

Young Forensic Scientists Forum *Newsletter*

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

November 2004

Editor: Sheila Estacio Dennis, MS

From The Editor - One Last Time

The year is 1997. It is my first AAFS meeting in NYC. Luckily, I am from NYC and I am attending the meeting with my wonderful mentor and friend. I wish then I knew about the YFSF, but I was gracious to be able to meet forensic scientists and learn more about the field. Fast forward to Reno, Nevada 2000-the first YFSF BYOS Session and I am a part of this historical moment with a total of three presenters! Seattle 2001 saw the emergence of discussion panels with distinguished forensic scientists getting involved and revealing the expectations and realities in our field. Dallas 2004-we have more sponsors, our first Poster Session, and a sponsored sit-down lunch with silverware!

It is now January 2005, a few BYOS presentations, panel discussions, planning meetings, and many articles later, my term is over. I have been with the YFSF for five years! According to our bylaws, I must move on. But, where does one go from here? Where are the past YFSF officers and what are they doing now? Is there a transitional phase? A colleague of mine remarked, "Does that make you part of the OFSF now?" No it doesn't. I plan to continue my involvement with the YFSF and the Academy with my focus on sponsorship for the YFSF and also the continued improvement and development of the forensic sciences especially in an area which is near and dear to me-DNA and Missing Persons.

As the Editor, it is my job to make it short and sweet. So, I echo the words of our President and my good friend **Claire Shepard** and I thank all of you who have guided us, supported us both mentally and financially with our organization, and to those who will continue to see the YFSF grow and mature.

— *Sheila Estacio Dennis, MS*
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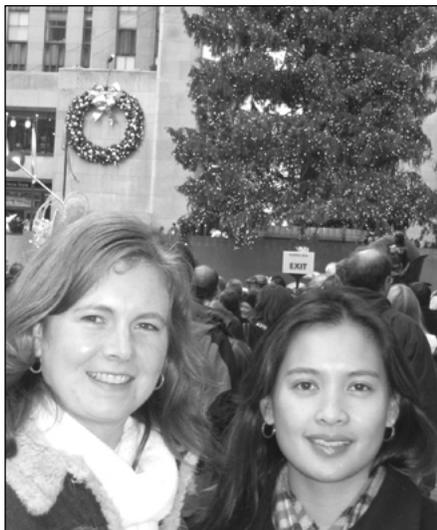
So Long, Farewell...

As the annual AAFS meeting quickly approaches, I began to think about the next phase of my life, as the one with the YFSF comes to an end. Almost six years ago, while I was in graduate school, I attended my first AAFS meeting and YFSF Special Session. Before I arrived at the meeting I knew that I wanted to be a part of this organization and work with the YFSF. After attending the meeting, I did everything I could to get involved. As a committee member and officer, through the years I have accomplished the goals I set for myself and the YFSF, with the assistance of my colleagues. Together we have built a larger, more involved, more organized, and more recognized YFSF.

In the beginning, I felt like it was difficult to get involved in this organization, therefore one of my goals was to include as many people as possible in planning the meeting, writing for the newsletter, answering emails, and organizing special projects. Not only was this one of my goals, it was also a necessity as our special session attendance grew from a few dozen to over one hundred people. While the YFSF formerly consisted of a President and Secretary, we now have over seven officers and committee members and a large

number of students and professionals answering emails and writing for the newsletter. As we continue to grow, there are many ways to get involved with the organization and I hope that if you want to get involved with YFSF you will have that opportunity.

Another goal I had developed out of greeting the YFSF attendees and standing in line for lunch at the Atlanta meeting. Sometimes the most seemingly insignificant acts end up being the most important. That morning a young international student checked in for the meeting and her escort asked if we served lunch. I stated that lunch was "on your own" but there were options in the hotel. I could



*Claire Shepard and Sheila Estacio Dennis
at Rockefeller Center, New York City*

tell this really put a kink in their day. I got the feeling this student had made tremendous strides to be at the meeting, and while we were advertising that our purpose was to provide a smooth transition into the Academy, we simply did not provide any resources for lunch. As my friend and fellow YFSF officer, **Sheila Estacio Dennis**, were standing in line at the hotel lunch counter, we thought how much better it would be to be able to have lunch with everyone at the special session. Not only would this give the participants somewhere to go for lunch, it would also give them a more relaxed setting to ask questions, network, and get to know their peers. The next year we accomplished that goal, with the help of generous donations from our sponsors, and we were able to serve our attendees lunch. We hope to continue this tradition and believe that the opportunity to get to know the officers, speakers, and your peers in a relaxed setting accomplishes the core mission of the YFSF.

As I took care of the so called little things like the lunch, getting more people involved, and planning the meeting, I began to see a need for some big things to happen. While I began my career with the YFSF by writing for the newsletter and operating the slide projector at Bring Your Own Slides, I also worked as Program Coordinator, stood in for the President at two meetings, and finally had the opportunity to serve as President. Through my years of service I realized that many of the same questions surfaced year after year. Those two questions were "How do I become a member of YFSF?" and "Now that I have been appointed to (insert position here) what are my duties?". Therefore as President my main priority was to establish the YFSF Policies and Procedures. Once these have been approved by the AAFS Board of Directors, I hope there is no longer any confusion as to the duties of an officer or membership in the YFSF. Without boring you with the duties of the officers I would like to clarify that a member of the YFSF is defined as an officer or committee member appointed by the YFSF President. However, everyone that registers for the AAFS meeting and the YFSF Special Session is invited to attend all of the YFSF sponsored events at the annual meeting. In addition, anyone who is registered for the meeting is invited to attend the YFSF BYOS and the YFSF Poster Session.

With all that my colleagues and I have accomplished this farewell is still bittersweet. While I know that it is time for me to move on and let a much younger forensic scientist use their goals and dreams to better the organization, I still feel strong ties to the organization and dream about its continued success. Four and a half years out of graduate school I am not that young anymore and have paved the way for a smooth transition to the Academy. I have benefited greatly from the YFSF and its mission that was established by Past President **Steven Batterman**, and I generously thank him for recognizing the need for this organization. Without the YFSF I would probably still be lost at the AAFS meetings and definitely would not have met the many wonderful people with whom I have had the opportunity to work and play.

As you consider becoming a member of the YFSF, simply attending the special session, or supporting the YFSF in any way possible, I encourage you to do so. Being a part of the YFSF has allowed me to foster several great friendships with people I would have not met otherwise, it has given me experience planning a meeting, managing people, working with people, writing policies and procedures, and most of all it has provided me with a smooth transition from a lost student who had never attended a meeting to a AAFS member that feels right at home and has an wonderful time every February at the annual meeting.

I cannot sign off without some personal goodbyes and final thoughts. To Amy, I am so glad we had that impromptu meeting under the escalator in Atlanta. That meeting changed everything and allowed YFSF to be what it is today. To Marilyn, thanks for all your assistance over the years, whether lending your ear, promoting the special session, or coming up with great ideas your assistance has been appreciated. To Allison, you'll do a great job and I will be more than willing to help you anytime you need it. To Nancy, Thank you for your patience while putting up with us our naivety about what has to be done and our inexperience. To Dr. Batterman, I would not be writing this article if it was not for you. Thank you for seeing the need for this great organization and meeting with us in Chicago. That meeting clearly paved the way for some great changes. And finally to Sheila, I could not have done it without you. I cannot even begin to list all the ways to thank you. I'll chalk it up by simply saying, we work well together. Whether it's in my kitchen in Atlanta, over brunch in New York City, or over a cell phone, we compliment each other perfectly.

As I conclude this article I know there is still work to be done at the meeting in February, and I have several articles for the newsletter brewing in my head. This will not be the last time you hear from me. However I felt it was important to sign off in the final newsletter of my term. As I end I want all of you to know I have learned more from the YFSF and the members and staff of the AAFS than you could ever learn from me. Thank you and good luck!

— *Claire Shepard, MS*
YFSF President



Sheila Estacio Dennis and Claire Shepard taking time out to see the sights in Seattle during the 2001 AAFS Annual Meeting

YFSF Bring Your Own Slides Update

YFSF Bring Your Own Slides (BYOS) is an informal opportunity to give a presentation over any forensic topic. The YFSF BYOS will take place Wednesday, February 25, 2005, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. If you can't get into the BYOS session following, you are more than welcome to participate in the YFSF BYOS.

Feature presentations include:

- forensic nurse examination
- current academic progress in forensic science
- the identification of interesting trace evidence by Raman spectroscopy
- crime scene investigation
- the operation of the FBI laboratory

This is a great opportunity to network with other young forensic scientists, find out about different areas of forensics, and learn how to get that first interview or internship. Everyone is encouraged to attend. If you are interested or for more information, contact Jeannette Perr at jeannette.perr@fiu.edu.

YFSF Poster Session

Tuesday February 22, 2005, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

We are approaching our upcoming AAFS annual meeting in February. Requests for participation at our poster session have been ongoing since June, with requests sent to academic institutions active in forensic education. We have an outstanding group of participators for our poster session ranging from masters and PhD candidates to professionals in the field. Submissions prior to December 1st will be cataloged in the YFSF binder to be handed out at the YFSF day session. We can still take late submissions if you are interested in participating. Anyone participating in an AAFS poster, slide, conference or seminar session may present a poster or participate in the YFSF Bring Your Own Slides session (please contact jeannette.perr@fiu.edu for the YFSF BOYS session). The YFSF sessions are a great opportunity to present your ongoing academic research, case studies or experiences in the field in a cordial and educational environment. Students, educators and working professionals are welcome. Please contact me if you have any additional questions about the poster session or wish to participate. Look forward to seeing you all in New Orleans!

— Marrah E. Lachowicz, MFS, GCCP
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From The Editor

The Young Forensic Science Forum Special Session 2005 is a must attend for any "young forensic scientist" who will be attending the AAFS meeting in New Orleans. "Young forensic scientist" refers to those who are new to the field of forensic science, not necessarily young in age. It is a good place to start getting to know others in the profession or to continue to advance those networking skills. Throughout the years the Young Forensic Scientists Forum has made great efforts to keep in tune with the changing face of forensic science. Our program has changed and grown tremendously since its establishment in order to provide students and scientists with five years experience or less with the most quality information possible. Due to the focus by the media on certain careers in forensic science, many aspiring and emerging scientists are not aware of the diversity of careers in the field. This year's session, "Forensic Science Outside the Box," will focus on a variety of aspects to forensic science that many people are unaware exist or fall under the discipline of forensic science.

We've assembled eleven speakers from perhaps the most diverse and interesting backgrounds in forensic science today. A presentation that is a must see of the academic session will be given by Vahid Majidi, the Chief Science Advisor for the United States Department of Justice who will be discussing the role of science and technology in Homeland Security. Also, at the end of the academic session there will be a panel discussion, entitled "Forensic Science in Louisiana," that you won't want to miss.

Back by popular demand this year will be the 2nd YFSF Poster Session and Social which will be held on Tuesday night following the Special Session. Wednesday evening brings our annual Bring Your Own Slides event which is full of interesting presentations and Thursday morning is the Breakfast/Business Meeting which will feature a resumé review. We hope to see some new faces at this year's session and look forward to seeing some old ones as well.

— Allison Curran, MS, Program Chair

AAFS 57th Annual Meeting

February 21-26, 2005

New Orleans, LA

See you there!