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## Scientists see need to study how brains become minds

BY PERRY BEEMAN • PBEEMAN@DMREG.COM • MAY 7, 2008

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Imagine a smart car that "sees" a truck in a blind spot and avoids a crash by deciding not to change lanes. Or a gadget implanted in a person's head that could send an electrical impulse capable of preventing a seizure.

Those are the types of breakthroughs anticipated by the high-powered scientists assembling this week in Des Moines for a seminar called "Decade of the Mind III: Emergence of the Mind."

The sold-out program is hosted by the Great Ape Trust of Iowa at the Des Moines Art Center.

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The initiative began a year ago in Washington, D.C., to drum up support to raise \$400 million a year for a decade in federal cash for mind research. The money would complement \$4 billion the National Institutes of Health spends on brain research annually.

Program co-organizer James Olds of the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., put the brain fest together with Robert Shumaker, who runs the Great Ape Trust's orangutan research, and his colleague Karyl Swartz, a trust scientist specializing in memory, problem-solving, social perception and self-recognition in apes. Scientists from Wisconsin, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Canada and Japan will attend.

"This is a major academic event for Des Moines," Shumaker said. "It's a phenomenal illustration of how Great Ape Trust is reversing the brain drain for the state of Iowa. It continues to establish us

as an important international academic institution."

The scientists are looking into how a brain becomes a mind.

"Mind is what the brain does," Olds said. "When we think of mind, we think of Shakespeare, we think of the Beatles, we think of a painting in the art museum. What produces the Shakespeare play or Mozart's music is brain activity."

Scientists are also looking at how to use the power of primates' brains. For example, knowledge of how the primates recognize faces and voices could help them program computers for new tasks.

Olds said Iowa was chosen to host the seminar because of the state's unique political power in the presidential race and it's home to two powerful U.S. senators, Tom Harkin and Charles Grassley, as well as Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, and the Great Ape Trust.

Harkin, who holds a key Senate financing post, said in a press release: "I am committed to a robust federal role in supporting basic, long-term scientific research - the kind of research that the private sector can't always do by itself."

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4real1 wrote:

sfinest - I went and checked the place out a while back. They've got a type of orangutan there (can't remember the name but they have the big round faces) that can converse with sign language. It can also do some pretty complex math problems. Maybe these studies can unlock the secret of the brain and allow people who have

The 200 slots for the conference are filled. However, you can follow the event, and eventually see the presentations, at [www.greatapetrust.org](http://www.greatapetrust.org).

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