The other day, as I sat with other department managers grimacing over the budget, I heard laughter and applause in the next room. Whidbey General Hospital was recognizing its volunteers. In these days of budget cuts, volunteers provide invaluable service—escorting patients, working in the medical library, filing, preparing charts. But we have volunteers in the laboratory, too. When attending an ASCP workshop, working with an inspection team, or participating in a National Medical Laboratory Week celebration, we benefit and learn from volunteers, and I know from personal experience that their hard work rewards them, too.

My volunteer experience with the ASCP began in 1982 after a coworker recommended my name to ASCP staff. At the national meeting, I registered participants, operated slide projectors, listened to complaints, and ran errands. I spent five days working from 8 AM to 7 PM. I also expanded my technical knowledge and met laboratory professionals from California to New Jersey. These contacts became mentors and sources of information when problems arose in my laboratory. Because I worked hard and many people knew me, the ASCP offered more challenges to me, and I took them.

The nontechnical skills I learned through my volunteer work have helped me inside and outside the laboratory. Getting people to work together in meetings honed my managerial skills. Stating my opinion in front of a crowd of experts helped me become confident in public speaking.

Today, the roster of staff assistants is full, but many different opportunities to get involved exist within the ASCP. The Associate Member Section (AMS), which didn’t exist when I first volunteered, directs a grassroots network of volunteers who advance the profession in many ways. To begin volunteering in the ASCP, contact an AMS regional advisor. You can represent us at a community college’s career day, mentor a high school student interested in a career in the laboratory, or write a thoughtful response to a question raised in this journal. By putting time and energy into your professional society, you will grow personally and professionally. You may not know where the first small step will take you.

FROM THE EDITORS

Helping Our Profession and Ourselves

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