

## Addressing management issues

### Plan a ceLABration for Lab Week

**Q** Do you have any suggestions for National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (NMLPW) — this year from April 18 to April 24 — for fun, creative activities that also will give laboratorians the respect and attention they deserve?

**A** How about a ceLABration? Hold an open house, inviting other departments to tour the lab. Have techs take turns escorting the guests and explaining the importance of each lab specialty. Produce a video tour of the lab, with techs explaining how lab results assist in patient care. Play it in the employee break room and in the lobby.

In a nearby (clean) room, serve Mellow Yellow, Mountain Dew, or lemonade in sterile urine cups and chocolate doughnut holes in new enema buckets.

Bake sugar cookies shaped like WBCs and platelets, and decorate them with icing, colored sugar, and Nerds to resemble different cells. Color some of the dough red, and make cookies shaped like RBCs. (This is time consuming but well worth the effort!) In the hall outside the ceLABration room, post drawings of different cells with their identities, and require non-laboratorians to identify their cookies before eating them.

Each day of Lab Week, post photos of different lab staff members on a prominent bulletin board, explaining the group's or individual's contribution to quality patient care. Let the highlighted team or person wear a special badge that day so others can give them special recognition.

—Ann Bachman, BS, MT(ASCP), CLC(AMT)  
Tennessee Medical Laboratory Supervisor  
Partner and Compliance Department Director  
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**A** It has been several decades since Congress passed the resolution to

honor medical laboratory professionals, but the profession still suffers from a lack of recognition — both from the general public and other medical personnel.

Today, most hospitals have in-house TV channels that run various features to hospital patients. Form a committee of motivated staff members and have them develop a script for a short video about “A Day in the Life of a Medical Laboratory Scientist.” This video can show the value of the work the lab staff provides in the delivery of quality healthcare. The video can also include some examples of interesting patients' diagnoses due to lab tests and some “mystery cases” to engage the audience.

Develop a proposal to the public-relations (PR) department to help sponsor this NMLPW project. Additionally, PR can send the video to local media outlets for positive publicity for your institution.

Lab staff members will be energized to use their creativity in a way that promotes the value of their work; and in return they will receive recognition for their innovative work and — more importantly — for the part they play in quality patient care.

—Diana Mass, MA, MT(ASCP), CLS  
Clinical Professor and Director  
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**A** Make 2010 the year you take National Medical Laboratory Professionals' Week outside the walls of the laboratory to make the public and other healthcare professionals aware of the role that laboratorians play in everyone's health and welfare. The first step would be to place NMLPW posters throughout the facility — cafeterias, drawing stations, and the front entrance.

Labs are Vital ([www.labsarevital.com](http://www.labsarevital.com))

offers excellent resources for innovative ideas to showcase laboratory professionals, including a free download of the award-winning video “A Life Saved, Laboratory Professionals Make a Difference.”

Many members of the clinical laboratory profession use the video to share how laboratory services and laboratorians contribute to healthcare. Play this video in the outpatient area to educate patients and other healthcare professionals.

Some laboratory professionals could be designated as the “go-to” individuals for questions about lab tests. Wear an “Ask Me About Your Lab Tests” buttons or T-shirts. Use this week as an opportunity to get out of the lab and share pride in your profession.

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**Bottom line:** Everyone loves a celebration, and the professionals that work in the laboratory industry certainly deserve to be celebrated. Whether you are in a one-person or a 100-person laboratory, find a way to implement a recognition opportunity during NMLPW. Offer the staff recognition suggestions — such as the wonderful recommendations presented here by some experts in the laboratory field — and have the staff vote for what will be most gratifying to them. Work with the lab staff and give them what *they* want. It is a sure win to let them know they are appreciated. □



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