

Montana Laboratory News

Summer 2025- Spring Meeting, JAM Recap, and more!



Greetings Montana Laboratorians and Friends!

I hope you've all been able to enjoy some of the summer season while it's still here. ASCLS-MT enjoyed an energizing and rewarding Spring Meeting in Kalispell, MT, in April. What struck me the most was the overwhelming sense of community. We were delighted to see that several of our members and even some new recruits traveled hours to attend! A top leadership goal was to redesign how MLS/MLT students interact and engage at the Spring Meeting, and this goal was certainly met! Thank you to Maria Rodriguez for your steadfast leadership as Conference Chair, as well as developing such a wonderful avenue to spark engagement, friendship, and advocacy with our Montana Students!



We celebrate a successful PAC campaign as Montana was recognized nationally, recently at the Joint Annual Meeting in Sacramento, CA, at 3rd Place for donations per member. Thank you to Anne Tate for your fastidious efforts to continue showcasing and encouraging the contributions of Montana and, as such, Region VIII! Region VIII celebrated 2nd place during the JAM PAC campaign!

Please join me (Anna Adams:2024-2025 ASCLS-MT soon to be Past President) in thanking the ASCLS-MT BOD and Leadership Team by reflecting on the impactful projects, collaborations, and initiatives from the past year:



- 2024 Wage and Satisfaction Survey- 55 Respondents
- Discussions with the State Department of Occupational Licensing regarding consolidation of the Respiratory, Radiology, and CLS Boards.
- Student Care Packages and Pinning Ceremony
- 2025 Wage and Satisfaction Survey –77 Respondents and counting!
- Region VIII Leadership Academy graduated Montana Intern, Kacie Toennis, who has recently been elected to serve as Director to our Board!

The next pages highlight Award Winners from our Spring Meeting, Installation of Officers, and memories made along the way!

Montana Laboratory News

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Longevity Awards!

Presented by Membership Chair: Jerrica Bursik

Celebrating:

- 5 Years: Heidi Fallang
- 10 Years: Pictured below: (Left photo) Kati Visser, (Right photo) Maria Rodriguez, Not Pictured: Michele Adams



- 20 Years: Sherri Nichols (pictured below) and Connie Hamm (not pictured):



Excellence endures and
sustains. It goes beyond
motivation into the
realms of inspiration.

-Azim Premji

Montana Laboratory News

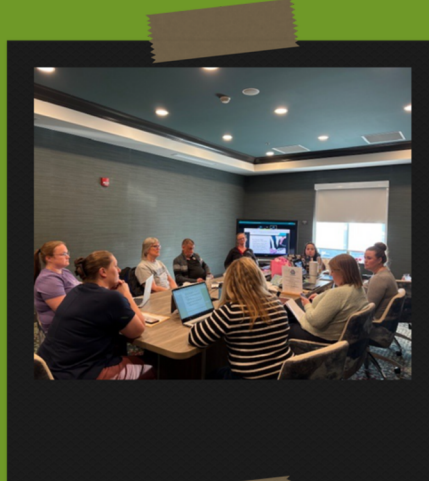
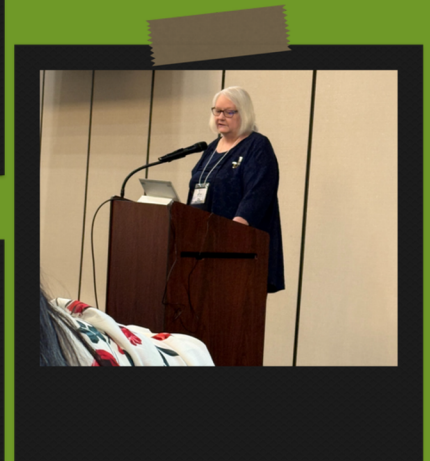
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Longevity Awards- Continued!
Presented by Membership Chair:
Jerrica Bursik
Celebrating:

- 25 Years! Holly Weinberg- pictured below:
- 50 Years! Donna Swank Rudiger- Not Pictured

Education, Labvocracy, Fun, and Friends!



Always do your best.
What you plant now, you
will harvest later.
Og Mandino



Montana Laboratory News

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Photo Highlights from the Award Ceremony: Key to the Future ,Omicron Sigma, Member of the Year, Student Awards; for a full synopsis of Award Winners- please check out our Awards and Scholarships [webpage!](#)



State Omicron Sigma Winners:

- Back Row: Shannon Callaghan Gardner, Anne Tate, Amanda Eney, Ethan Mercer, Holly Weinberg, Sherri Nichols, Jerrica Bursik
- Front Row: Cara Bushmaker, Abbey Wichman, Maria Rodriguez, Gracie Tooke
- Not pictured: Zanna Ward, Tori Rensink



Regional OS Winners:

- Anne Tate, Shannon Callaghan Gardner, Maria Rodriguez, Holly Weinberg, Cara Bushmaker, and Abbey Wichman

Montana Laboratory News

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National OS Winners: Abbey Wichman, Anne Tate, Holly Weinberg

Installation of Officers and Elected Leadership Positions: 2025-2026 Leadership Year

Left to Right:

Anne Tate- President
Kacie Toennis- Director
Shannon Callaghan Gardner- Nominations
Maria Rodriguez- President Elect
Cara Bushmaker- Secretary

Not Pictured: Victoria Rensink- Awards and Scholarships



Labvocracy Updates

Anne L. Tate MLS (ASCP), SC, MBA, MHI

Principal

Talking Laboratories

Workflow, IT, and Compliance/Regulatory Expert

ASCLS-MT President Elect/GAC&PAC Chair



Listen to the latest Labvocate podcast: “Highlighting the PAC”

Download [here](#)!

The laboratory industry plays a vital—yet often overlooked—role at the heart of patient care. Advocacy isn’t just a professional duty; it’s a personal journey and a collective effort.

In this episode of the ASCLS podcast, “Off the Bench,” Anne Tate and Tristan Sonnier share how engaging in advocacy has deepened their connection to the lab profession and strengthened their passion for driving meaningful change in healthcare. Please tune in to hear their unique perspectives and discover why advocacy matters now more than ever.

Additionally, Anne has compiled an excellent summary regarding potentially devastating policy initiatives at the Federal Level and their impacts on laboratories throughout the nation.

Title: Healthcare Policy at a Pivotal Crossroads: Lab Leaders Urged to Prepare for Disruption

As the new administration advances sweeping regulatory and fiscal changes, the clinical laboratory profession finds itself at a critical inflection point. Executive orders, agency realignments, and aggressive budget cuts are reshaping the healthcare landscape—and laboratories must be prepared to adapt swiftly. At the recent ASCLS Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) in Sacramento, Jim Flanigan, Executive Vice President of ASCLS, and Patrick Cooney, President of The Federal Group, presented “MAGA, MAHA, and MEGO”, a timely and insightful session outlining how these policy shifts will impact laboratory operations, reimbursement, and workforce sustainability.

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Laboratory Operations: Executive Orders with Immediate Impact

Several executive actions issued in early 2025 are already influencing laboratory practices:

- **Price Transparency Mandate (Feb. 2025):** Hospitals, insurers, and pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) must now publish actual, not estimated, prices for outpatient and diagnostic services, including lab testing.
 - **Lab Impact:** Labs must post negotiated rates, maintain accurate and current pricing data, and support greater audit transparency.
 - **Market Impact:** May drive healthcare purchasers to shift to lower-cost lab providers, altering referral patterns and competitive dynamics.
- **Drug Pricing Reform (May 2025):** A “most-favored-nation” pricing model now mandates lower drug costs, indirectly affecting lab budgets.
 - **Lab Impact:** Specialty labs may be pressured to restructure test menus and control costs due to tighter system-wide budgets.
 - **Market Impact:** Provider systems may reprioritize diagnostic spending, affecting test utilization.
- **Cuts to Federal Health Agencies (Feb. 2025):** Budget cuts to the NIH, CDC, and public health infrastructure have led to suspended programs and the loss of critical laboratory scientist positions.
 - **Lab Impact:** Public health labs are bracing for workforce shortages, which could hinder outbreak response and disease surveillance.

These developments demand that lab leaders revisit cost structures, compliance strategies, and service alignment to remain competitive and resilient.

Reimbursement Risks: Medicaid and CLFS on the Chopping Block

- **Proposed Medicaid Cuts:** A pending Congressional reconciliation bill aims to reduce Medicaid, CHIP, and ACA funding by over \$806 billion over the next decade.
 - **Coverage Impact:** Nearly 10.9 million Americans may lose Medicaid, and an estimated 16 million ACA enrollees would be affected.
 - **Lab Impact:** Hospitals and labs in rural and underserved regions—such as many in Montana—may experience reduced demand, diminished reimbursements, and increased uncompensated care.
- **PAMA and the CLFS Outlook:**
 - Without intervention, longstanding PAMA delays will expire in January 2026, triggering 15% cuts to reimbursement for more than 800 lab tests. Laboratories should begin preparing now for this possible revenue shock.

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Labvocacy Updates Continued:

Workforce Stability: Legislation Offers Hope

In a rare bright spot, Representative Deborah Ross (D-NC) introduced legislation in late 2024—developed with key input from ASCLS—to address the medical laboratory workforce crisis. This bill is endorsed by ADLM and ACLA and contains the following proposals:

National Health Service Corps Support:

- Scholarships and student loan forgiveness for laboratory scientists committed to underserved areas.
- \$25 Million in Annual Grants - support accredited MLT and MLS education programs nationwide, including funding for equipment, faculty, and student support.

This initiative recognizes the vital role laboratory professionals play and invests in building a sustainable workforce for the future.

Upcoming Labvocacy Updates and Events:

- Look for results from the 2nd Montana Laboratory Wage and Satisfaction Survey, distributed and compiled by Anne Tate
- Labvocate Symposium: October 20-21st, 2025

Montana Laboratory News

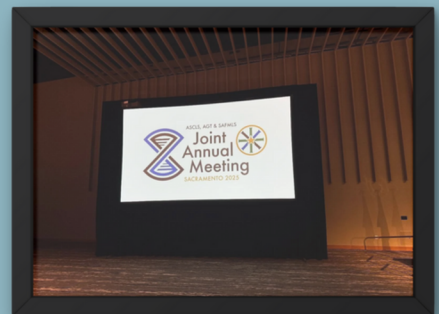
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Montana and Region VIII Represented well, as usual, at the Joint Annual Meeting- last month in Sacramento, California!

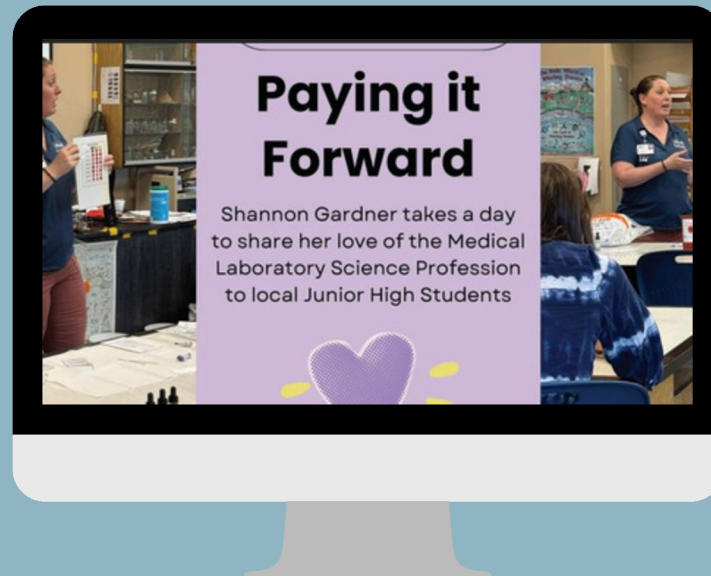
Highlights included:

- Region VIII Leadership Academy interns graduated! Kacie Toennis, Hayley Vinchattle, and Nickola Chin!
- Montana earned 2nd place for Community Engagement in addition to 3rd place for most PAC Contributions per member!
- Region VIII took 2nd place in the PAC Promotion!
- Holly Weinberg wins Mendelson Award!
- Idaho wins 2nd place for Greatest Membership Growth!



Leadership Spotlight:

Shannon Callaghan Gardner



Bringing Laboratory Science to Life at Lewistown Junior High

By Shannon Gardner, Laboratory Manager, Central Montana Medical Center

This spring, I had the pleasure of visiting the 7th-grade science classes at Lewistown Junior High School to lead a hands-on lab experience in blood typing. This event, now in its second year, was a collaborative effort between Central Montana Medical Center (CMMC) and science teacher Mr. Brett Shelagowski, who had just wrapped up a teaching unit on genetics and blood types. Thanks to materials and support provided by CMMC, 88 students across six classes had the opportunity to perform their own blood type testing using fingerstick samples and antisera reagents (Anti-A, Anti-B, and Anti-D). This practical experience helped students connect the dots between classroom instruction and real-world science. By observing the reactions on their test cards and interpreting the results, they were able to determine their own blood types and better understand how blood types are identified.

Naturally, some students were a little anxious about using a lancet to collect their blood sample, while others were excited and curious. Many were pleasantly surprised by how simple and (mostly) painless the process actually was. Mr. Shelagowski recorded their results and compared them to national blood type averages, turning this into not only a biology lesson but a small-scale scientific study in population statistics.

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Montana Laboratory News

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Sparking Interest in Lab Careers:

After the lab, I spent time introducing students to the fascinating world of laboratory medicine. We explored the different departments within a hospital lab—Hematology, Chemistry, Urinalysis, Microbiology, Coagulation, and Blood Bank—each one playing a critical role in patient care. I also spoke about the pathways to becoming a laboratory professional. Many students were unfamiliar with the options available, including two-year Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT) programs and four- to five-year Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS) degrees.

We discussed education requirements, clinical internships, and national certification exams. With an ongoing nationwide demand for lab professionals, the career opportunities in this field are not only rewarding but highly sought after.

It was incredibly rewarding to share my passion for laboratory science with such an enthusiastic and engaged group of students. Experiences like these are a great way to spark curiosity and perhaps even inspire the next generation of lab professionals. We're proud at CMMC to support this educational partnership and look forward to continuing it in the years ahead.

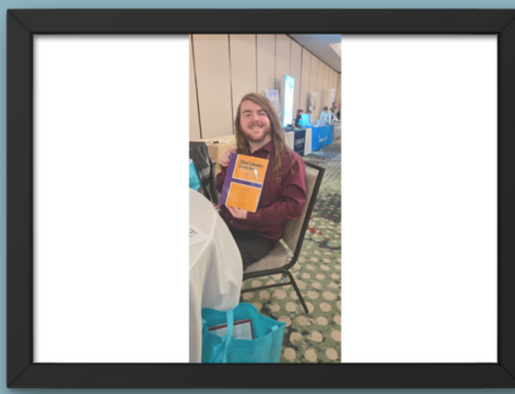
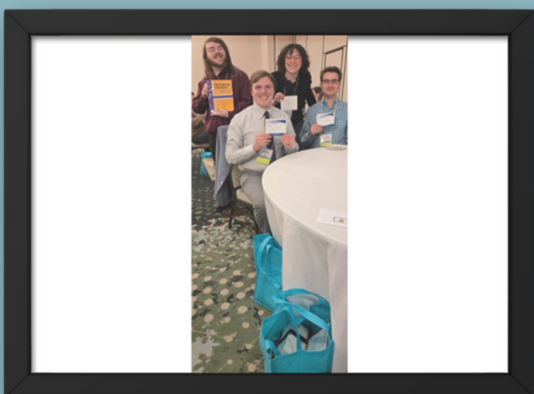


Montana Laboratory News

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ASCLS-MT Supports our Montana Students!



Lab Word Search

ANALYSIS
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DIAGNOSIS
DISEASE
EQUIPMENT
EXAMINATION
FLUIDS
GENETICS
HEMATOLOGY

HISTOLOGY
IMMUNOLOGY
MEDICINE
MICROSCOPE
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ORGAN
PATHOLOGY
PATIENT
SAMPLE
SCIENCE

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E P O C S O R C I M N C E M S
Q S G S R A L U C E L O M I I

Print & Enjoy!

Upcoming Events

ASCLS Montana Board Meeting - Sunday Aug 24, 1- 3 pm

ASCLS Montana 2025 Wage & Satisfaction Survey - coming soon!

ASCLS Labvocate Symposium - Oct 20 & 21, Washington, D.C.

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