



## President's Message

RJ Benson

### Are you an Agent of Change?"

The rough outline of this message has been incubating for a long time. So, here goes.

When I was managing the laboratory inspection program for the state of Michigan, I received a call from a woman stating she had been transferred from four or five Departments and was told that I was the person to talk to.

**Me:** "How can I help you?"

**Caller:** "I have a cure for AIDS and wanted to let someone know."

**Me,** after a mere micro-pause: "You have my attention. Tell me more."

**Caller:** "I don't want to make money off of this. It's just that so many people are suffering, it would be wrong not to share it."

**Me:** "Can you tell me what it is and how it works?"

**Caller:** "Sure. It is a mixture of some pretty simple substances that is applied to the person that is either sick or going to get sick."

**Me:** "Amazing. I'm all ears."

**Caller:** "The salve is made using camphor or Vicks Vaporub, alcohol, some plant extract and

kerosene. It is liberally applied to either the man's reproductive part or into the woman."

**Me,** thinking I might appeal to her scientific skills: "That sounds like a fairly caustic mix to be applied to some very sensitive skin. Where was this developed?"

**Caller:** "It came from the Bible."

**Me,** realizing my skills in framing concepts of scientific trial and medicine just became moot: "This strikes me as dangerous. I know you are trying to help people, but this medication, like every other medicine, needs to be tested to determine how well it might work. You said it could be used on people that "might" get sick. Is this being used on people right now?"

**Caller:** "Oh, yes."

I don't recall the specifics of how the conversation ended, but I do remember sharing my extreme concern about using an untested substance on people that had not even been diagnosed. Later, I tried to put myself in the position of a person creating such a "cure" and the only approach that made sense was one where the sheer pain from the salve's contact was equated to the pain and destruction that must also be experienced by the virus, but I'm handicapped here. I bring too many biases to the table.

The Executive Secretary for my Section ran the place and kept me sane. We developed a friendship that included being partners for the golf league and she was comfortable sharing things from her personal life. One day, she told me that she was trying a treatment using something a

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friend had given her. I was concerned about her health and asked why she was doing this. She said she was fine, but that the “treatment” would remove toxins and seemed like a good idea. I asked how it worked. She said that you prepared a pot of hot water, poured it into a small basin, added two of the treatment tablets and soaked your feet in it for 20 minutes. She said it “removed” toxins from your body through your feet and you could tell if it was working if the water turned brown. I did not remember anything in my college courses that described the tissues in the feet as being capable of toxin exchange and told her I was a bit skeptical. I asked her to heat water, pour it into the basin, add the two tablets and wait 20 minutes without putting her feet in the solution. The next day, she reported that the water turned brown without her feet being in it. I said that there were many natural treatments for conditions, but verifying SOME evidence of the treatment actually working was in her best interest.

I have stories of health treatment scenarios that are TNTC. I lost friendships over defending the effectiveness of the COVID vaccine, but made it a point of sharing that I was a volunteer for the Ingham County Health Department vaccination programs. We got thousands of needles into thousands of arms and I’m proud to have assisted. I stopped asking the detractors what ever happened to all those people that had their DNA modified by the vaccine. I stopped responding to people that said that it wasn’t a “true” vaccine because it used mRNA. Those people had their heels dug in and no amount of scientific evidence was going to change their beliefs.

You probably have already thought, “RJ, why the rant?”. Measles. As of late April 2026, Michigan has confirmed 10 measles cases, largely concentrated in Southeast Michigan (Washtenaw, Wayne, and Macomb counties). The outbreak, which began in March 2026, is linked to an unvaccinated traveler and has prompted

health officials to recommend accelerated vaccine doses for infants 6–11 months old in affected areas. Nation wide, the trend for new cases is the same as gas prices. This disease was controlled by effective use of vaccinations and the willingness to get children vaccinated is declining. Why? Scientific, evidence-based conclusions are under attack. I’m not going to dwell on the specific dynamics which are thwarting ongoing protection to this disease. You probably also thought, “What does this have to do with me?”

I believe we can confront this problem [and others] which exists due to either lack of information or disinformation. I realize we did not train or sign up to be spokespersons for Public Health, HOWEVER, we can be agents of change. One of the speakers at our Annual Conference shared that a care giver had declined getting the COVID vaccine, while the person she was caring for got it. The speaker had asked why she declined the shot and she didn’t have a firm reason other than someone told her it was a bad idea. The speaker spent some time explaining the way the vaccine worked and that it presented an extra layer of protection for both her and the person she was caring for. She got the shot soon after.

Perhaps you know someone that has kids that have not gotten vaccinated. A casual, gentle query as to why they didn’t choose protection might open the door for providing information or refuting disinformation. Vaccines are just one example.

I know what your expertise is [thank you for your dedication], but I believe we have an opportunity to be Agents Of Change and that we can have an impact on society that was not part of our curriculum pathway. I hope you might consider stepping out of your comfort zone. The rewards may not be readily evident, but they will be significant.



# ASCLS-Michigan 2026-27 Election Results

Kyle McCafferty



Mattie Brechbiel



Caitlyn Madden



Kayla Waider



Natalie Ishioka



Meighan Sharp

Position	Elected nominee
President-Elect	Mattie Brechbiel
Treasurer	Vacant
Secretary	Caitlyn Madden
District Director	Kayla Waider
Developing Professional Director	Natalie Ishioka
GAC Chair-Elect	Meighan Sharp
Nominations Chair-Elect	Don Robertson
Ascending Professional Director	Allie Montie
Delegates to JAM	
Ascending Professional	Katelyn Farrar
Developing Professional	Israel Ruiz
Members	Amy Morris Caitlyn Madden Roslyn McQueen Suzanne Butch
Sponsored for LabVocate Symposium	Meighan Sharp



Katelyn Farrar



Israel Ruiz



Amy Morris



Roslyn McQueen



Don Robertson



Allie Montie



Suzanne Butch

# Annual Meeting Recap from President RJ Benson



The ASCLS-MI Annual Conference was held at the Soaring Eagle Casino in Mt. Pleasant on April 12, 13 and 14. It is always a pleasure to gather and celebrate the Profession.

Some highlights of the meeting:

- There were 15 Scientific Sessions, over 20 vendors and over 200 participants.
- The prize for Speaker That Came The Longest Distance goes to Dr. Rebekah Martin, who crossed the Atlantic Ocean to present “Routine Excellence: Building a Culture of Quality in the Clinical Laboratory” as well as “In the Wake of Wakefield: The Vaccine-Autism Controversy”. We were also joined by ASCLS President Kyle Riding, who had two presentations.
- Student activities included a Mock Certification Exam.
- The “tradition” of Facility Safety continued [a loud-by-design test of the fire alarm system took place during presentations; no evacuations this time].
- The Board of Directors were able to meet [in person!] to discuss the past year’s activity and current activity. New officers were sworn in during the Awards Ceremony and Installation of Officers [Award Winners are listed elsewhere].
- At the Membership Meeting, members were able to approve Bylaws amendment proposals and discuss future meeting dynamics.

Please enjoy a selection of photos from the event.






**ASCLS**  
The American Society for  
Clinical Laboratory Science  
MICHIGAN

**ASCLS-MI Annual Conference**  
April 12-14, 2026  
Mount Pleasant, MI




**BRONSON**  
Laboratory




**ASCLS**  
**MICHIGAN**




**ASCLS**  
**MICHIGAN**



## ASCLS Michigan Awards Celebration!



This year's awards ceremony was held in person on April 13, 2026, at the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mount Pleasant as part of the "Celebration of the Profession" Special Event. Our hardworking members were honored and recognized. After opening remarks by Stephanie Mabry, the awards were presented by Mattie Brechbiel.

### Presidential Recognition Award

This is an honor bestowed to individuals who have greatly assisted the President during their tenure. This year president RJ Benson recognized **Kristina Martin** and **Stephanie Mabry**. (Pictured L-R)



### Scientific/Technical/Literature Research Award

The ASCLS-Michigan Scientific/Technical/Literature Research Award recognizes and encourages the development of scientific research or other innovations that contribute to quality of laboratory testing, patient care, education, or other aspects relating to the profession of clinical laboratory science. This year's research award was presented to **Peter Davis** (pictured at left) for his continued development and validation of Panel Pal, an original decision-support software designed to assist laboratory scientists in blood bank antibody screening and identification.

### Joseph Miller Memorial Award

Established in honor of a vendor who passed away following an ASCLS-Michigan Annual Conference, this award recognizes an outstanding medical laboratory science student who will complete their clinical internship in the calendar year in which the award is presented. This year's award winner was **Gwen Russell**. An excerpt from this year's winner's nomination letter states:

An excerpt from this year's winner's nomination letter states: *"I had the privilege of working with this student as her laboratory supervisor while she worked as a student lab assistant for the last two years. She brought a consistent level of professionalism and preparedness to every responsibility. She is the kind of student whose achievements may not be loud, yet her reliability, maturity, and steady excellence never go unnoticed. She was always prepared for class and laboratory work, carried herself with professionalism, and demonstrated self-sufficiency when performing laboratory tasks. She is also engaged in campus life and service. She is an active member of the Laker Lab Scientists Club, Rock Climbing Club, Yarn Arts Club, and regularly participates in Campus Ministry. This student embodies the values of our profession through her integrity, resilience, and quiet leadership. I am confident she will make the profession proud as she completes her clinical internship and begins her professional career."*



## ASCLS Michigan Awards Celebration!



### Martha Roulund Membership Award

Established in 2003 to honor former ASCLS-Michigan Executive Secretary Martha Roulund, our next award recognizes ASCLS-Michigan Developing Professional Members who show great potential to contribute to the profession and to ASCLS with a certificate for one year of Ascending Professional membership dues.

This year, we have one recipient of the Martha Roulund Membership Award: **Luke Markley** (pictured at right).

*Luke serves on the board of the student organization Laker Lab Scientists, where he contributes time, energy, and leadership to advancing student involvement in the MLS profession. His dedication to service is further reflected in his volunteer work at an event hosted with the career technical center in Kent County (KCTC). Luke helped introduce high school students to the field of Medical Laboratory Science, inspiring future professionals through education and outreach. Luke also actively engages with the professional community, having attended the ASCLS Agar Art event for two consecutive years. This consistent participation highlights his commitment to professional involvement and lifelong learning.*



### Omicron Sigma Awards

First awarded in 1977, Omicron Sigma is the ASCLS President's Honor Roll for Outstanding Service. It provides lasting recognition of those dedicated members who volunteer their personal resources, time, and energy to ASCLS. Recognition is at three levels: national, regional, and constituent society.

For service at the Constituent Society level, ASCLS-Michigan would like to recognize (L-R):

- Kristina Martin
- Paul Guthrie
- Mattie Brechbiel
- Kyle McCafferty
- Christina Lim
- Katelyn Farrar
- Amy Morris
- Meighan Sharp (not pictured)



Additional individuals may be recognized by the ASCLS President or Board of Directors for service at the regional or national level with the Omicron Sigma award at the upcoming Joint Annual Meeting in St Louis, MO this June. All Omicron Sigma awardees will be recognized by a special badge ribbon at the Joint Annual Meeting.

## ASCLS Michigan Awards Celebration!



**Developing Professional Travel Award.** This award was established to help support student travel to the ASCLS-Michigan Annual Conference. This year, we have three recipients for the Developing Professional Travel Award.

Our first awardee is **Kaitlin Banaszak**. (Pictured below at left) Kaitlin has distinguished herself as a level-headed, engaged, and highly capable learner from the very beginning of the program. She approaches her coursework and laboratory work with a calm focus, attention to detail, and genuine care for quality, qualities that translate directly into outstanding patient-centered practice. Her work is consistently thoughtful and precise, reflecting not only strong academic ability but a deep respect for the impact our profession has on patient care.

The second recipient is **Anh Tran**. (Pictured below at center) is an artistic and creative individual, qualities that enrich both her academic environment and the professional community. These strengths, combined with her technical competence and professionalism, position her as someone who will continue to contribute positively to ASCLS and the MLS profession as a whole.

The third recipient is **Damilola Oyewole** (Pictured below at right) Damilola is a hardworking and motivated student with a genuine enthusiasm for the medical laboratory science profession. She approaches her studies with a clear desire to continually improve, consistently seeking opportunities to strengthen her knowledge and skills. These qualities will no doubt carry forward into her professional career.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR 2026 AWARD WINNERS!

# ASCLS Michigan Awards Celebration!



## Mock Certification Exam Awards

The Mock Certification exam is an excellent opportunity for individuals and MLS programs to assess and prepare for their readiness for the BOR Certification Exam.

This year's team winners:

For **third-place** team we had a tie:

- Andrews University Hemeosapiens with team members Jakob VanDenburgh, Gabriel Quintin Wilson, Riel Julian Guarino, Vincent Vuong, Luke Watson, and Jasher Liwanag
- LabCorp Hospital Based Program team: Amber Ren, Marina Stevenson, Caitlin Ancel.

The **second-place** team is the Micro Masters Team from GVSU: Keaton Kval, Claire Peyerck, Christine Tran, Joshua Patterson

The **first-place** team is from FSU - the WoodBridge Team: Molly Malec, Nick Peters, Lindsay Cross, Samantha Krul, Amaris Joseph, and Ethan Blue

In the INDIVIDUAL category, the winners are:

- **4th place** individual is Madelyn Ross from MTU
- **3rd place** individual is a tie – Molly Malec from FSU and Camila Asis from EMU.
- **2nd place** individual is Annika Julcher from Grand Valley State University
- **1st place** Top scoring individual is Marina Stevenson from LabCorp Hospital Based Program

**Please congratulate these and all our mock exam participants and teams. These students have all shown that the future of medical laboratory science is bright in Michigan!**



Thank you API for being a sponsor of our 2026 Annual Meeting!



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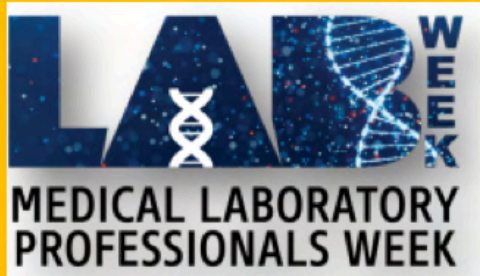
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How did your lab celebrate MLPW 2026? Please share any photos or stories you'd like published in the next edition to the publisher (see last page).

Below are photos from a contest held at the Bronson system laboratories.

# TOY

## BUILDING CONTEST

**RULES:**

1. Gather into teams of 1 to 3 people.
2. Each team will receive a toy building kit.
3. You may only use what is inside of the kit to build your toy, along with glue, 3 pieces of paper, tape, markers, scissors or a stapler to enhance your design.



Pat- She has a hard time collecting herself!



Gill- He is curious, a little chaotic, and way too confident for a fish. He believes he's the smartest member of the lab team even though he doesn't quite understand what's going on half the time.



Stevie Sticks- She grew up on the prairie but now works in blood bank. Unfortunately, she still needs some lessons in proper PPE.



Gull Roady



Dragon Toy



Creepy Crawler- pull the string to make him crawl around!



Sir-Race-Ya (serratia)



Artemis II- This interactive rocket toy will jump when played with!



Launchy- It will launch small objects into the sky for a thrilling adventure!

# STATE OF MICHIGAN



## CERTIFICATE OF PROCLAMATION

ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF MICHIGAN,  
I, Gretchen Whitmer, governor of Michigan, do hereby proclaim

April 19 – April 25, 2026

as

**MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS WEEK**

**WHEREAS**, the health of all Americans depends upon educated minds and trained hands; and,

**WHEREAS**, the practice of modern medicine at the standards we now enjoy would be impossible without the scientific tests performed daily in medical laboratories; and,

**WHEREAS**, these highly trained and dedicated health professionals make an invaluable contribution to quality health care and save countless lives each day by providing reliable laboratory test results required for prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, which comprise almost 70% of a patient's medical records; and,

**WHEREAS**, the diverse employees of the laboratory include pathologists, medical technologists, histologists, cytotechnologists, microbiologists, chemists, other laboratory scientists, medical technicians, laboratory assistants, phlebotomists, medical secretaries and transcriptionists, and laboratory clerical staff who perform their related duties 24 hours per day, every day of the year; and,

**WHEREAS**, Michigan residents deserve the highest possible health care quality and accountability, and laboratory science practitioners and their peer organizations have a duty to keep the public well-informed about the medical laboratory practice as well as their overall competency; and,

**WHEREAS**, during the COVID-19 pandemic, medical laboratory professionals played a crucial role in testing and monitoring patients and have worked behind the scenes at every hospital throughout our state to ensure the health and well-being of countless Michiganders; and,

**WHEREAS**, laboratory medicine is an honorable profession, which should be recognized by all individuals as vital to the high standards of health care enjoyed in Michigan;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, Gretchen Whitmer, governor of Michigan, do hereby proclaim April 19-25, 2026 as Medical Laboratory Professionals Week in Michigan.



*Gretchen Whitmer*  
Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor





**June 28 to July 2nd**

**Register Now at:**

<https://ascls.org/annual-meeting/>

### ASCLS-Michigan *Newslinks*

A quarterly publication of the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science-Michigan. This newsletter is available on our [website](#), distributed via email link to members and posted on the ASCLS-Michigan Facebook page.

#### Intended Content

##### Member submissions:

Articles focusing on the medical laboratory profession are encouraged, including case studies, workplace activities, district events, committee reports, technology developments, awards and any other relevant and necessary information.

##### Non-member submissions:

Educational Institutions and Commercial Organizations: [Sponsors of Annual Meeting](#) will be recognized and may submit materials for approval by ASCLS-Michigan leadership.

**Deadlines** for articles are the 30th of the months of April, July, October & January. Articles must have name of author. Anonymous letters will not be published. The editor reserves the right to edit all materials submitted for publication. Articles appearing in *Newslinks* represent the opinion of the author and may not represent the opinion of the society.

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**Membership:** Join ASCLS-Michigan by visiting the ASCLS web site:  
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for a complete listing and contact information for all ASCLS-MI board members and a wealth of other information on the Society.



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