

## Young Forensic Scientists Forum Newsletter

### A Letter from the YFSF President

The 63<sup>rd</sup> AAFS Annual Meeting is rapidly approaching and we are all getting very excited. Registration is now open, which means you can register for the YFSF Special Session. The Special Session registration includes the day-long event on Tuesday, which also includes lunch, plus the YFSF Bring Your Own Posters on Tuesday evening, YFSF Bring Your Own Slides on Wednesday evening, and the YFSF Breakfast Session on Thursday morning. Space fills up quickly, so remember to register as soon as possible. The pre-registration deadline date is January 26. Also, **there is no on-site registration for the Special Session** and we don't want you to miss out, register today and save your seat.

Not sure if you should register? Think you might be "too old" for the Young Forensic Scientist Forum? Don't let the title "Young Forensic Scientists Forum" fool you. The "Young Forensic Scientists Forum" is simply a title for people who are new to the field of forensic science, who have five years of experience or less, and is not necessarily only for young people or people still in college. The YFSF is a great place to start networking and getting to know others in the profession. AAFS membership is not required to present at any of the YFSF events.

The Special Session Chair **Jenna Oakes-Smith** has been hard at work all year long creating a very exciting and diverse group of speakers who are all eager and excited to enrich the lives of young forensic scientists. If you have new and exciting research that you want to share and are looking for a pressure free way to present this material, then be sure to contact the Bring Your Own Slides Chair **Martin Overly** ([martin.overly@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:martin.overly@mail.wvu.edu)) or Bring Your Own Poster Co-Chair **Taryn Mead** ([taryn.mead@sfgov.org](mailto:taryn.mead@sfgov.org)). Do you want to have your CV reviewed by professionals in the field? Make sure you register and attend the Breakfast Session on Thursday.

At the end of the meeting we are always looking for new volunteers to help plan the next year's events and we'd love to find a way to get you even more involved in the YFSF! Keep warm and we'll see you in Chicago!

*Tanisha Henson, BS*  
2011 YFSF President

### Questions and Answers from the YFSF Secretary

1. *Can I attend the YFSF Bring Your Own Slides and YFSF Bring Your Own Poster events even if I am not registered to attend the YFSF portions of the 2011 AAFS Annual Meeting in Chicago?*

Yes, please feel free to stop by the Bring Your Own Slides and the Bring Your Own Posters events. These events are open to all registered meeting attendees. It is a great opportunity to meet new people and see what your peers are doing so you will feel more comfortable presenting the following year.

2. *I have never been to Chicago or to an AAFS meeting. How will I know where to go, and what am I supposed to wear?*

You should try your best to stay at one of the hotels listed on the Academy of Forensic Sciences website pertaining to the 2011 Annual Meeting in Chicago ([www.aafs.org/make-your-chicago-2011-hotel-reservations](http://www.aafs.org/make-your-chicago-2011-hotel-reservations)). The Hyatt Regency is the headquarter hotel where the meeting is being held. To find the conference location, which is where you will pick up your registration packet, simply ask for directions from either the front desk or one of the hundreds of people carrying an AAFS tote bag. Inside your meeting registration packet (i.e., tote bag), you will find a booklet containing a map of the meeting rooms and a time-table listing (similar to a tv guide) who is speaking when and the room where he or she will be speaking.

As for what to wear, business attire is best (e.g., no jeans, tennis shoes, flip flops, tee shirts, or low-cut tops). I have been to several professional

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## Young Forensic Scientists Forum cont.

conferences, and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences meeting contains the most formally and conservatively dressed attendees by far (please note that in this situation “formal” refers to a business suit and not a sequin ball-gown). Dress as if you were going to a job interview being held by a law firm rather than one being held by a coffee shop or hardware store. If you have never been to a formal job interview, then keep this in mind while packing: If the outfit would be inappropriate to wear into a courtroom, then leave the outfit at home. Please know that we are simply encouraging you to use your own discretion. If you have any questions as to whether or not something is appropriate, please do not hesitate to contact any of the members of the YFSF Program Committee. We will be happy to assist you!

*Lauren Pharr, MA*  
*YFSF Secretary*

### Financial Liaison

The YFSF relies on the support and contributions of the forensic community each year to make our Special Session a success. Events held at each meeting include a day-long scientific session, a working Breakfast Session, a Bring Your Own Slides presentation session, and a poster session. These sessions are critical in the professional development of young scientists trying to establish a solid foundation in the field of forensic science.

In the past we have received both monetary and educational support from AAFS sections, universities with FEPAC-accredited programs, and various forensic science vendors. We would like to thank our current sponsors who have pledged their support for the 2011 YFSF Special Session:

- AAFS Criminalistics Section
- AAFS General Section
- Laurentian University
- University of Alabama at Birmingham

It's not too late! If you or your group is interested in providing support for the 2011 YFSF Special Session, whether through a financial contribution or donation of materials, please contact **Jackie Jenkins** at [jjenkins71@gmail.com](mailto:jjenkins71@gmail.com).

*Jackie Jenkins, PhD, MSFS*  
*YFSF Financial Liaison*

### YFSF Breakfast Session

Greetings from Mississippi!! With graduation right around the corner, many students wonder what it takes to become a professional within the forensics community. It takes dedication, responsibility, education, and the right demeanor. When you are interviewing for a job in the workforce, you must keep in mind that the first impression is what will stick with the interviewer. The attitude and eagerness are just a part of what will separate you from the rest of the applicants. Your education/experience and appearance are the rest. When you walk into an interview, how you look will be the first thing the interviewer will take into consideration.

Figuring out what to wear to an interview is kind of like getting ready for a first date. What do I wear? What shoes will match? Do I wear pants or a skirt? Button up dress shirt or tasteful

blouse? It may sound silly, but you are trying to put the best foot forward as a job applicant.

Individuals who plan to attend the Breakfast Session will learn how professional attire, general appearance, and demeanor will affect his or her credibility and prospect of being hired at a laboratory or company. Our speakers will include **Anjali Swienton**, SciLawForensics; **Robin Bowen**, West Virginia University Forensic Science Initiative; **Lucy Davis**, Northeast Regional Forensic Institute (NERFI); and **Susan Ballou**, Office of Law Enforcement Standards.

This year's breakfast session should be informative and lots of fun. It should give everyone a better idea on how to put a “professional face” to his or her resumé. We will also have a resumé review panel. The panel will be made up of professionals within the Academy. If you have any questions concerning the breakfast session or the resumé panel, email me at [mdeberry@mcl.state.ms.us](mailto:mdeberry@mcl.state.ms.us).

*Melissa DeBerry*  
*YFSF Breakfast Session Chair*

### YFSF Special Session

The YFSF Special Session Chair **Jenna Oakes-Smith** and Co-Chair **Amanda Kittoe** are excitedly preparing for the 2011 YFSF Special Session. The YFSF Special Session is designed to orient scientists with five years experience or less to the ever changing, variegated field of forensic science. This year's theme is “Interdisciplinary Approaches to Solving Crimes in Forensic Science.” The special session will involve a panel of speakers, each one representative of a different aspect of forensic science. The take-home message is that specialists within sub-disciplines work together to gather and process evidence to be presented in court.

The YFSF Special Session will take place on Tuesday, February 22. The morning begins with a word from AAFS President **Joseph Bono** on how to hold forensic science to scientific standards. AAFS Membership Coordinator Cheryl Hunter will delineate the procedures for becoming an AAFS member, and *JFS* Editor **Michael Peat** will outline the rules and regulations for publishing in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*.

The morning will continue with a scientific presentation by **Paul Kish** who will describe the role that bloodstain pattern analysis plays in a death investigation. Trace chemist **Kristine Olsson** will explain how multidiscipline evidence flows through a laboratory. **Mary Case** will show how pathology is useful in solving crimes. The morning will conclude with FSF Emerging Scientist winner **Jordan Brough** as he discusses his method for identifying the software that was used to print a questioned inkjet document. The afternoon will begin with **Steve Ousley**, who will describe the holistic nature of physical anthropology. Forensic anthropologist and entomologist **Maria Allaire** and forensic odontologist **Robert Barsley** will review interesting case reports from death crime scenes. YFSF veteran **Richard Vorder Bruegge** will illustrate the benefits of biometric modalities to forensic science. The YFSF Special Session will conclude with retired District Attorney

**Rockne Harmon** discussing how effective collaboration is needed in the justice system to ensure appropriate outcomes.

Remember to pre-register by **January 26**. You can register at the AAFS website [www.aafs.org/aafs-2011-annual-meeting](http://www.aafs.org/aafs-2011-annual-meeting). As you prepare for your stay in Chicago, consider sharing a room with a fellow young forensic scientist. If you need help finding a roommate, feel free to email **Jenna Oakes-Smith** ([jloakes-smith@slmpd.org](mailto:jloakes-smith@slmpd.org)) or **Amanda Kittoe** ([akittoe@gmail.com](mailto:akittoe@gmail.com)), and we will research roommate options for you. If we receive enough e-mails, we may be able to place interested students in direct contact with one another.

As always, please email any questions or comments to either **Jenna Oakes-Smith** ([jloakes-smith@slmpd.org](mailto:jloakes-smith@slmpd.org)) or **Amanda Kittoe** ([akittoe@gmail.com](mailto:akittoe@gmail.com)).

*Jenna Oakes-Smith*                      *Amanda Kittoe, BA*  
*YFSF Special Session Chair*      *YFSF Special Session Co-Chair*

### YFSF Bring Your Own Slides

The AAFS Annual Meeting in Chicago is right around the corner. We have completed the selection process for this year's YFSF Bring Your Own Slides (BYOS) speakers and look forward to all of the interesting presentations. Thank you to everyone who submitted abstracts this year!

As you plan which presentations to attend at the annual meeting, I hope you consider the YFSF BYOS. This session is open to all AAFS meeting attendees and will include a wide variety of forensic disciplines, so there is something for everyone. It will be informative and it will be fun! Be sure to stop by and support

your fellow young forensic scientists on Wednesday, February 23 at 7:00 p.m.

If you have any questions about this year's YFSF BYOS session, feel free to contact us: **Martin Overly** ([martin.overly@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:martin.overly@mail.wvu.edu)) or **Ali Mostrom** ([alison.p.mostrom@usdoj.gov](mailto:alison.p.mostrom@usdoj.gov)). Can't wait to see you in Chicago!

*Martin Overly, MS*  
*BYOS Chair*

*Ali Mostrom, MSFS*  
*BYOS Co-Chair*

### YFSF Poster Session

We are still accepting submissions for the YFSF Bring Your Own Poster Session. The poster session, as part of the YFSF, provides new forensic scientists the opportunity to showcase their research or case studies during the annual American Academy of Forensic Sciences meeting and to gain valuable exposure and feedback.

There is still time to sign up to attend the YFSF, as well as submit an abstract to the Poster Session. Each abstract can be a maximum of two-pages in length with the following details: background information, hypothesis, methods, and results. We also require a current curriculum vita to be submitted with your abstract. All types of forensic research will be accepted. Space is limited, so please send your abstract in quickly!

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact **Taryn Mead** ([taryn.mead@sfgov.org](mailto:taryn.mead@sfgov.org)), because beginning January 1, 2011, Taryn will be the chair of the poster session.

*Stephanie M. Crider, MA*  
*YFSF Poster Session Co-Chair*

*Taryn Mead*  
*YFSF Poster Session Chair*

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## Legislative Corner cont.

One argument that I've heard, in my mind, is pointless. I have heard some colleagues disparage the National Academy of Sciences Report and minimize the concerns voiced in the Report. To insist that the premier scientific body in the U.S. doesn't know what it is talking about will not achieve the desired result. Neither the courts, Congress, nor the Administration will accept that contention. Perhaps there is an alternative way.

I personally have little doubt that pattern evidence (e.g., fingerprints, firearms, handwriting, footwear, tire impression evidence and all the other classes of evidence that have been criticized) offers valuable information and helps solve crimes. Part of the problem is that some experts may tend to overstate conclusions. But that is not the same as saying, for example, that fingerprints are not valuable nor are capable of identifying perpetrators. More research needs to be directed to demonstrate the strengths and limitations of these types of evidence. That is one way to silence detractors.

And testimony stating that there is a "zero error rate" or that two items of evidence "come from the unique source to the exclusion of any other" may not be readily accepted because it cannot be proven statistically at this time. Reports with conclusions using terms such as "consistent with," "similar to," or the "same" without a more detailed explanation of what those terms actually mean are also likely to be challenged. What does the expert witness mean by such statements? Rule §7.02 seems to beg such questions.

I've managed to cover a great deal of material in a short amount of space. I think you will agree that there are still many issues to be addressed.

Lastly, I would like to give a little plug to a panel **Jay Siegel** and I are participating in at the AAFS meeting with the Criminalistics and Jurisprudence Sections on Errors in Forensic Science. We've invited some very interesting speakers, and if you are available Thursday morning, please drop by.