

Meet our new State Training Coordinator – Karen Stiles

NPHL welcomes Karen Stiles as your new State Training Coordinator. Originally from Fremont, Nebraska, she now resides in Gretna with her husband, Mark and daughters Nicole and Jacquelyn.

How did you become interested in pursuing a career in laboratory science?

At a very early age, my mom implanted the idea of laboratory science. I was one of those weird kids who tinkered with a chemistry set. Of course, being from the farm, my whole environment was immersed in science, from canning vegetables to the corn and soybean fields. The chicken house was a whole science class in itself!

Where did you attend medical technology school?

My undergraduate years were spent at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. I was then accepted into the Medical Technology Program at the UNMC.

How long have you worked in your present location?

I have been with NPHL only 8 months and feel there is still so much to learn! Prior to accepting this position, I worked for over 2 years with the NPHL staff as a trainer for the **Secure Telecommunications Application Terminal Package™** in Kansas and Oklahoma. The **STATPack™** is a remote consultation device that Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma Public Health Laboratories use to communicate and share images with sentinel laboratories throughout each state.

Are there any specific areas of microbiology that you have expertise or interest?

Despite working in microbiology over 25 years, I have remained in the basic area of bacteriology and susceptibility testing. Through the years, however, I have always been involved to some degree in teaching. Whether it was to teach students individually on the bench or in a classroom setting, or present topics such as ESBL testing or high level aminoglycoside resistance in *Enterococcus* to a team of infectious disease residents, I loved the challenge sharing the field of microbiology.

What advice would you give to a first year medical technologist?

Never give up. The vast amounts of information they will be exposed to can be formidable. Soak up what they can. More importantly, go back and review, for it will make more sense as time goes on. Continue to study, attend workshops if possible and participate in all areas of continuing education. Don't hesitate to ask questions! Continuing education will be the key to their success.

What is the biggest challenge you face in your job today?

It is a privilege to have a job that allows me to pursue what I enjoy most in this profession. I realize that continuing education is unfortunately put on the back burner at many facilities because of lack of funding and staff shortages. My challenge will be to fill that void and make continuing education available to everyone.

