



"I'm a commissioned officer with the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and have remained so for the past eight years. My first duty station was working in a federal prison providing laboratory services

to federal inmates. My current duty station involves performing inspections of human blood and tissue manufacturers. In my role as a USPHS medical laboratory science officer, I have deployed multiple times utilizing my laboratory skills to support public health missions, with the most recent being COVID-19.

I received my Medical Laboratory Sciences degree from the University of West Florida. I also have a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama, have obtained a Masters of Public Health from the University of South Florida, and I have earned my Certified in Public Health (CPH) credential."

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

"I am honored to have received this incredible award because, like my colleagues that also applied, we have worked very hard in the laboratory over the past two years especially with the challenges brought on by COVID-19. I think I speak for all the medical laboratory scientists out there that it is a great feeling when your hard work is recognized. I am very thankful and grateful to have received this award among my esteemed colleagues."

How did your friends, family, colleagues, etc., react to the news that you had received a 2021 BOC Lab Hero Award?

"My family and friends were ecstatic when I told them that I had received the 2021 BOC Lab Hero Award. They were all aware of the deployments that I had been on over the past two years due to COVID-19 and were happy to see that my work and dedication had been recognized. They were very quick to share the announcement on social media."

Everyone gets BOC certification for a different reason, but what is your story?

"As an undergraduate, I worked with a graduate student in the Ichthyology Department who was extracting fish tissue and performing polymerase chain reaction. This got me interested in laboratory work; I started to research laboratory programs and that is how I came across the Medical Laboratory Sciences program at the University of West Florida. BOC certification has played a major role in my career because it was required when I worked in the hospital and it is a requirement with the USPHS when the qualifying degree is Medical Laboratory Sciences."

Why did you choose Baby Quest Foundation, Inc. as your BOC Lab Hero charity?

"I chose Baby Quest Foundation, Inc. because I feel infertility is unfortunately something that many women experience in one form or another. It is a topic that is not talked about enough and women should not feel alone if they are going through that tough journey. Not only can it be mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausting, but the procedures such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), are very expensive. This charity provides financial assistance through grants to those who cannot afford these costly procedures. "

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

"As medical laboratory professionals we must remember how important we are to healthcare and how our skills play a very important role in a patient's diagnosis. Sometimes it is hard to remember this because our field of work can be overlooked at times and we do not always receive the credit we deserve. However, I am hopeful that this will change because the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the world how valuable and needed our skills are, especially most recently with COVID-19 testing. Medical laboratory professionals have a unique skill set that requires specific education and credentials, which makes us irreplaceable."