

Rokach to be inducted into Inventors Hall of Fame

For Hometown News

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BREVARD COUNTY — Joshua Rokach, the acclaimed chemist and longtime Florida Tech faculty member, is being inducted into the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame.

Dr. Rokach is among eight inductees into the Tampa-based Hall of Fame. He was selected for his creation of the first synthesis of major treatments for asthma, nose allergies and inflammatory bowel disease, which led to the development and commercialization of the globally successful drugs Singular and Flexeril.

"I was thrilled to learn of my election to the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame," Dr. Rokach said. "This honor is definitely one of the highlights of my career."

The 2020 inductees, who must have at least

one U.S. patent and a connection to Florida, were nominated through an open nomination process and elected by a Selection Committee of distinguished leaders in research and innovation from across Florida.

Dr. Rokach has excelled in both of those nominating criteria.

A faculty member at Florida Tech from 1989 until his retirement in 2020, and currently serving as Professor Emeritus, Dr. Rokach has 119 patents in the U.S. and internationally. Among them are three patents jointly owned by Florida Tech and McGill University that in July 2018 were licensed to Fairhaven Pharmaceuticals, a Canadian-based start-up company that plans to bring the 5-OXO-ETE receptor antagonist compounds that Rokach developed at Florida Tech into human clinical trials.

Dr. Rokach joined Merck & Co. in 1966 as

a senior research chemist, where he was part of a beta-blocker development program that led to the discovery of timolol, an antianginal/ antihypertensive agent used in the drug Blocadren. The same drug was also a unique cure for glaucoma, and it captured a large proportion of the world market in ocular hypertension as Timoptic.

Also at Merck, Dr. Rokach also help develop Singular, an FDA-approved treatment of asthma and allergic rhinitis. The product is used by millions of allergy sufferers and has yearly sales in the billions of dollars. Dr. Rokach also developed a nomenclature for isoprostane that is now used universally.

In 1989, Dr. Rokach came to Florida Tech, where he analyzed free-radical damage in disease as it relates to Alzheimer's and the discovery of isoprostanes and their measurement as an index of free-radical oxidative

damage. He was also involved in other research efforts involving challenges such as asthma, including work on 5-Oxo-ETE, a potent eosinophil chemotactic factor that may be responsible for eosinophil accumulation in the lungs.

His work has been recognized around the world. In 1988, he was awarded the Canadian Society for Chemistry Award for his accomplishments in the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry. That same year he was awarded the Chinese Academy of Science Award for his contributions to eicosanoid research. In 2011, Dr. Rokach was awarded the Gordon Nelson Award, given by the American Chemical Society Orlando Local Section for outstanding achievement in the chemical field. In 2018, he was named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

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Why Senior Advocacy in Brevard County?

I often write about unmet senior needs in Brevard, many of which were uncovered in a 1996 countywide survey. Why haven't we fixed them in 24 years? Partly because of the failure of those we elect to the Florida House and Senate to act in our best interests.

Years ago I ran unsuccessfully for the State Representative seat vacated by the death of Howard Futch. I had many admonish me for making a late run, saying I could accomplish more as a voice for seniors. Now, after 20 years, I agree with those who told me to become a senior advocate.

Since founding Helping Seniors of Brevard in 2011 and becoming an advocate for seniors, I am convinced that more can be done at the local level. Especially when those we elect to build a State budget, pass laws, and represent us seem to be playing a shell game with the funds entrusted to



HELPING SENIORS
OF BREVARD
JOE STECKLER

them. Here I refer to the oft cited Sadowski fund, which was developed to build affordable housing but seems to be a target for General Revenue programs. For the past 20 years legislators have bilked the fund for approximately \$115 million annually.

Besides highlighting the need for term limits, what I am saying is that a lot more could be done if these dollars were used for the purpose intended – matching locally developed monies across Florida to build affordable housing, which could

then be managed through low income rent dollars. Consider for a moment the amount of monies that Brevard would collect if these dollars were allocated by the number of seniors per county. We can fix this not through wishful thinking but by concerted action.

A Senior Advocacy Council needs leadership, goals and objectives, committed staff, and an established meeting place. Zon Assisted Living Facility has provided a place to meet. The Senior Resource Center is also home ported (Navy term) there. Several objectives can accrue from an Advocacy Council:

Development of a Brevard County Aging Plan

Unification of seniors in affairs affecting seniors

Building of low cost housing

Creation of a senior responsive transportation program

Identification of senior needs

These are just a few of the objectives to be identified and funded, but nothing will be accomplished unless we seniors advocate for it. Call 321-473-7770 and become part of the solution to a long standing set of problems in a county with one of the highest number of seniors in the nation. While failure to correct unmet needs can be laid to elected state and local officials, it also can be attributed to our failure to unify. Make that call – 321-473-7770 – and become a senior advocate.

Contact Helping Seniors at 321-473-7770, at www.HelpingSeniorsOfBrevard.org, or at P.O. Box 372936, Satellite Beach, FL 32937.

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Hometown News will be the judge of that. We are asking our readers to submit photos of their beloved pets, as part of our "Pet of the Week" Contest. The winner for the week will have his or her pet displayed in our newspaper, while also being qualified to become the Hometown News "Pet of the Year!" Email a photo of your pet (one entry per owner) that is at least 1 MB in size to brevnews@hometownnewsmediagroup.com Write "PET OF THE WEEK CONTEST" in the subject line, and in the body of the email, please include the following information:

- Name of pet; age; breed
- Three of your pet's favorite things to do
- Pet owner's full name and hometown
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