

ASCLS, ASCP and AACC Join for Science Festival in Washington DC

by Mary Ann McLane, ASCLS-DE

A unique event happened at this year's 4th USA Science & Engineering Festival in Washington DC, April 15-17, 2016. For the first time, three national laboratory professional organizations, ASCLS, AACC and ASCP, coordinated in providing a single experience for attendees, showing how WE do science. Titled, "Solving Medical Mysteries", our exhibit had children of all ages doing a "who-dun-it" with rbc's and antibodies (fake, of course), groans and ooooohs with very real worms in a jar, streaking agar plates, matching photos of gram stains, bacterial isolations and wbc's with actual stained smears and University of Minnesota realistic painted isolation plates, guessing how color can be turned into a number with a colorimeter, reading a pulse oximeter, and what do those colored lines on a pregnancy test mean?

Handouts were provided from the ASCLS Patient Safety Committee on "Venipuncture safety tips" and "Do I need to fast?" as well as "Who does my lab tests?"

The ASCLS members who volunteered their time over one to three days of the weekend were Mary Ann McLane (DE), Mary Gourley (PA), Carol Rentas (DC), Elaine Pappamihiel (VA), Sally Cortez (NJ), Cynthia Dixey (NJ), Lucia Wang (NJ), Eric Hirtle (NJ), Lucy Pierre (MD), James Adams (MD), Stacey Robinson (MD) and Jean Bauer (MN). ASCP staff were Edna Garcia and Liz Waibel, and AACC-Capital Section volunteers were Ed Wong, Zhen Zhao, Eri Anastas, Kerry Walsh, Apurva Srivastava, William Wu, and Sarah Wheeler. Organizers estimate that over 60,000 students, teachers, military families, government officials and press attended Sneak Peek Friday, while roughly 300,000 people attended over Saturday-Sunday. We encountered toddlers to high schoolers, parents to chaperones, some barely interested to those asking 100+ questions, all in the name of demonstrating how wonderful OUR version of science is!

What a great, absolutely exhausting time we had! It was pretty much non-stop for 9-3 on Friday, 10-6 on Saturday and 10-4 on Sunday. Everyone agreed it was a superb event, and it would be a golden opportunity to participate in the 2018 Festival.

We are very grateful to all three organizations and the ASCLS Education Scientific Assembly for the funding needed to make a great display. We are so delighted that our colleagues from AACC and ASCP provided the collegial atmosphere in both planning and execution of this joint effort. There are already 12 volunteers ready to do it again in 2018!



The combined ASCLS-AACC-ASCP team at the 2016 festival. The ESA donation paid for the blue carpet, that front table, labor cost for hanging the back poster, an extra 5-amp/500 watt outlet (for the 2 scopes and spec), liability insurance required by the meeting, and for one hotel room night for those going a day early to set up the display.

