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# Twin Matters

Spring 2018 Volume XXXV

A Family Newsletter from the Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry

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- Study Progress (ABCD & T4T & AYATS Update)
- Potential New Studies

## Twin Talk - Stories from the MATR Community

### TWIN BONDS

Sometimes miracles come in pairs. It's double the giggles, double the grins and double the trouble when you're blessed with twins. In 1986 our parents were blessed with my twin brother, Anthony, and me nearly three months premature. As our parents tell us today, it was the greatest but scariest blessing of their lives. Since that day, we have conquered so much together in our short life and hope to continue to share our story for twins and their families.

Due to being so premature we have been faced with health issues, extended hospital stays and numerous checkups, however nothing has broken the bond we share as twins. To this day, we finish each other's sentences and have yet to miss a beat of each other's lives. We celebrate together our accomplishments, birthdays, holidays and everything in between. We talk every day and feel so fortunate to have a built-in best friend.

We're very similar but very different in ways. Anthony is left-handed and I am right-handed. I am outgoing and Anthony is shy. He likes mustard, I like mayo. Despite our small differences, we both have an interest in sports, traveling, and enjoy helping others. Being a twin has been an incredible experience. Thank you for listening to our story.

Sincerely,

Amy and Anthony



## Greetings MATR Participants!

In this edition of our spring newsletter, we wanted to bring you some stories, photos, and feedback that you have shared with us over the past year. In addition, we are continuing with several studies and gearing up for new ones, so please take a minute to see if any of those are of interest to you.

As always, thank you for being a part of the MATR – each and every one of you makes twin research possible!

Judy Silberg, PhD  
MATR Scientific Director

## We Value You

The Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry (MATR) values our participants. If you have feedback regarding your experiences with MATR staff or research staff for any study, please do not hesitate to send us an email to [matr@vcu.edu](mailto:matr@vcu.edu), call 1-800-URA-TWIN (1-800-872-8946), or call our Participant Coordinator, Carol Williams, directly at 804-828-8116.

## New Info?

Remember to let us know if your name, address, email, or telephone number changes by going to: [go.vcu.edu/twinupdate](http://go.vcu.edu/twinupdate), sending an email to us at: [matr@vcu.edu](mailto:matr@vcu.edu) or calling our toll free number 1-800-URA-TWIN (800-872-8946).

## NOSTALGIA OF A TWIN CHILDHOOD

My twin sister and I thought it would be fun to restore our vintage, circa 1970's Sears & Roebuck childhood bikes. Our Dad built his career at Sears and we thought it would be a fun tribute to our family. With the help of a neighbor, a true artist who designs and restores automobiles, he was able to salvage all the original parts with the exception of the tires to original condition, color, and design! The bikes are now a special reminder of "Being a Twin" and the beautiful carefree days that these special bikes gave us as kids!

Submitted by Meta and Myra – MATR Members for over 20 years!



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### Potential New Studies on the Horizon!

We wanted to let our twins know that researchers have been in contact with the MATR to discuss investigating the causes of **psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis** in identical twins as well as a study hoping to learn more about **breast cancer** risk. Even though these are still just potential research topics, we thought we would go ahead and give MATR twins that might be interested a heads up that these may be upon the horizon.

If you would be interested in learning more should such studies begin, please let us know and make sure we have your current contact information by completing the form found here: [go.vc.edu/tellmemore](http://go.vc.edu/tellmemore).

### We Appreciate You!

Recently, we've had the opportunity to say thank you to some of our twins and their families for being registered members, updating their contact information, or sharing a story or photo with us! These tokens of appreciation could be a ticket to an event or a VISA gift card in a modest amount. Recipients are chosen by random periodic drawings, so please keep those updates, stories, and photos coming our way – you might be the next recipient of one of these tokens! Read what some of our lucky members had to say about being in the MATR:

Bonnie B. (mother of twin girls) registered her family in 2016 and said *"The opportunity to help learn more about the experience of being and parenting twins is thrilling and satisfying!"*

Kathleen L. and her family have been members for almost a decade and said *"My 11-year-old twins love being able to participate in science that could help others!"*

Ansley C. and her family have been members since 2012 and said, *"I have triplet 7-year-old boys and it has been fascinating for my husband and me to watch their individual personalities develop and the group dynamic change as they get older. They are unbelievably close and we cherish this bond. We often read them stories from the MATR and they loved the recent one regarding the identical twin astronaut experiment! They couldn't wait to research it more! ...Thank you for including us in the MATR! We have really enjoyed your publications over the years!"*



Like us on Facebook!

If you have not already, please take a minute to like our page to stay up to date on studies, twins in the news and events for twins! Check us out at [www.facebook.com/twinsmatr](http://www.facebook.com/twinsmatr) or by searching "The Mid-Atlantic Twin Registry of VCU."



### No Multiples Day this year...

We are very sorry to report that Kings Dominion will not be able to accommodate our Multiples Family Day this year. We are hopeful that we may be able to bring back this fun event next year. We always enjoy seeing twins, other multiples, and their families, so please keep an eye on our website ([go.vcu.edu/matrevents](http://go.vcu.edu/matrevents)) for announcements regarding events we will attend in the future!

## IN PROGRESS

### Adolescent Behavior Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study Update

Many folks have now heard of this exciting study because it was featured on NBC's The Today Show - visit: [go.vcu.edu/matrstudies](http://go.vcu.edu/matrstudies) to see the clip. Recruitment for this study continues full steam ahead - and there's likely less than a year left for the staff to complete the baseline study assessments. Our MATR twin families have been amazing with their interest, time, and commitment in this study - the Turner twins were excited about the MRI (before and after!) Ms. Turner said her twins had a blast and participation in the study made them more interested in science. The whole family took pleasure in knowing they were a "great assistance with helping potential scientific discoveries."

The bulk of the remainder of this baseline recruitment will focus on providing opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as Hispanics/Latinos, Asians, and African Americans to participate. If interested in learning more, please visit: [go.vcu.edu/tellmemore](http://go.vcu.edu/tellmemore).

### Text-4-Thoughts (T4T) Study Update

The T4T study is another in which the generous spirit of our MATR twins continues to shine! Recruitment for the T4T study is ongoing as well, though for now, the study's Principal Investigator has asked us to focus our efforts on the young adult (18 through 21 years old) portion of the recruitment sample. If interested in learning more, please visit: [go.vcu.edu/tellmemore](http://go.vcu.edu/tellmemore).



## Twins today, tomorrow, and yesteryear...



When MATR twin Donna P. learned she was going to be a grandmother of 'double the trouble' she was doubly excited. This inspired her to learn more about her family's twinning history. Continue to read Donna's story...

*October 2017 brought a wonderful announcement from my son and his wife. It was, "We are having twins!" It is exciting for many reasons, but mostly because I am a twin. Now, I will experience a firsthand glimpse of the challenges my mother and father lived through-- of diapering, feeding and caring for two babies at the same time.*

*With a new set of twins to add to our family, I decided to research my family history. What*

*I found is fascinating. The first recorded twins in my family tree were born in 1857, named Mary and Joseph. From 1857 to 2005 - which is where the family history recording stops, there have been 48 sets of twins - an average of 3.3 sets per decade! There were boy-boy, girl-girl, and girl-boy twins in similar proportions. My son's twins are due in June and will be the 49th set of twins in our extended family. I wish I knew how many of the same-sex twins were identical, but that information is not in the books.*

*Two families had two sets of twins. Two families had both twins die at birth (one of which later had another pair who lived). And two families had one twin die within 6 months of birth.*

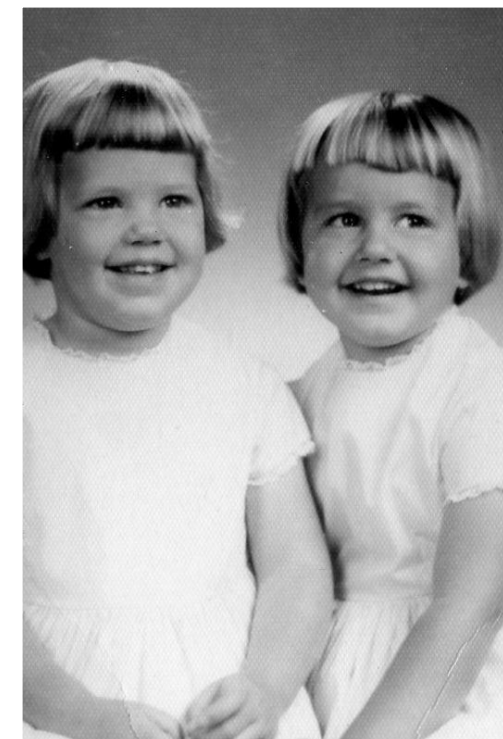
*The names\* are fascinating. Some rhyme, some share initials and others most assuredly made it easier on mom.... I can hear it now as their mother called for Cheryl or Cherylene, "Cheryl.....lene, get yourselves in here!" There is Wilda and William, Mary and Joseph, and my sister and I, Donna Jean and Debra (Debbie) Jean.*

*Debbie and I are very different, both in appearance and personality, yet are often asked if we are identical. We have first cousins who are opposite-sex twins and are also asked if they are identical (Ha, Ha!) When we were toddlers, we had our own language. Mom told us we would babble to each other and then take off running. We dressed alike through grade school and for many years wore the same outfits in different colors. I wore blue, and she wore green. Debbie and I are both registered nurses, married within 8 weeks of each other and each have three children. I had three boys and she had three girls. We are both grandmas, she with her beautiful white hair and I with dark brown.*

*We are often asked, "What's it like to be a twin?" The answer? "It's all we know!" When I was younger I'd respond, "What's it like to not be a twin?"*

We bet many MATR twins get asked this question and have had the same thought! Best wishes to Donna on her adventures in being a grandmother of twins! We thank Donna so much for sharing this (and her and Debbie for the photos)! If you have a story and/or photos you'd like to share, please visit: [go.vcu.edu/matrstory](http://go.vcu.edu/matrstory).

\*Some names were altered to protect privacy of individuals from which it would be difficult to obtain consent.



*Pictured above, Donna (left) and Debbie (right) have been part of the MATR community for over thirty years!*

## AYATS Update

The AYATS study staff is in the homestretch for its study enrollment! Over 400 families completed Wave 1 of the study and of those, approximately 152 twin pairs participated in Wave 2 thus far. By the end of March, the AYATS staff completed their VCU-site Wave 2 visits. For AYATS participants that have not completed a follow-up with the study, stay tuned: running through July, approximately 194 more participants, selected from pairs that completed Wave 1, will be invited to complete an online follow-up task.

Along with the AYATS staff, we couldn't be more pleased with how generous MATR families were in helping make the recruitment for this study successful thus far! Study requests for completing Wave 2 follow up surveys online may continue well into 2018.