



NEWSLETTER



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

My name is Barbara Kraj, and this is my first letter ever written as ASCLS Constituent Society President – the weight is so vast! I am not new to ASCLS though... last year marked 20 years since I was first introduced to the organization as an immigrant, non-traditional 4+1 Medical Technology (at the time) student in the Medical College of Georgia. As vice-chair of the Student Forum (now known as the Developing Professionals), I had fantastic, engaged mentors in ASCLS-Georgia who inspired me to stay active long after finishing school, serve as student forum advisor and seek opportunities to attend as many state and national ASCLS meetings as I could to grow professionally and spend time with like-minded people. A year was not complete without National Meeting or CLEC or the Legislative Symposium, or a state conference... Fast forward 20 years and I am in Virginia now, grateful for everyone who welcomed me as their own.

When I started this letter a few days ago, I stumbled on a major writing block and reached out to my peers for ideas how to properly welcome the membership. One of my coworkers, an accomplished writer, suggested using ChatGPT. I was really tempted but resisted.

"Start at the beginning how you were motivated to inspire new graduates and bring back those who lapsed [...]. Need to invigorate the chronic complainers to utilize their energy to be resourceful!!!" – marvelous idea, I thought, but I wasn't really feeling it... The truth is, I have not really met too many "chronic complainers"...not in ASCLS-GA or ASCLS-VA! I've heard of them, but have not regularly interacted with them. Most of the time, the people I encounter are solution seekers, troubleshooters, as we like to call them.

"Can't go wrong. Follow your gut" said one of the graduates of the MLS Program I've directed for the past 6 years. *".....start with first encounter, then weave in the other threads [...] ending with your vision for the VA chapter and the profession". "Sharing how you started with the profession and ASCLS, and what this profession has done for you. That can then provide the foundation for how we meet today's challenges and opportunities". "I would suggest you share your journey as a source of inspiration"* They are onto something, I thought.... I started seeing a common theme, until someone said, *"You are slipping into the trap of overthinking.... at this point most people are quite bored with a long list of history and accomplishments."*

IN THIS EDITION:

- Recapping the Annual Spring Meeting in Norfolk
- Thoughts from a clinical microbiology instructor
- A Developing Professional's new ASCLS membership experiences
- The Joint annual Meeting in Providence Rhode Island.



So, I kept on reading..."*Begin with the end in mind. What do you want the landscape to look like after your time of leadership?*" Excellent question, I thought. Why focus on the past if we are moving forward? "*I vote for tackling the challenges!*" was another suggestion. I did consider this as one of the options but could not bear naming them all in a welcome letter. "*Thanking*" said one former clinical affiliate director, referring to all who inspired me to ultimately agree to take on the challenge.

"Sit, breathe deeply, play some classical music, preferable strings, take your time, and sense into your heart for inspiration". Do Rodrigo y Gabriela count as classical music? Definitely playing strings.

I have decided there will be plenty of opportunities to talk about the beginning of my journey – just ask me when you see me! This is the time to express gratitude to all who continuously make effort to keep ASCLS-VA strong.

To *Briana Shelton*: outgoing ASCLS-VA President for serving in that role for several years (I've lost count!) and always keeping us on track. She answers my texts whenever I need anything and is always so courteous! Briana holds ASCP Specialty in Hematology and is an Education Coordinator at University of Virginia Health System.

To *Natalie Case*: outgoing ASCLS-VA Treasurer for many years, past-president, always showing up where hard work is needed. Natalie holds ASCP Specialty in Blood Banking and works at Chippenham Hospital, Richmond, VA.

To *Angela Wilson*: ASCLS-VA Secretary, patiently crafting minutes from our Board meetings, no matter how much we go off-topic. She is also the steward of our membership (you may have gotten a phone call from her asking to renew). She teaches clinical microbiology at ODU and her passion is AgarArt.

To *Laura Link*: ASCLS DEI Councilor At Large and our President Elect full of ideas, planning our next state conference together with Krystina Angelini and Jennifer L McBride (all faculty at Radford University at Carillion).

To *Rachel Childs*: our new PACE coordinator, recently named a rising Star in Teaching by Old Dominion University College of Health Sciences Awards Committee.

To *Doryan Redding*: the energetic Ascending Professional on the Board and Communications Director. Our Texas Connection at UVA.

To *Connie Mahon*: the well of wisdom of all things, not only microbiology. Author, educator and volunteer like no other.

To *Melissa Reeves*: our "connection" at the National Institute of Health. Molecular biologist and research professional with clinical mindset.

To *Nicole Parham*: outgoing Developing Professional Chair who took a while to discover her passion for the

laboratory and professional advocacy. Her 2022 graduate story is featured on ODU website. Take a peek. To all who recently expressed their interest to become more involved and share responsibilities for the society activities: Matthew Burroughs from UVA blood bank, Ellie Coggins (Nominations Committee), Amy Vinarao (the new Developing Professionals Chair), and others whom I may not have listed here.

To all who contributed to the success of our annual state meeting this past April, held face-to-face at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA, to remind us what it means to actually see people in person, learn together, socialize, laugh and reminisce:

- Our speakers: Dr. Rodney Rohde (opening Keynote, Texas State University), Dr. Bill Korzun (VCU), Dr. Jeffrey Craig (UVA), Dr. Peter Mollica (ODU) and Dr. Robert Carden (Closing Keynote, CTF) for sharing their wisdom and experience.
- Our panelists discussing how to inspire the Next Generation in Clinical Laboratory Science (D. Redding, R. Childs, M. Reeves, and C. Mahon) for their ideas and contagious enthusiasm.
- The Commonwealth Transfusion Foundation which, as private entity decided to support us as a non-profit organization by awarding us with \$10,000 grant to offset the cost of the meeting and, most importantly, allow offering travel scholarships to 12 students (5 from Radford University, 3 from Augusta Health, 2 from Virginia Commonwealth University, one from Tidewater Community College and one from Old Dominion University) and support ASCLS-VA Delegates' travel to the National Meeting in Providence, RI.
- Other vendors: ODUGlobal, QuidelOrtho, Dan the Safety Man, Zeus Scientific, Department of State bureau of Medical Services, Virginia Department of General Services/Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services and Eurotrol for financial support, exhibits and networking opportunities.
- Our attendees for reminding us that it does matter to meet, exchange ideas, network and plan the future together.

I look forward to all and every opportunity to recognize many more people in the next Newsletters and encourage you to submit stories, reflections and opinions.

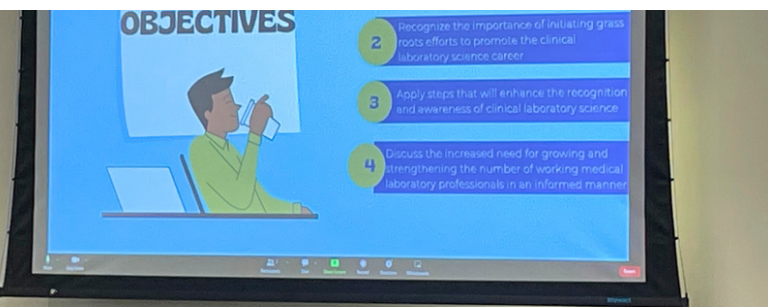
With much hope for a successful year and a strong society able to endorse our professional identity,

Yours in Service,
Barbara Kraj, PhD, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}MB^{CM}
ASCLS-VA President

Fun From The ANNUAL SPRING MEETING



Beginning the Day!



Dr. Craig's Presentation on Hodgkin Lymphoma



Thank you to our Sponsors!



Dr. Rohde's Opening Keynote

Rachel Childs, Melissa Reeves,
Connie Mahon, and Doryan
Redding discuss Promotion of
the Profession



Dr. Peter Mollica speaking on Next Generation Sequencing



Students play lab related games in between breaks to win prizes

Dr. Robert Carden delivers the Closing Keynote



Congratulations to all the Students who received CTF Scholarships!



Oxidase, indole, catalase, blood agar, MacConkey agar, and the Vitek 2 Compact. These reagents, media, and instrument are only helpful if we have growing bacteria in the student clinical microbiology lab.

I have been teaching clinical microbiology for seven years. During those seven years, I was lucky to have a refrigerator and freezer full of lyophilized and frozen American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) bacteria strains; most were donated and expired, but they worked. This year, however, for the first time, many of my steadfast frozen bacteria and expired loops failed to grow. I took their reliability for

granted. I was conscientious about ordering the more fastidious bacteria like *Neisseria gonorrhea* and *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. I took for granted other bacteria like *Corynebacterium* species, *Proteus mirabilis*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis*, and even *Escherichia coli*. I recall one year recovering *E. coli* and *M. Morganii* from donated loops that expired in 2012.

This year, I went to the lab coordinator and requested the usual bacteria like *N. gonorrhea*, *S. pneumoniae*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, and some anaerobes. I assumed the hardy bacteria miraculously growing from frozen broth or expired loops for years would grow. Well, this year, they failed to grow. Unfortunately, students worked through a few labs without seeing some commonly isolated bacteria. I do not blame the bacteria but myself for taking their vitality for granted. I plan to review the master list of bacteria, purchase only those necessary bacteria, and stay within our budget. Students only need to see some of the bacteria they might encounter in the hospital clinical microbiology laboratory in the student lab. Still, I must ensure and appreciate that our most essential laboratory supplies are available and alive.

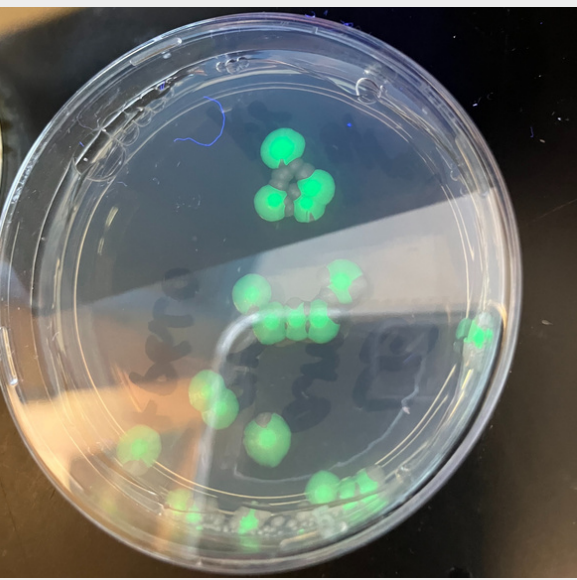
At the semester's closing, I was going through the stock of frozen bacteria. I found *Yersinia enterocolitis* and *Escherichia coli* O157 (neither of which I have used before) dated 2012. I subbed them to Cefsulodin-Irgasan-Novobiocin (CIN) agar and MacConkey with sorbitol and incubated them at 25°C and 37°C, respectively. The *E. coli* O157 grew! The *Yersinia* did not. I tested the transparent colonies from the MacConkey with sorbitol agar on the Enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* (EHEC) kit, and the result was positive for the toxin. I was pleasantly surprised by this recovery.

**I AM TRULY FORTUNATE TO TEACH CLINICAL MICROBIOLOGY
AND EVEN MORE FORTUNATE TO WORK WITH LIVING LAB
SUPPLIES.**

THOUGHTS FROM A CLINICAL MICROBIOLOGY INSTRUCTOR

*When your lab
supplies are ALIVE*

by Angela Wilson



**Getting ready for American
Society for Microbiology
Agar Art 2023 with
fluorescent E.coli!
Students created using
pGLO lab Bio-Rad for
bacterial gene
transformation.
Positive and Negative
images shown.**



My Experience as a new ASCLS Member and attending the JAM

by Amy Vinarao



*"Being a part of
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Hello! My name is Amy Vinarao. I currently am enrolled in a Medical Laboratory Science program at Old Dominion University. I've been an ASCLS member since March 2023, which is not that long as other members. Recently, I was appointed as the Developing Professional Chair and I am ecstatic to help make this organization better.

Being a part of this professional community has offered me many opportunities to better myself as well as make great connections that will help me in the future. One of the best memories I've made as an ASCLS member is attending the 2023 Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) in Providence, Rhode Island during the summer, organized jointly by the American Society of Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS), the Association of Genetic Technologists (AGT), and the Society of American Federal Medical Laboratory Scientists (SAFMLS). I attended the JAM as the winner of the Clinical Laboratory Educators Forum (CLEF) Student Paper Competition with the financial support received by the school as well as the ASCLS-VA. My research paper was about Investigating the Potential for Foodborne Pathogens in Deliverable Fresh Meal Kits. Prior to winning the prestigious award, I have presented my research with my professor twice at ODU and at one of the events, I was the only undergraduate student to present during the College of Health Sciences Research Symposium.

Two events I enjoyed the most throughout the entire conference was Trivia Night with other MLS professionals and the JAM 5K Run. Seeing everyone come together, share experiences, and welcome new members made this a positive experience! I hope to see new and current ASCLS members enjoy the benefits that this organization offers and attend the next ASCLS-VA meeting sometime next Spring!!

ASCLS-VA IN PROVIDENCE, RI

The Joint Annual Meeting of ASCLS, AGT, and SAFMLS is a remarkable event where members from each society come together to learn, network, and have some summer fun! The 2023 Meeting was no exception. ASCLS Virginia had a great presence at the conference and really left our mark. Pictured on the next page you can see the presentation I was a part of. This was a Lab Trivia Game show that was not only presented in person but also recorded and released on my podcast *Off the Bench* by ASCLS. This session was so rewarding because we got to interact with our brilliant audience full of hilarious and engaging members! Also pictured on the next page is some of the vendors at the event where attendees acquired so much new information about up and coming instrumentation, programs, and more! And of course it wouldn't be a proper recap without mentioning the other fabulous Virginia members who attended: Nicole Parham, Amy Vinarao, and Angela Wilson. Extra shout out to Amy who won the CLEF Student Paper competition! Personally, I am so excited to see that our constituent society contains motivated and dedicated developing professionals to propel our organization above and beyond where it has ever been before. In summary, this year's Joint Annual Meeting was a tremendous success and I think I can't wait to see how it gets better in the years to come!

BY DORYAN REDDING





*Greetings from
Rhode Island!*



***The board of
ASCLS - Virginia
Thanks you for your
continued support!***

*"Move forward.
Good things are
up ahead."*

Let's keep this wonderful tradition of sharing and connecting alive in the pages of our next edition! We're eager to continue featuring the diverse voices and perspectives within our community.

**WANT TO BE FEATURED IN
THE NEXT EDITION?**

Email your submissions to
doryan.redding@gmail.com

Together, we make this newsletter a vibrant reflection of our amazing ASCLS Virginia Community.