



ASCLS-MT AND ASCLS-ID AT JAM 2024!

2024 Joint Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA July 8-12th

Front Row: Left to right: Holly Weinberg, Anna Adams, Abbey Wichman, Gracie Tooke, Anne Tate, Debbie Shell

Back Row: Left to Right: Jerrica Bursik, Tori Rensink, Ethan Mercer, Heather Gunter

Region VIII represented well at JAM 2024 and we are excited for next year!

President's Message:

I'd like to start by saying that I am incredibly humbled to have the opportunity to lead such a dynamic team of powerhouse talent this 2024-2025 Leadership Year. Our team is the epitome of One Voice, One Vision.

A few things to summarize as we soon transition to the new membership year:

- Montana gave a fond farewell to our Past President, Jennifer Wolcott during our recent Spring Meeting and wish her only the best in her new endeavors. Jennifer was awarded the 23-24 Member of the Year Award for her contributions to ASCLS-MT while enduring hardships but her spirit remained a source of strength and perseverance. Our hearts are with you always, Jennifer.

Congratulations, again, to our Spring Meeting Award Winners:

- Member of the Year Award Sponsored by Laboratory SolutionZ: **Jennifer Wolcott**
- **Keys to the Future: Francis Grei Sebastian, Emily Haight, Anne Tate**
- State Omicron Sigma was awarded to all members of last year's leadership team.
- **Region VIII Omicron Sigma Winners: Anna Adams, Abbey Wichman, Jennifer Wolcott**
- 2024 Student of the Year Sponsored by Xtant Medical: **DeLayne Doucette**
- Paper of the Year Award: Comparative Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV2 Variants of Concern: **Cara Bushmaker**
- Student Posters Sponsored by MLS Services
 - Student Poster of the Year: Validation of Pneumatic Tube Transport of TEG Hemostasis Specimens: **Lakota Pugilese**
 - 2nd Place: **Meghan Logan**
 - 3rd Place: **Hannah Hicks**
 - 4th Place Tie: **Victoria Rose** and **Darian Burns**



In this newsletter:

President's Message, Leadership Transition Information, and JAM Recap

Labvocate Information

Student Care Package Recognition



Student Awards and Election of Officers- Spring Meeting 2024

Left Picture: Awards Ceremony, 2024 MT
Spring Conference:

Left to Right:

- Lakota Pugilese, Meghan Logan, Hannah Hicks, Victoria Rose, Darian Burns, Zara Cornelius (Awards & Scholarship Chair)

On Screen: Jennifer Wolcott, Past President

Thank you to the MMLS Program and Interns for your informational posters and your active engagement at the meeting. We look forward to seeing many of you in years to come!

A quick recap of the newly installed officers for the 2024-2025 Leadership Year:

Bottom Picture: Left to Right:

Holly Weinberg; Superior, MT- Finance and Audit Chair

Abbey Wichman; Lewistown, MT- Nominations Committee

David Korkowski; Big Sandy, MT- Director 1st Year

Anne Tate; Big Fork, MT- President Elect

Sherri Nichols; Wise River, MT- Secretary

Anna Adams, Missoula, MT- President



JOINT ANNUAL MEETING RECAP



Gracie Tooke, DP (left) and Jerrica Bursik, AP (right)
Location: Overlook at the Duquesne Incline, Pittsburgh, PA

Ascending and Developing Professional Spotlight

I recently had the privilege of attending the 2024 Joint Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh as the Developing Professional Delegate for Montana ASCLS. This was a fantastic opportunity to network, engage in educational opportunities, and spend time with the amazing members of MT-ASCLS!

Some highlights from the conference included the Developing and Ascending Professional Social Event, the 5k Run/Walk, the AMTF Dinner, the 'Appropriate Utilization and Lab Stewardship' educational session, and the visit to the Duquesne Incline. It was empowering to see how ASCLS advocates for its members and provides resources to constituent societies to ensure their success.

I am grateful for this experience and look forward to future opportunities within ASCLS. Thank you for making this possible!

Thank you!

Gracie Tooke
ASCLS-MT Developing Professional

The Joint annual meeting this year held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was JAM-packed with society business meetings, social events, continuing education, a 5K run/walk, vendors, and friends. One of my favorite continuing education seminars was given by SAFMLS, Society of American Federal Medical Laboratory Scientists, basically the military side of med lab science. It was about how they made and implemented a plan to combine all the branch-specific (Navy, Army, Airforce...) labs in smaller towns in Germany under a singular CAP license and decentralize their large hospital lab in the area to the smaller labs. This meant the personnel's competencies transferred to any of the area's labs, the test menus were standardized, and they could combine resources efficiently. I connected with this seminar because it seems somewhat similar but a different route to how the lab I work in operates with all of our rural hospitals and outpatient sites, helping me to understand my job in the healthcare system better. I wanted to highlight this seminar for the newsletter because like Pittsburgh's many beautiful bridges, to me, ASCLS is about fostering connections. Connections between mentors and mentees, instrument manufacturers to instrument operators (can you tell I also loved the busses with all of the analyzers?) , students to employers, the lab world to government/legislative officials, and of course lab friends to lab friends, who often become our closest friends.

Thank you,
Jerrica Bursik
ASCLS-MT Ascending Professional

Montana Laboratory News



ASCLS
The American Society for
Clinical Laboratory Science
MONTANA

As I descended through the clouds in one of the rare Boeing 717's (yes I'm an airplane nerd as well as a microbiology nerd), the many bridges of Pittsburgh came into view. Their bright yellow color scheme served as little golden accents dotting the downtown area; connecting it with the surrounding communities. I had met most of our entourage from Region VIII in Minneapolis so we all grouped off after deplaning to gather our bags and get an Uber to the hotel. How thrilling to explore a new city!

The next morning I navigated my way to registration (always an exciting expedition). I had a chance to peak at the registered names and see if I recognized them as any of my friends I had made last year. Before long it was time for the board meeting where parliamentarians began raising concerns of their constituent societies to the board. While some might find it mind numbing, this was where things happen for our organization. This was like having a finger on the pulse of our profession.

The rest of the week was a bit less formal as the presentations and chats with vendors commenced. Interesting topics such as bioterrorism and inter-professional kindness were presented with enthusiasm. After these presentations, the evenings were filled with lively opportunities for socialization. On Monday night there was the ascending and developing professional forum meeting and social. One morning before the presentations I ran a 5k (the heat nearly killed me). One of the highlights was the region VIII dinner where we gathered our friends from Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho for a moment to come together and celebrate our regional community.

All too soon however, I was standing in line at the airport for security to board a flight back home to Montana. What an action packed week! I could only wonder what fun next year would be.

Ethan Mercer
ASCLS-MT Awards and Scholarship 1st Year
Region VIII Ascending Professional



**Joint
Annual
Meeting**



ASCLS
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Clinical Laboratory Science
MONTANA



Region VIII Updates from JAM!

Back Row: Left to Right: Robyn Sorrell, CO; Anna Adams, MT; Holly Weinberg, MT; Tori Rensink, MT; Ethan Mercer, MT; J.R. Constance, CO; Jerrica Bursik, MT

Middle Row, L to R: Hayley Vinchattle, Gracie Tooke, MT; Barbara Brown, CO; Heather Gunter, ID; Debbie Shell, ID; Anne Tate, MT;

Front Row: L to R: April Shields, CO; Ayla Avalos-Morales, CO; Mindy Ingalls, CO; Abbey Wichman, MT

Region VIII won 1st Place in the PAC Promotion held during the conference, Montana took home 3rd Place for Best Website, Cara Bushmaker won the Scientific Research Paper Award: Comparative Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV2 Variants of Concern

Gracie Tooke, Developing Professional, was awarded the Roma E. Brown & Nellie M. Bering Memorial Scholarship as well as a Developing Professionals Forum Travel Scholarship. Ethan Mercer was also awarded a travel scholarship.



Montana and Region VIII Represent at JAM 2024- Pittsburgh, PA



Education and Research Fund-Silent Auction

Anna Adams and Tori Rensink giving a Barbara Snyderman a hand at the Education and Research Fund Silent Auction at Jam in Pittsburgh, PA. Tori is on the Board of Trustees, representing Montana.



House of Delegates

Seated Left to Right: Hechter Gunter, ID; Debbie Shell, ID; Anne Tate, MT; Jerrica Bursik, MT; Abbey Wichman, MT; Anne Addams, MT; Holly Weinberg; MT



Region VIII Looking Great!

The event photographer caught a candid moment at the Award Ceremony:

Top Photo: Left to Right: Tori Rensink, Anne Tate, Heather Gunter, Holly Weinberg, Debbie Shell

Bottom Photo: Tori, Anna, and Abbey having too much fun!





JAM Notes/Recap from Holly Weinberg

The ASCLS Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) was another great experience, and the Montana delegation did an excellent job representing our state. The annual Board of Directors meeting was very long but it provided for in-depth discussion of several topics. The newer format for BOD meetings begins with strategic discussions of up to 3 topics; at this meeting the topics covered 1) a fresh look at our Mission, Vision, and Values, 2) how to measure diversity in our organization, and 3) making accommodations for disabilities and providing a standard for inclusion. The third topic stemmed from a constituent society's concern when planning their spring conference and receiving a request for special accommodations for a hearing-impaired Developing Professional member. In this case, the availability of closed captioning on the zoom site was not adequate as this individual grew up using ASL (American Sign Language) and the closed captioning was like a foreign language to her. I admit this is something that never crossed my mind, always assuming closed captioning was an excellent alternative for the hearing-impaired. The cost of hiring a sign language interpreter is very steep so what accommodations do we have as an organization to address this? Food for thought.

During the week, we attended governance meetings, educational sessions, and networking events while still getting a chance to visit Pittsburgh. We attended the Region VIII Council meeting at the beginning of the week and saw our 2 interns, Grei Sebastian, MT and Jin Heo, UT present an outstanding project promoting the profession of Medical Laboratory Science, followed by graduation. We also convened with the rest of Region VIII attendees for the annual regional dinner after the awards ceremony on Wednesday evening. Montana once again brought home numerous awards -way to go!

As the Elections Chair for this year's meeting, I had a few extra things going on. The election opened on Tuesday morning after the presentation of the candidates. We ran into a situation that we've never dealt with before; we've had tie votes but nothing to this extent. This year we had 2 nominees for President-Elect, and 9 nominees for 5 open Director at Large positions. After the first ballot, the PE race was tied and 4 Director nominees received 50% of the vote, meaning we needed to do a run-off for both PE to resolve the tie and Director to determine the 5th nominee. We understood that all positions required a majority (>50%) to win, so in the Director race, our SOP states that the lowest vote getter drops off the runoff ballot and the remaining nominees appear on the ballot. The first runoff ballot took place Tuesday evening and President-Elect was decided in Kyle Riding's favor; however, the Director ballot still didn't get a majority so another runoff took place Wednesday morning dropping the lowest vote getter and the remaining 3 nominees were on the ballot. That ballot still didn't produce a majority so yet another ballot now with 2 nominees and we finally had a winner! After the meeting concluded, ASCLS President Pat Tille with approval of the BOD, appointed an Elections/Credentialing Task force to look at the process from Credentialing through Elections and develop a detailed SOP to better define our process. One of the biggest issues is our old documents are all based on past years when the process was entirely manual; we are now attempting to update to hybrid in-person/virtual attendee voting. Watch for more information on this!

I want to thank the Montana members for allowing me the opportunity to represent you at the annual House of Delegates, this is an honor that I don't take lightly! The Montana Delegation was an example to all, attending and actively participating in governance activities throughout the week, and bringing home exciting ideas to make our Montana Society even better.



ASCLS Labvocate (formerly Legislative Symposium): Fall Preview

Every year, ASCLS constituent society members collaborate with partner organizations such as ASCP, AGT, AMT, NSH, and PAMET-USA to address regulatory and compliance issues in the industry. Additionally, they dedicate a day to meeting with U.S. congressional representatives and senators on Capitol Hill to discuss critical issues and concerns affecting the laboratory profession. This united effort demonstrates the significant impact that a cohesive front can have in driving change.

This year, Montana will be represented by Anne Tate, ASCLS President Elect at the Labvocate Symposium September 30-October 1, 2024. Plans are in place for meetings with Senators Jon Tester and Steve Daines, as well as House Representative Ryan Zinke. Key topics for discussion with our State Senators and Representatives include addressing laboratory workforce shortages, proposed funding through Title VII, and the status of the SALSA Act, which is intended to replace the PAMA Act and prevent reductions in the laboratory fee schedule to unsustainable levels.

Interested in the Labvocate: [Click Here!](#)

Laboratory Staff Shortages

The laboratory profession has long struggled with a shortage of qualified personnel, a challenge that has persisted for over twenty years. Despite the CDC estimating over 14 billion tests are conducted annually—a number that continues to rise—the workforce is dwindling. Baby boomers are retiring at a rate that outpaces the replacement of new laboratory scientists, and the current number of training programs is inadequate to meet the increasing demand. ASCLS advocates for expanding Title VII Authorization to include laboratory science professionals. Such an expansion of the Title VII would provide essential funding for MLS and MLT scholarships, grants, and growth of both existing and new training programs.



PAMA vs SALSA Acts – Drastic Reduction in the Lab Fee Schedule

Attention laboratorians! It's crucial to be informed about the PAMA Act. Enacted in 2016, the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014 (PAMA) mandated significant cuts to the Laboratory Fee Schedule. Lab Fee schedule cuts impact ALL laboratories! These fee schedule reductions are severe and not reflective of market data from all types and sizes of laboratories. Since 2016, there has been one round of cuts, with further reductions postponed by Congress. It is expected that the 2023-2024 Congress will defer additional cuts to the fee schedule until 2025.

The Saving Access to Laboratory Services Act (SALSA), introduced in Congress in 2021, aims to address the flaws in PAMA by improving market data collection. Including data from all laboratory types and sizes will help establish more sustainable market rates for laboratory testing.

Support ACLS and ASCLS by joining the [Stopthecuts](#) campaign, which advocates for the adoption of SALSA to ensure patients continue to have access to affordable laboratory testing.

Labvocate update submitted by:
Anne Tate- President Elect, MT PAC
Chair/National PAC Committee



ASCLS-MT/MMLS Student Care Packages

As a board initiative to provide encouragement and support to the MMLS Program Students, care packages were assembled by Maria Rodriguez and items were donated by various members from the board and supporting organizations. Individual letters of support were submitted by BOD and leadership team members.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2025 ASCLS-MT Spring Meeting
April 10-12 | Kalispell, MT

2025 ASCLS, AGT & SAFMLS Joint Annual Meeting
June 8-12 | Sacramento, CA

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