

Montana Laboratory News

FALL 2020



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Do a Little More, Do a Little Better

Fall is one of my favorite seasons. Some may argue that it means Winter is around the corner and colder weather is approaching, but for me, this season represents natural change. Again, change is hard for some, but in my perspective, it embodies continual growth and possibility.

Recently I have started a journey. I purposefully interjected change into my life. I started a yearlong nutrition course. In this journey I have learned new habits, struggled with change, fallen, got back up, reflected, ignored what I have learned and refocused – not all in that order! I started right when Montana saw its first case of COVID. It has been a saving grace for me, something to focus on outside of all this.

What have I learned? So much! But the lesson that has been in focus lately – Do a little more, do a little better. The key to this lesson is to think small and grow big. Pick something attainable and try and do it just a little better each day. I have also learned to have grace with myself and experiment (sounds like science to me).

As we approached our Fall ASCLS-MT board meeting, I have thought about how these newly acquired habits can be incorporated into each aspect of my life. How can I do a little more and do a little better in ASCLS? As I looked at our strategic plan, I am in awe to see such a strong constituent society already in place. We Montanans have developed outstanding leaders and have been a strong presence in Region VIII. We continue to support each other, especially through COVID. We remain innovative and always work to improve our structure for future leaders. Professional Development through education has been reinvented through virtual learning as we proudly hosted our first completely virtual annual Spring Meeting this year! The list is extensive, and I would like to thank all the past leaders for contributing to these achievements!

The five pillars of our strategic plan are an important foundation for doing a little more or doing a little better.

Promoting the Profession is one of my passions and a pillar each individual member can find success. How can you work in your community to proudly educate others about our profession? Can you visit with HR or Administration in your hospital about the important role you play and the workforce shortage we are facing? Can you visit local schools or career fairs and show students the world of microscopes or bacteria? What about writing an article in your local paper or snagging a spot on the radio? Maybe for you this could be getting more involved in ASCLS. It is also important that each hospital support our local MMLS program and other MLT programs; allow students within your lab and give them the tools they need to thrive. We are in a unique period-of-time with COVID, we are noticed by the public eye. I hope many of us choose to capitalize on this advantage and work on ways to Promote the Profession. In a time when Laboratory staffing is facing a workforce shortage, there has never been a better moment in time to get up on your soapbox! Let your voice be heard far and wide.

Therefore, I invite each of you to try and do a little more, do a little better for your Profession. Start by saying one positive thing about the laboratory to someone outside the lab or teaching someone about lab processes. Ultimately, work to do a little more or do a little better by growing your voice to reach more and more people. Do not forget to give yourself and others grace, and experiment with what might work for you. You will fall down in some way, but always remember to get back up and refocus your energy. Remember, you do not wake up and become the butterfly... growth is a process. You are a vital component to patient care; let's each do our part in helping others understand how important we are! Welcome to a new year full of possibilities and dare I say... change.

Signing off,

Abbey Wichman, ASCLS-MT President



JOIN US OCTOBER 18-20!

WE HOPE, YOU'LL WARM UP YOUR WEBCAM AND JOIN US FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR HOME, COUCH, OR LABORATORY!

ASCLS Region VIII Presents



[Register NOW](#) for the 57th year of this regional educational conference.

We will be *Roaring Virtually into the 20's* on **October 18-20**.

For more details, visit the [IMSS website](#).

Continuing Education	There will be general sessions each day followed by breakout sessions. Many sessions deal with COVID-19, but there are sessions in all disciplines—something for everyone.
Industry Experience	The Virtual Exhibit Hall will allow you to interact with vendors and learn about the latest instrumentation, reagents and supplies used in the laboratory every day.
Social Zoom Room	Enjoy the Zoom Social Rooms on Sunday and Monday after the sessions. Register early to receive the IMSS Fun Package and enjoy kicking back with your fellow attendees.

IMSS 2020, October 18-20

All sessions will be held over Zoom



Stay in touch virtually!

As members of ASCLS one of your most valuable resources is the [ASCLS Connect Community](#)! Each year you can customize your member community to receive email updates regarding our state society news/ updates, any laboratory specialty of interest, and hot topics in the laboratory world. Stay connected to our membership across the US and across our big sky state. The most resources are at our fingertips via the [Connect Community](#), download the app today.

ASCLS Connect Community and Mobile App

Connect through the Online Community
at connect.ascls.org

Download a New App to Access the Connect Community on Your Mobile Device

Convenient. The app keeps you logged in, making the entire Connect Community (and all its functions) just an icon away.

Accessible. Look up other members in the directory, send and respond to messages, and monitor community discussions in real time.

Fun!



MemberCentric
Results Direct

Social

To download the app:

1. Go to the [Google Play store](#) or the [Apple App Store](#) and download the **MemberCentric** app.
2. Search for ASCLS when prompted to "Find your organization."

INSTALL

3. Log in using your credentials for your ASCLS member account.

**KEEP
YOUR
EYES
PEELED
FOR
THESE
SUSPECTS**

WANTED

Isolates of:

- Salmonella spp.*
- Toxigenic *Escherichia coli* or STEC positive broths
- Shigella spp.*
- Campylobacter spp.* or EIA positive specimens
- Listeria spp.*
- Vibrio spp.*
- Neisseria gonorrhoeae*
- Invasive *Neisseria meningitidis*
- Invasive *Haemophilus influenzae*
- Bordetella pertussis*
- Suspected VISA, VRSA, CRE
- Drug Resistant *S. pneumoniae*
- Isolates with Unusual Resistance Patterns
- Outbreak Associated Organisms

Must Be Taken Alive!

Submit (at no cost to you) to:
MT Public Health Laboratory

Questions? Call 800-821-7284



Healthy People. Healthy Communities.

Department of Public Health & Human Services

COVID-19 Resources

[Expanded State Courier Schedule as of 3-24-20](#)

Toll free number: 1-800-821-7284

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Laboratory Courier Service

Spokane Courier Services, LLC provides courier service for the Laboratory Services Bureau.

In response to testing for COVID-19, we are offering expanded courier service, which includes extra sites Monday through Friday and Saturday pickup at our regular weekend sites. Please consult the schedule below to see the facilities and pickup times, and have your samples to the location at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled pickup time. Also, be advised this is the same courier who picks up for LabCorp, so please ensure that samples for the state are packaged separately and marked appropriately.

If you do not have access to these sites, call MTPHL if you would like a prepaid UPS label. If you will be driving a sample, please call so we can make arrangements to receive your sample at our laboratory.

Samples sent through the courier should be packaged separately from other samples, in an insulated box to maintain cold condition. Please call the Public Health Laboratory at 1-800-821-7284 with any questions.



MONTANA
COMMUNICABLE
DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY

Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 case counts, hospitalizations, and active cases by county. The state laboratory has expanded hours 7 days a week. Watch for updates via email!

[Montana Response-COVID-19](#)



Extended PPE Use Fatigue

We are all working and buying our groceries in a higher level of PPE these days. We've also been battling this pandemic for more than half a year. Remind yourself this is a marathon and we need to take care of ourselves and our employees in order to survive this grueling pace. Check out these tips and remember to take care of each other out there on the front lines. Every. Little. Bit. Helps.

Self-care

While workers must concentrate on their important job duties and the proper use of PPE for self-protection, they must also be aware of the impact of PPE on their wellbeing. The balance between the protection afforded by PPE and the burden of that PPE must be met with a plan to mitigate the burden.

Take scheduled breaks

Find a safe place to properly take off the respirator to reduce CO₂ build-up and the negative physiological effects associated with it.

Breaks during work shifts are vital to worker health and safety. The potential physiological burden brought on by PPE use can be an unfortunate side effect; however, it can easily be remedied with a little fresh air and proper self-care.

Hydrate and eat

Dehydration can be a significant problem when wearing PPE while working in high threat environments. The effects of dehydration may contribute to the experience of the physiological burden such as headache, dizziness, strong sensation of thirst, and reduced cognition or greater distraction from the job. Therefore, HCWs must be aware of the need for proper hydration especially if wearing PPE causes significant sweating from heat exposure. A rule of thumb is to drink 1 ml or 1 oz of fluid for every 1 ml or 1 oz of body weight lost. For example, if the HCW has lost 1lb of body weight they must drink 16 oz of fluid (or for metric, if the HCW has lost 1 kg of body weight, then they must consume 1000 ml of fluid to make up for the loss).

Similarly, one must eat healthy food in part because the calories are needed to provide energy for HCWs to continue their work and also because most food contains water which will help with re-hydrating the body.

Institute policies to care for employees

Supervisors and hospital management can minimize the physiological burden of PPE by instituting policies and procedures to assure breaks for HCWs, encouraging front-line supervisors to check in regularly with staff to assess for symptoms or concerns, and providing a mechanism to report symptoms immediately and without fear of penalty.

ASCLS-MT, WHAT'S OUR PLAN, OR DARE I SAY S T R A T E G Y FOR THIS YEAR? I'M SO GLAD YOU ASKED!



2020-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN



PURPOSE				
To be recognized by our members as an organization of purpose, value to the profession, and involved in leading healthcare throughout the state and region.				
KEY OBJECTIVES				
COMMUNICATION	LEADERSHIP/ MENTORSHIP	MEMBERSHIP	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	ADVOCACY/ PROFESSIONAL PROMOTION
INITIATIVES				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member Community Newsletter – MLN Facebook Utilization and other social media platforms Website Virtual Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of Leadership Academy participants for Region VIII and National Provide Mentor at time of election Orientation of Board Members and Appointees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate value of membership Promotion of Group Memberships Promote different levels of memberships Retain Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advancing leadership through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Academy Committee participation Board Members Continuing educational opportunities Succession Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen relationships with state representatives Recognition for those who serve ASCLS Providing consistent communication to members on “labvacy” and government updates Promote the Profession
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member community participation Provide written communication for MLN Contribute information for posting on Facebook Provide updated information to Website Regular Communication of State, Regional, and National legislative actions to membership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one in a Leadership Academy – Region VIII or National. Engagement of Board Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting attendance Committee Participation Leadership representation evenly distributed throughout state Update by-laws to include SOPs/position descriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase membership by 5-7 each year Increase of Student memberships to professional memberships Retain memberships Provide communication to assist with annual lapsed membership campaign Encourage members to renew before memberships lapse One non CE related Networking activity each Year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide at least one CE event a year. Full slate of Board Members Contested Elections Regional representation in committees or programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet State representative once or twice in MT Continued Legislative Days representation. Provide Legislative Update Session once a year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex. State Annual Meeting or Webinar Awards given to those who participate and serve. Challenge each member to promote the profession within their community in some way.

MEET THE 2021 MMLS CLASS-VIRTUALLY (AKA "PANDEMIC SYLE")

Happy Fall Internship season MMLS class of 2021! ASCLS-MT is always excited to meet the new class of scientists and learn a little bit more about you all. We can't tell you how important it is to us all that you are successful and succeed in your careers. This is a year like none other. Your future co-workers are battling COVID-19 and have had a long and stressful year. We've battled more things in one year than some faced their entire career. We look forward to training and hearing about you all. You're not our ONLY hope that would be too dramatic, but we look forward to adding more teammates on the front lines! We welcome you all to you Intern-demic year, I don't think any of us will forget this year anytime soon.

MARLEY SANDE

1. Where are you from?

Bigfork, MT

2. Cat, Griz or other?

Cat!

3. Where are you doing your internship?

Bozeman Health in Bozeman, MT

4. Why did you decide to study Medical Laboratory Science?

I was always interested when I was watching my mom (an MLS) at work when I was younger. She would show me her blood smears under the microscope and always knew exactly what to do when we were sick based on her education in MLS. I've found that since becoming a lab assistant when I was halfway through my undergraduate curriculum, I really enjoy the environment of the lab and all of the people that I get to work with. It can be difficult at times, but the work is rewarding!

5. What are your plans after school?

After (fingers crossed) passing the board exam, I hope to find a job as soon as I can. My fiancé

and I are planning on starting to save for a house soon, possibly in Bozeman.

6. What do you hope to gain from ASCLS-MT?

I hope to make connections with like-minded people and gain an insight into how other labs across the state are operating. It also interesting to hear about the other neat things that other people see at their labs.

7. What's the best thing about being a student during a pandemic? Worst?

Best: online WebEx classes/recorded lectures so I get to stay cozy at home!

Worst: not having in-person experience and having to rely on online simulations, and general insanity/stress in the lab I have my rotation at due to COVID testing. Not to mention testing positive for COVID myself right before my rotation started, and having to miss out on my first week to quarantine.

Ashley Boehm

1. Where are you from?

Billings, MT

2. Cat, Griz or other?

GO CATS GO!

3. Where are you doing your internship?

St. Vincent Healthcare

4. Why did you decide to study Medical Laboratory Science?

Intrigued with the process of gathering the information that the doctors and nurses need to make a proper diagnosis for the patient.

5. What are your plans after school?

I hope to accept a position at one of the local labs in Billings.

6. What do you hope to gain from ASCLS-MT?

To meet fellow colleagues in the same field that I am seeking for my professional career.

7. What's the best thing about being a student during a pandemic? Worst?

Overall, I would not say that being a student during a pandemic has been the best thing. The worst thing about all of this is not being able to have close interactions with fellow classmates and teachers.

Thomas Frost

1. Where are you from?

East Helena, MT

2. Cat, Griz or other?

Cat

3. Where are you doing your internship?

VA hospital at Fort Harrison

4. Why did you decide to study Medical Laboratory Science?

I have always excelled in science and I thought working in the medical field would be very interesting.

5. What are your plans after school?

I hope to stay in Montana and find a job somewhere

6. What do you hope to gain from ASCLS-MT?

I hope to stay updated with news and technology in this field.

7. What's the best thing about being a student during a pandemic? Worst?

Getting to stay in bed for online lectures. The lack of human interaction.

Ticha Padgett-Stewart

1. Where are you from?

Missoula, Montana

2. Cat, Griz or other?

Cat! Loved attending MSU

3. Where are you doing your internship?

Benefis Health System

4. Why did you decide to study Medical Laboratory Science?

I loved working in the lab ever since high school and knew I wanted to find a way to continue lab work as a career! I was also interested in having a job that made a meaningful impact on patient lives the way medical lab science does, both of which made MLS an exciting career option.

5. What are your plans after school?

To work as a medical lab scientist, likely in either a hospital or maybe a public health lab for at least the next several years. After that, maybe pursuing further education as a specialist in blood banking, or really, who knows? I'm still early into my internship.

6. What do you hope to gain from ASCLS-MT?

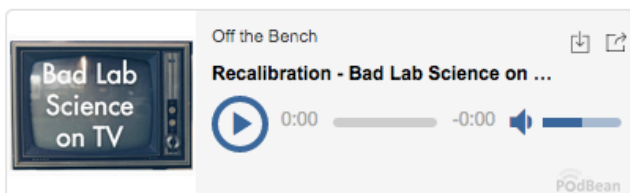
To meet other laboratory professionals and hear research, ideas and gain experience through talking to people who know the field well.

7. What's the best thing about being a student during a pandemic? Worst?

The best part of school during a pandemic is the low interest rate on student loans right now (and that's just about it). The worst was missing out on hands on experience during our summer semester.

PODCASTS

The Off the Bench podcast series discusses scientific and not-so-scientific ideas in laboratory medicine. Join the **ASCLS Off the Bench Facebook Group** to continue the discussions and share your feedback. Let's share ideas and talk nerdy.



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MEET THE 2021 MMLS CLASS cont...

Krista Woo

1. Where are you from?

Tigard, OR

2. Cat, Griz or other?

Go Cats Go!!

3. Where are you doing your internship?

Community Medical Center, Missoula, MT

4. Why did you decide to study Medical Laboratory Science?

It seemed like an exciting and interesting career. I wanted to be in the medical field, and this seemed like a good fit for me! As an undergrad, I really enjoyed hematology and immunology. I look forward to putting my knowledge and skillset to good use.

5. What are your plans after school?

I plan to work as an MLS in a hospital in either Montana or Oregon.

6. What do you hope to gain from ASCLS-MT?

Continuing education

7. What's the best thing about being a student during a pandemic? Worst?

The best thing would probably be the experience of a very busy workplace. There is always something to do, and I have learned a lot very quickly. However, it also makes it a bit difficult to study and absorb it all. Sometimes it is a little too hectic, and as a student, I am limited in how I can help. But it is definitely a unique experience to be working so closely with it.

Heidi Muller

1. Where are you from?

Billings, MT

2. Cat, Griz or other?

doesn't matter to me!

3. Where are you doing your internship?

Billings Clinic

4. Why did you decide to study Medical Laboratory Science?

I was working as a certified optician, making \$12/hr., and while I enjoyed working with the optometrists and doing the book work, I did not enjoy the pressure put on me to increase sales. Also, as an introvert I was constantly exhausted from interactions with new people everyday. After one particularly tiring day I decided I couldn't work with the public anymore and started looking at what it would take to become an autopsy

cont...

assistant, which led me to looking into returning to school to finish a biology degree. When I started to look into going back to school I found the biology-MLS program, and everything clicked for me. (I would say it was comparable to cartoons when the lightbulb goes off over someone's head) It was exactly what I wanted in a career but hadn't known it existed.

5. What are your plans after school?

Hopefully finding a job in Billings and living happily ever after

6. What do you hope to gain from ASCLS-MT?

Meet new people with the same passions

7. What's the best thing about being a student during a pandemic? Worst?

Best- nobody questions when you're crying, because everyone feels the same way. Also only spending 7 weeks in Bozeman this summer instead of 13 saved me a bunch of money Worst-the masks! they're hot and irritate my face!

ASCLS UPCOMING EVENTS:

1. 2021 CLEC - February 25-27

Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, Denver, Colorado

2. 2021 Annual Meeting - June 27-July 1

Omni Louisville Hotel, Louisville, KY

ASCLS-MT IS ON SOCIAL MEDIA...BE SURE TO CHECK US OUT!



FOLLOW US TO STAY UP ON THE LATEST NEWS AFFECTING OUR PROFESSION, CONFERENCE UPDATES, TECHNOLOGY, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AND SOCIETY UPDATES.

IF YOU HAVE HAVEN'T ALREADY, FOLLOW US, LIKE US AND SHOW US SOME LOVE! YOU CAN ALSO STAY CONNECTED WITH US AND OTHER LABORATORIANS WITH #WeSaveLivesEveryday #IAMASCLS #UNITEDAGAINSTCOVID19 #ASCLSMT #ASCLS

Explore the ASCLS-MT website by clicking on the graphic below.

