

Meet the Laboratorian

by Josh Rowland, State Training Coordinator, NPHL

This section of the Newsletter will feature one of the dozens of wonderful people that I have met during my recent “meet and greet” ventures around Nebraska. Over the last 6 months I have had the opportunity to visit 88 laboratory facilities in Nebraska and in turn met over 140 laboratorians.

The featured laboratorian in this issue of the Newsletter is Ruth Uhrich, the Microbiology Supervisor at Great Plains Regional Medical Center in North Platte. She provided these answers to my questions.



What got you interested in pursuing a career in laboratory science?

When I was a senior at North Platte High School, my guidance counselor suggested Medical Technology because I enjoyed math, science and the laboratory. He arranged for me to tour the Great Plains Regional Medical Center's laboratory, and from then on I was hooked!

Where did you attend medical technology school?

I attended the Medical Technology program at Clarkson Hospital from 1981 to 1982.

How long have you worked in your present location?

I began work at Great Plains Regional Medical Center in North Platte in August 1982, right after graduation (back then, we didn't finish our training until July). That means I have been working here for more than 21 years.

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

It is very difficult to keep up with the constant changes in the lab, especially in microbiology. It seems we go from one crisis to another. Antibiotic resistance to West Nile Virus to SARS to Influenza to Bioterrorism. It never stops.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the laboratory since you started?

Our lab has gone through many changes, some good and some not so good. One of the best changes our laboratory, made a long time ago, was to become a 24/7 lab, including all holidays. Our lab is also very fortunate to have many new and modern pieces of equipment which help to keep up with the changes in laboratory medicine. Because we are in the process of becoming an official “level B” laboratory associated with NPHL, employee moral has improved as the recognition has given the laboratory more distinction. The hospital is in the process of undergoing a major remodel. As part of the remodel, the hospital has installed a pneumatic tube system to be used through out the institution. This will improve lab turn around times and help our staff become more efficient!

What would be your advice to a first-year medical technologist?

A medical technologist must be able to "go with the flow". Don't make the mistake of being resistant to change because it's inevitable. Enjoy the developments in technology as they become available. Continue with your education after you graduate, it will make you a better technologist and more marketable!