

# New Editor in the house...

I would like to take a moment and introduce myself as the new editor of Illinois Insights newsletter. My name is Demetra Castillo.

I am the hematology instructor at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and have been an active member in ASCLS since I was a student in 1997. My purpose here is to apprise all ASCLS members to some of the changes that have been occurring within the state of Illinois:

First, the ASCLS Illinois website has been revamped and revitalized. Please visit us at [www.ascls-il.org](http://www.ascls-il.org) and see all the new features. We have added a registration feature. We encourage all members who visit the new site to register so they can be apprised of new updates occurring within ASCLS-IL.

In an effort to be a little "greener", the Insights newsletter will now be distributed electronically with minimum printing. All active members that have listed an email address with ASCLS that currently reside within the state of Illinois will now receive the newsletter by email. The permanent home for Insights will be on the new

ASCLS-IL website as well. Now for those of you that do not have access to a computer, have no fear. We know who you are and we intend to mail you a copy of the newsletter.

Insights will be distributed quarterly. This will be the first issue. The spring issue will be released on April 30th. All members are welcome to submit articles and let us know what exciting things are happening in their areas. The deadline for article submissions for the May issue will be April 15th. Please submit your articles electronically in word files by the posted deadline.

I would also like to send many many thanks to Michele Crase, the former editor. You have been a truly wonderful vessel of knowledge and mentor. I could not have done this without you.

2009 marks a year of change with ASCLS. We will be making bold efforts to move forward to the future while holding faith to the ideas of the past.

Thank you Demetra Castillo, M.Ad.Ed., MT(ASCP)

*The ASCLS Illinois website has been revamped and revitalized.*

*Please visit us on the web at [www.ascls-il.org](http://www.ascls-il.org)*

# ASCLS-IL Insights

## Contest of the quarter

*Design our new Logo for ASCLS-IL!*

*Deadline for submission is March 31st!*

*Get creative and Have Fun!*



*New logos should be emailed as a picture file to:*

*Demetra\_C\_Castillo@rush.edu*

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# A day in the life of a...Blood Banker

By: Arikpo Dada, MS, MT (ASCP)

Hello and welcome to a new section of Insight newsletter called "A day in the life" In this section we will talk to professionals within the field of Pathology and Clinical Laboratory Science. To inaugurate this section I will start with myself. My name is Arikpo Dada and I am a Clinical Laboratory Scientist at Rush University Medical Center. Here is some background on me;

I am a first generation Nigerian born and raised in the Bronx, NY. I attended the Bronx High School of Science where I found a love of science. I went on to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, NY where I obtained a Bachelor's degree in Biomedical Engineering. Needing a change, I moved to Chicago, IL in 2003 where I completed a Master's degree in Clinical Laboratory Science (CLS) at Rush University Medical Center. Aside from my studies, I have always worked to positively impact the community around me. As an undergraduate, I was very active with the National Society of Black Engineers.

From being chapter president to an award winning chapter, to being the first Regional Leadership Chair, I always strive to do my best. I am currently the alumni president for the Class of 2002 at RPI and have been the former class president and class vice president of the CLS program at Rush University Medical Center. I enjoy helping others and being in the company of good friends. I am happily married to my wonderful husband, Matthew Dada and we have a beautiful 8 month old baby boy, Olaitan Nathan. The quote that best describes me is, "A black woman seldom does what she wants to do, she does what she has to do" - Dorothy I. Height. I am passionate and dedicated to improving the world we all live in.

## How did you end up in the Clinical Science / Pathology Field?

I always knew I wanted to work in the field of healthcare. The idea of positively affecting a person's life excites me. As I looked at the many different careers in healthcare (and yes there are more than just doctors and nurses in healthcare), I came upon Clinical Laboratory Science. Being instrumental in diagnosis of a patient is something I am very proud of.

As far as Transfusion Science goes, like most Blood Bankers, I just fell into it. At a welcome lunch before I started the MS program, Ann Viernes the manager of Transfusion Services announced she was looking for students to work part time. After applying I was hired shortly after. I have been working in Transfusion Services ever since.

## Tell us about a typical day of work.

The Transfusion Services at Rush is a three part 24 hour laboratory. One part is our Donor and Apheresis Center where both autologous and volunteer blood products are collected. Anything collected at Rush stays in house for our patients. The second part is the Bone Marrow/Stem Cell Laboratory. All testing for bone marrow recipients and donors is done at this laboratory. It is also the home for autologous bone marrow collection, dating back as long as 15 years. The third area is the Blood Bank, where I currently work. The Blood bank is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week. There are three shifts totaling 22 clinical laboratory professionals. Each shift has its differences and I have been fortunate to have worked all three shifts. I am currently on first/day shift. The work is distributed over 5 sections. They are expediting, type and screens, crossmatch, consultation and senior tech. The expeditor is responsible for accepting specimen and processing them, dispensing blood products, returning blood products back to the Blood Bank, confirming and processing doctor's orders, confirming and processing nurse's releases for blood products, answering phone calls, and accepting packages. There are usually two professionals assigned to this position. The type and screen professional is responsible to running the automated instrument, performing manual testing if needed, and informing the crossmatch professional of the completion of specimen testing. They are also responsible of preparing all samples that need further/ advance testing. The crossmatch professional's responsibility is to correctly choose and test donor products to the recipient's specimen. This professional must be correct 100% of the time, seeing that a mistake in this area can significantly affect a patient's outcome. The consultation professional is responsible for advance testing using a variety of methods to ensure the patient

receives the best matched products possible. The senior tech is responsible for the overall flow of the shift and assisting where ever possible. Each position is essential in making sure the patient is given the best care possible.

## What are your future plans?

I see my future as very bright. I know I will remain in healthcare and look forward to moving up. I can see myself as a manager or owner of a laboratory one day. But as for now, I enjoy working with a great team of professionals.

## What would you tell someone interested in getting into this field?

I would say go for it. If you have a love for science, enjoy the idea of positively impacting patients, job security, and can do without seeing a lot of sick people, this is the field for you. I have enjoyed my time in this field and look forward to many more years.

*"You cannot call yourself a professional if you are not part of a professional organization."*

## What words of wisdom would you give to a new graduate in this field?

There are a few things I would say; first – Take your certification exam right away! The longer you wait the more you forget and the more it stresses you.

Second – Like with anything, what you get from this field is directly proportional with what you put into it. This field can be as small and as big as you want it to be. This field has allowed me to perform research, present at national conventions, and receive scholarships. It has also allowed me to start a family and volunteer in my community. It is all up to you.

Third – Join a professional organization. I truly believe that you cannot call yourself a professional if you are not part of a professional organization. This is where you will not only meet your peers but you will also gain insight on other aspects of the field. The connections you make will be priceless.

# My first 2 years as a Clinical Laboratory Scientist

By: Lynn Stradal, MS, MT(ASCP)

It has been slightly less than 2 years since I began working in the Core Laboratory of a large 900+ bed hospital. I was certified as a Medical Technologist (MT) (ASCP) right out of college, and I began my Core Lab training directly after graduation.


Being fresh out of school has had many advantages. My supervisors were incredibly eager to start my training since our lab, like many labs, was short-staffed at the time. Even though I was young and fresh out of school, I never felt my supervisors treated me less than equal. They never doubted my ability to advance and take on new tasks, even when I may have doubted myself. For instance, in these 2 years, I have been cross-trained on over 7

benches, ranging from Hematology to Chemistry to Serology. This year, I also had the chance to partake in a new instrument evaluation. I helped run samples, correlate data, and write maintenance and standard operating procedures.

When I first began working in the Core Lab, I never expected it to be so fast-paced. There are times, for instance, when we must troubleshoot an instrument, resolve a difficult question asked by a doctor, and process blood from a stat stroke patient – all at the same time, within 5 minutes, and while covering for another co-worker at lunch. The Core Lab is also a fairly automated lab; however, there is much skill needed to operate these automated instruments. For one we must always be aware of suspicious

these automated instruments. For one we must always be aware of suspicious results or results that do not make sense. Also, technology *always* needs troubleshooting and maintenance, probably more often than we would like. Despite the automation, there are still many areas of our Core Lab that are very manual, including blood and body fluid differentials, urinalysis, and anti-nuclear antibody (ANA) testing.

Overall in these 2 years, I have learned that a MT must be confident, quick-thinking, and both physically and mentally prepared to tackle any problem. A MT should also be willing to advance, whether in cross-training at a new bench or taking part in a special laboratory assignment.




**Specialist in Blood Bank (SBB)  
Online Certificate Program  
Rush University  
College of Health Sciences**

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Continue to work and earn graduate credit while you study for the SBB exam given by ASCP! Rush University offers online graduate level courses to help you achieve your career goals. Several curricular options are available. The SBB program at Rush University is currently accepting applications for Fall 2009. For additional information please visit our website at: [www.rushu.rush.edu/cls/](http://www.rushu.rush.edu/cls/)  
**Contact:** Veronica Lewis MS, MT(ASCP)SBB by email at [Veronica\\_Lewis@rush.edu](mailto:Veronica_Lewis@rush.edu) or by phone at 312-942-2402.  
SBB Program fully accredited by CAAHEP / Rush University accredited by the Higher Learning Commission [HLC] of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

**Program Highlights:**

- Advanced instruction in blood group serology and transfusion medicine
- Flexible class schedules for the busy professional
- Classes accessible 24/7 via the Internet
- Structured, quality program that earns graduate level course credits
- Relevant, up-to-date content to enhance knowledge and skills for career advancement
- Learn from qualified facilitators with extensive professional experience
- Collaborate with blood bank professionals throughout the country

 RUSH UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL CENTER

**Interested in Blood Banking?**

**Get your specialist certification while you work!**

Registration Form is on Page 5!

## **Attention Students: Student Bowl 2009 Deadline is fast approaching!**

The 2009 Student Bowl competition will take place on Monday March 30<sup>th</sup> at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel and Conference Center in Springfield, IL. The competition will begin at 6:00pm. This Jeopardy-style competition is a lot of fun and a great way to start reviewing for certification exams. All CLS/CLT students are encouraged to compete in this exciting event! Volunteers are also needed to make this event a success. If interested in volunteering, please contact Sheila Gibbons at [sheilazenk@yahoo.com](mailto:sheilazenk@yahoo.com) on or before February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The entry fee is \$35.00 per team. Each school may send up to two teams of four. Both teams may have an alternate. Remember that all team members and alternates must be registered for the ASCLS-IL state meeting.



# My experience as a first year professional.

By: Tiffany Mistina, MS, MT (ASCP)

Entering the field of medical technology as a first year professional is a unique experience. On the one hand, it can be intimidating being the new tech. As with any initial job in any field, at first the new MT can't help but feel somewhat ill-equipped and incongruous within the new surroundings. He or she quickly recognizes the enormous quantity of information still to be learned. The substantial amount of experience which one's colleagues possess as well as the complexity of procedures exclusive to the particular institution become a glaring reality. The overly inflated ego of the recent grad soon deflates to a more appropriate size as he or she begins to integrate into the fabric of the laboratory. Gaining appropriate skills, performing tasks in compliance with new protocol, and better under

standing the social dynamic within the workplace are undertakings the first year professional must rapidly assimilate. On the other hand, the new professional has an advantage over his or her peers. Having recently completed a rigorous curriculum and passed certifying exams, this tech is essentially prepared to delve into any of the lab disciplines. While some seasoned techs have become disillusioned, the new grad is eager to make an impact in the subject of his or her choosing. This enthusiasm for a broader knowledge base may provide the first year professional with a competitive edge. Furthermore, as labs face the harsh reality of running more efficiently with fewer FTEs, opportunities for the green yet reliable tech are numerous.

Therefore, the first year professional is considered a valuable member of the laboratory. Albeit inexperienced, he or she is rapid to amass knowledge and become a strong member of the healthcare team. The tech's ability to quickly overcome the hurdles associated with integrating into a new setting allows for a greater respect from his or her colleagues and superiors. In brief, the first year professional is afforded immense opportunities which can be parlayed into a successful and rewarding career.

## “Rush-ites” celebrate NMLPW during the Transformation!



From Left to right: Kimberley McGee, student, Demetra Castillo, faculty, LaDonna Moreland, faculty, Joan Radtke, faculty, Veronica Lewis, faculty, Maribeth Flaws, faculty, Sylvia Schwister, HLA/flow technologist, Regina Ziegler, HLA/Flow technologist and First Year Professional

**STUDENT BOWL TEAM REGISTRATION**

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Team Coordinator (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Team #1** (print or type names)    **Team Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Team Captain \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**Team #2** (print or type names)    **Team Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Team Captain \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form by February 2, 2009 to:**

**Sheila L. Gibbons**  
733 E. Lincoln Avenue  
Belvidere, IL 61008  
Sheilazenk@yahoo.com

# CONGRATULATIONS TO 2008 ELLEN MCGILL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

By: Robin Killam

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Congratulations to Kristy Shanahan who was a 2008 winner of the Ellen McGill Scholarship to attend the 2008 Legislative Symposium. Kristy has been a member of ASCLS for over 12 years and has been involved at all levels of the society-local, state, and national. She has served locally as secretary, a board member, in career recruitment, and president. At the state level, Kristy has served as a board member, in career recruitment, and as president. Kristy has also served on the CEA committee at the national level. Kristy is an instructor at Rosalind Franklin University College of Health Professionals located in Chicago, IL.

Congratulations to Nicholas Moore who was also a 2008 winner of the Ellen McGill Scholarship to attend the 2008 ASCLS National Meeting. Nick is a masters' degree clinical laboratory science student at Rush University in Chicago, IL. Nick has been elected chair of the ASCLS-IL and Region VI student forum. Nick has been communicating with ASCLS-IL educators and clinical laboratory science students about ways to get students more involved in ASCLS. Nick has been very involved in updating the state website! Check it out!

*The Ellen McGill Scholarship offers financial assistance to current active members of ASCLS interested in attending a national meeting.*

*Interested?*

*See below for Details!*

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## ELLEN MCGILL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

By Robbin Killam

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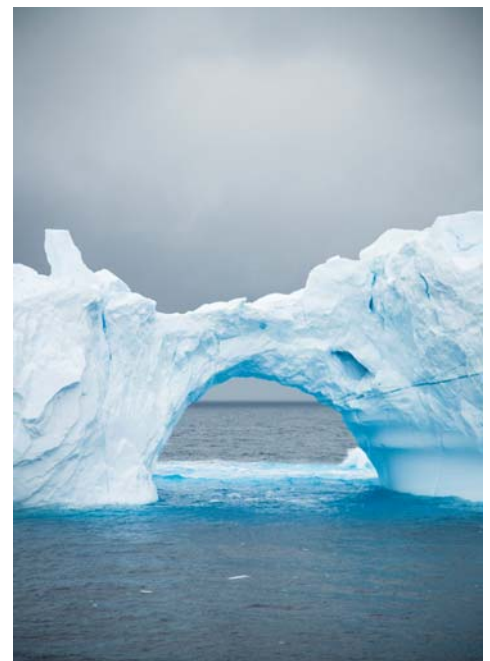
Would you like to receive a scholarship to attend the Legislative Symposium in March or the ASCLS National Meeting in July? Apply for the Ellen McGill Memorial Scholarship!

The ASCLS-IL Ellen McGill Memorial Scholarship is named in honor of Ellen McGill who is a long-time medical technologist in the Chicago area. Ellen was an active member in ICLSA and a past president. She was the Director of the School of Medical Technology at Illinois Masonic Hospital. This scholarship was started to honor Ellen's contributions to the profession as well as to the education of students.

The scholarship is awarded to an active member, first year professional, or student member of ASCLS-IL to support their registration, travel, and hotel costs to either the Legislative Symposium in

March or the ASCLS National Meeting in July. Two scholarship of up to \$1000 may be awarded in 2009. The scholarship application information is posted on the ASCLS-IL website and in this newsletter or contact

[Killam.robbin@mhsil.com](mailto:Killam.robbin@mhsil.com).



# “We are not button-pushers!” A reflection from a seasoned and young MT

by: Diep Nguyen, MS, MT (ASCP)

After six and a half years, I'm still optimistic with my career choice as a Medical Technologist. A colleague, working twenty-plus years at Rush Core Lab, often said to me, “Ever since I started working here, I've never seen any laid-offs in this profession.” And I believe this will hold true for the next ten or more years. Automation may be the trend these days, however, qualified med techs are still needed to analyze, troubleshoot, and validate test results. And no, we are not button-pushers. I doubt any med techs would claim so because we have walked the path and done the tasks to know it's a big stereotype. The current irony of our profession, in this economic recession, is that while my friends and relatives outside of the medical profession have working days cut down to four days a week, I felt like my working days have increased to “eight” days a week!

Being a generalist in the lab has its advantage in that each work day becomes a new challenge-filled and invigorating day. Work becomes less pedantic when one has the flexibility to rotate around the lab.

Being a medical technologist with a masters degree sometimes have its quirks. Most of the times, this degree-separation among colleagues is negligible as we all are still performing similar tasks with a common goal: quality care to all patients. The rare quirks are when one wants to make a career advancement either in the MT profession or a career upgrade into health management or other medical fields. With a masters in Medical Technology and the acquired lab skills over the years comes the responsibility to act, think, and talk more professionally. I think that is the biggest expectation one faces at the workplace: to professionally and courteously impart your medical technology skills and knowledge, and find or assist in finding solutions to problems arising on a daily basis.

(To Supervisors, Managers, and the upper managements: Please do not read what follows! The following statement is entirely a dream within a dream, within a dream, within a dream....)

Salary-wise, I really don't know what the real starting offer is since I never got recruited by the CIA, or learned to negotiate or bargain...(wince). I believe for a budding MT, if you can negotiate for the starting salary range of \$20/hr, then I believe it's an ideal deal. Realistically, it's always going to be a bit lower. (If anyone knows differently, please call me. If I don't pick up, please please leave me a detailed message and a job offer! Sorry, boss! :) The pay is livable and the benefits are tolerable.

At the workplace, we are fortunate to have some professional MT “enthusiasts” on our shift. Not only do they give new meanings to work, but they also enliven our work experiences. Work becomes more enjoyable and bearable during the busiest times when accompanied by cheerful chatters and light-hearted banter among the staff. Laughter is indeed the cure to stress. Enthusiastic teamwork is the key to harmony at work. Having trained some new employees and sat in on a few interviews, I believe you will have a high chance of acceptance if you have the following characteristics: a team-player, a multi-tasker, positive, enthusiastic, organized, professional, and caring.

To students in the MT program, and to current and future Medical Technologists:

I dare you to walk the Medical Technologist path, and be unique. Bring joy to work, and in the process you will be rewarded with happier colleagues, and smoother working relationships. Make your work experiences unique. Take pride in your work. Take pride in being a Medical Technologist, or a Clinical Laboratory Scientist. Take pride in yourself and your achievements! After all, you have gone through and have succeeded 2 years of intensive studying and training to become an MT (ASCP) or CLS (NCA). Show your colleagues that your performances reflect your dedication to professionalism.

Best regards,  
Diep Nguyen, MS, MT (ASCP)

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

### AWARDS:

**February 15, 2009:** Postmark date for:

- ASCLS Member of the Year
- ASCLS Young Professional of the Year
- ASCLS Publication Awards
- ASCLS Scientific Research Awards
- BioRad Professional Achievement Awards
- Quest Diagnostics Student Forum Leadership

**Clec 2009:** February 19-21, 2009: Denver, Colorado

**ASCLS-IL meeting:** March 30-April 1, 2009, Springfield, Illinois

**March 31st:** Leadership Academy application deadline

### SCHOLARSHIPS:

Postmark deadlines:

- Alpha Mu Tau (Graduate/Undergraduate): **April 1**
- ASCLS Forum for concerns of minorities: **April 1**
- Cardinal Health Graduate Research Award: **May 1**
- Education Scientific Assembly student paper award: **May 1**

**APRIL 15, 2009:** article submission deadline for April Newsletter

