

October 16, 2014 (Sel)

Red carpet for Stefan Hell at the DKFZ

On Wednesday, October 15, 2014, about 500 employees of the DKFZ in Heidelberg celebrated “their” Nobel Prize winner, Professor Stefan Hell. In attendance were Theresia Bauer, the Minister of Science, Research and the Arts of the State of Baden-Württemberg, Helmholtz Association President Jürgen Mlynek, and Heidelberg’s Mayor Dr. Eckart Würzner. Hell received two valuable presents from two Directors of the DKFZ, Professor Otmar D. Wiestler and Professor Josef Puchta: A gift certificate for a portrait to be painted by an artist of his choice and the promise of five years of funding for a junior research group that will be named after the Nobel Prize winner.

One week after the news from Stockholm that Stefan Hell was to be awarded this year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) held a grand celebration in his honor. Hell is not only Director at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen but also heads the Division of Optical Nanoscopy at the DKFZ. Professor Otmar Wiestler, Chairman of the Management Board and Scientific Director of the DKFZ, congratulated the Nobel Prize winner in the name of the whole “DKFZ family” and stated how pleased he was about the prestige that the prize also brings to the DKFZ. Science Minister Theresia Bauer congratulated Hell on behalf of the federal state government and commented that the prize was awarded to a scientist “who has crossed borders more than once in his life”, both personally as a native of Rumania native and in his career as a researcher. With the development of high resolution nanoscopy, Hell was first to break the resolution barrier of 200 nanometers that had long been believed to be a maximum limit for light microscopy.

Professor Jürgen Mlynek, President of the Helmholtz Association, evoked laughter with a play on words about the Nobel laureate's last name: “Go to Hell,” he said, was sure to acquire a completely new, very positive meaning in Heidelberg. Heidelberg's Mayor Dr. Eckart Würzner was proud to report that with Hell, Heidelberg has produced a total of 11 Nobel Prize winners. He continued that if counted all Nobel laureates who had ever pursued research in Heidelberg, the sum would reach 55!

“This reception in Heidelberg is something very special for me,” said Hell, who was deeply moved. “It was in Heidelberg that I studied physics, did my PhD, and worked at EMBL.” He added that although he had spent many years working in other places, Heidelberg held a special place in his heart. Hell said that it was a privilege to serve as head of a department at the German Cancer Research Center. “Heidelberg has excellent research institutes and also a great quality of life – just the right mixture for a creative researcher!” he said.

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 3,000 employees is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. At DKFZ, more than 1,000 scientists investigate how cancer develops, identify cancer risk factors and endeavor to find new strategies to prevent people from getting cancer. They develop novel approaches to make tumor diagnosis more precise and treatment of cancer patients more successful. The staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. Jointly with Heidelberg University Hospital, DKFZ has established the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg, where promising approaches from cancer research are translated into the clinic. In the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research (DKTK), one of six German Centers for Health Research, DKFZ maintains translational centers at seven university partnering sites. Combining excellent university hospitals with high-profile research at a Helmholtz Center is an important contribution to improving the chances of cancer patients. DKFZ is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers, with ninety percent of its funding coming from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the remaining ten percent from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

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