



Claire LaPlaunt, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, is the Co-director of the Chippewa County War Memorial Hospital, Inc.'s Laboratory in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, which serves the Michigan community's physicians and health care providers through a wide variety of diagnostic testing services. With

state of the art technology and certified and experienced staff, the laboratory provides testing services for routine and emergency situations. Nearly all of the testing is performed onsite and includes blood bank transfusion services, diagnostic pathology, microbiology, general lab, and occupational drug and alcohol testing for community businesses.

In 2020 the laboratory began running 200-300 tests a day; providing service to multiple counties in Michigan. Due to the high volume of testing they were able to perform, additional laboratory workers were needed to help perform the tests. "We are running a drive through line for testing, NCAA testing for athletes, nursing home testing, pre-surgical testing, and other pop up clinics. We have also worked with and provided a testing site for our National Guard," said LaPlaunt.

What did receiving the BOC Lab Hero Award mean to you?

"Receiving this award was such an honor for me! Day in and day out, I always try to do my best. I know I give it my all. To be nominated and chosen as a lab hero is a great reward for all of my hard work. I feel honored just to be recognized."

How did your friends, family colleagues, etc., react to the news that you had received a 2020 BOC Lab Hero Award?

"My friends, family, coworkers, and employer were all very proud of the recognition. We are a small hospital in a remote area. I feel proud to represent War Memorial Hospital's Laboratory as a Lab Hero! We have so many wonderful people working in our laboratory, I feel like they all are lab heroes."

Everyone gets BOC certification for a different reason, what's your story?

"I chose to get an ASCP BOC certification because I felt like it was the best certification to have. After finishing my medical laboratory science program, I wanted to appear to prospective jobs as a top-choice employee. Being certified by the BOC has allowed me to remain up-to-date through continuing education and continuous learning year after year."

Why did you choose the Road to Recovery through War Memorial Hospital as your BOC Lab Hero charity?

"We live in a rural area in which oncology patients must travel to another health system for specialized care and treatments. This program gives patients rides to their appointments that are hours away, when they may have no other means to get there. My stepfather used this program and was very thankful for it through his many radiation treatments. It provided him with a ride, as well as the opportunity to ride along with others who may be in the same situation as he was. He was able to get support and friendship through the ride time in the van. The program is all volunteer drivers and donation based funding."

What message would you like to send to all of the medical laboratory professionals around the world this Lab Week?

"Now is the time for Medical Laboratory Professionals to shine! We have been the unsung heroes in the background for too long. For so many years, our profession was almost unknown, with small university programs, and a lack of career education being provided to high school students entering the universities. COVID has put the spotlight on laboratories around the world, making the general population aware of what the laboratory profession is."