

Addressing management issues

Educate, celebrate, recognize NMLPW

Q Do you have any suggestions for National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (NMLPW)?

A During NMLPW — this year from April 18 to April 24 — laboratorians will be recognized for their valuable contribution to patient care and have the opportunity to spread the word to others about the laboratory science profession.

There are usually three aspects to cover during NMLPW: recognition, education, and celebration.

Recognize staff. First, use this week to show your appreciation for your dedicated, talented staff. Hold award ceremonies to thank them for their hard work all year. Honor laboratory staff for exceptional attendance or for going the extra mile to complete an extra project.

Educate the public. Distribute a newsletter, or create a Facebook page or YouTube video to illustrate the vital role the laboratory plays. Display posters in various public places.

School budgets have suffered in recent years, so many schools no longer have the funds available to take educational field trips — why not take one to them? Make a video of what goes on in the lab and distribute it to local schools or post it on a video-sharing website for teachers. Visit a school with some specimens. Be sure to send students home with an informative flyer they can share with their parents.

Celebrate. Have a lab-themed party for the staff. Fun giveaways include syringe pens, vials of candy blood, candy blood bags, test tubes with liquid candy, and test tubes of slime. Have each staff member design/decorate a lab coat and model it for a panel of judges a la “Project Runway.”

Get a planning guide at www.ascp.org. Visit www.ascls.org/about/national.asp for ASCLS’s downloadable flyers, videos, presentations, and NMLPW store.

—Christine Dobb, MT(ASCP), Retired
Columbus, OH

A Consider a community service project that helps build teamwork among the staff. Find a cause in which everyone can join such as a fundraiser for a particular disease. Raising funds can become a game, too! One team can hold a silent auction, while another team sells raffle tickets for a prize, and yet another team holds a community garage sale. The team that raises the most money wins — as does the receiving charity.

Volunteer time as a team to an organization in your community or a group in need. Wear team T-shirts with this year’s theme: “Laboratory Professionals Get Results.”

Educate those who may be interested in joining the laboratory-science profession. Offer local high school science students a tour of the lab, and ask the students to create a presentation to share with the rest of their school.

—Linda Rodriguez, MT(ASCP)
LAB Consulting Services
San Antonio, TX

A Our facility has a theme for each year’s Lab Week. Last year’s theme was “Successful Survival,” so activities included several survival games. The 2008 theme was “Lab professionals — Delivering Today’s Results for a Healthier and Safer Tomorrow,” so we offered a number of safety-related events. Our activities for the week generally include continuing education programs, games, contests, open houses, food events, special dress days, and community outreach.

We try to involve a diverse group to present the CE programs — lab staff, pathologists, physicians, other hospital personnel, and vendors. The programs are varied with lots of opportunity for staff to attend and earn CE credits.

Games include word searches, guessing games, puzzles, and arcade games. There have been a wide variety of contests provided over the years — everything from match the employees to their pets, to identify the high school graduation or

baby photos, to the 20-glove challenge (What is the most interesting thing you can make out of 20 latex gloves?). Games and contests are optional, of course, and can be completed by employees who choose to participate. Prizes are awarded to winners, sometimes by drawing or by popular vote.

Food activities are always well received and have included donated cookies, soft pretzels, root beer, and chocolate candy. Bake-offs (chili, pumpkin desserts, healthy eating) and potluck luncheons are usually the most popular activities.

Community outreach events such as food drives or cell phones for soldiers programs — projects that enhance the quality of life for people in the community — are good team-building activities.

Special dress days we have had in the past have included crazy sock day; wear red, white, and blue day; mismatched clothing day; and camouflage shirts, pants, and hats for the survival theme.

Since it is a long time between each year’s NMLPW in April, our laboratory also celebrates “Mini Lab Week” in October offering the same types of activities as those in April. These efforts allow laboratorians to celebrate themselves!

—Marti Bailey, MT(ASCP), CPC
Work Unit Leader, Pathology
Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Hershey, PA

Bottom line: Take the opportunity during NMLPW to recognize lab professionals, educate the public (and future laboratorians), and celebrate. Also check out ASCLS President Mary Ann McLane’s “provide the face” plan. □



Anne Pontius is a senior medical practice consultant with State Volunteer Mutual Insurance Co. in Brentwood, TN, and president of CLMA. Send questions to Ms. Pontius at manqa@mlo-online.com.