and at Hebrew University in Israel.

Seeing One Another As Human Beings

STEP is unique because it enables the pairs of Fellows to work together for prolonged periods of time (academic programs are at



Allen Taylor '67, founder of the STEP-GTE program, with Ahmad Al-Halaweh, a STEP Fellow, visiting the Mobile Diabetes Clinic in Hebron, West Bank.

least two years) under intense circumstances in the classrooms and laboratories where they work and study, as well as in the local political arena. They build professional and personal relationships. STEP Fellows learn to trust and rely on one another.

Unlike other collaborative programs, STEP Fellows pledge to continue their professional engagement as they complete their training and return to work in their communities.

Taylor believes that “more than ever, STEP is crucial because it is among the few programs that provides a chance for Israelis and Palestinians to see each other as human beings, and not just as enemies. The significance of cooperation in science will continue to grow as Fellows become professors, doctors, and entrepreneurs and inspire and lead new students.”

The Fellows agree.

Efrat Tal Kotegaro, STEP Fellow 2014, who has worked at Ben Gurion University doing research on obesity, finds, “Every one of us is an ambassador. He is taking what he knows and what he feels and he takes it back to his family. This program just gave me the opportunity to meet a new person, to have a look through a window to all this great population and feel that we are exactly the same.”

“Why doesn't everyone think like us?” asks Hasnaa' Makkawi, also at the Hebrew University School of Dentistry.

This year, STEP-GTP will host its second Convocation in Jerusalem for graduating Fellows. At last year's convocation, the atmosphere was joyous and we expect the same this year.

For further information about STEP-GTP visit our website at www.step-gtp.org and our brief video: <https://vimeo.com/108606136> ■

Kim Kronenberg is associate director of the STEP-GTP Program and an adjunct professor in the School of Public Health at Boston University.