

Young Forensic Scientists Forum Newsletter

Don't forget that participation
in the YFSF events require
pre-registration for the
YFSF Special Session!

2007 YFSF Special Session

By the time you read this the turkeys will have been eaten, the stockings hung and the ball dropped. All the excitement of the holidays is past and for most of us it's back to the grind with our wallets slightly thinner and our waistbands slightly snugger! But the down time will not last long because it is now only one month until the AAFS Annual Meeting in San Antonio! The meeting registration deadline is January 24th, and as you peruse the wide variety of breakfast seminars, luncheons, special sessions and workshops we have a challenge for you — get more bang for your buck!! What in the world are we talking about you ask? We're talking about registering for the Young Forensic Scientists Forum Special Session! Register for this session and not only do you get an entire day packed with presentations covering a wide range of forensic disciplines (see below), but you also get a luncheon, a Poster Session, a Bring Your Own Slides presentation, and a Breakfast Session; now that's what we call getting more bang for your buck! The best part is that not only does your registration cover all these events, but every single one of them is specifically tailored for you as a young forensic scientist! This session not only offers you interesting and thought provoking presentations, it also offers you a venue to meet both fellow young forensic scientists and experienced professionals in the field. The connections you have the opportunity to make at this meeting will stay with you throughout your career and we're putting them all in one place just for you!

So we've mentioned that one registration gets you five events and that this session is a phenomenal opportunity to network within the field, but it

doesn't end there. Beyond the presentations and beyond the networking, we will also give you the skills it takes to get into the field and move up in the field! This will all be done at the Breakfast Session where, back by popular demand, we will have a panel of professionals available to cover topics such as internships, interviews, resume/CV/cover letter writing, job requirements, salaries, benefits, promotions and court testimony. Not only will this information be presented to you, but you have the opportunity to actively participate by bringing your resume/CV and cover letter to the meeting to be reviewed and commented on by our panel and you have the opportunity to ask panel members any questions you might have!

As a Young Forensic Scientist you can't get a better deal at the AAFS meeting than the YFSF Special Session. The planning has been in full force for months, the presentations are scheduled and the times are set. Now all we need is you! Below you will find a list of topics to be covered which can be found in the AAFS *Advance Program*.

- > New Advances and Ethical Issues in Forensic and Physical Anthropology
- > Ethical Concerns and Challenges for the Young Forensic Scientist
- > Introduction to Forensic Engineering and Accident Reconstruction
- > A Global Issue: Heroin Production in Developing Countries
- > Scanning Electro Microscopy of Saw Marks on Bone
- > How Law Enforcement Handles Evidence: Maintaining the Same Standards in Different Jurisdictions
- > New Advances and Ethical Issues in Forensic Entomology
- > Forensics — The FBI and Child Abduction Investigations
- > Behind the Scenes: The New York City Medical Examiner's Office
- > Are There Meta-Ethical Foundations for the Normative Ethical Guidelines of the AAFS?

If you have any last minute questions don't hesitate to contact the YFSF Program coordinators, **Amanda Frohwein** at frohwein@dps.state.ia.us or **Marrah Lachowicz** at gradpath@aol.com. We look forward to seeing you all in San Antonio for another great YFSF Special Session!

– *Marrah E. Lachowicz, MFS
YFSF Program Chair*
– *Amanda Frohwein
YFSF Program Co-chair*

Online Continuing Education for Forensic Professionals

Forensic agencies face tight budgets, a lack of manpower, and increasing case loads. For forensic professionals working in state and local laboratories, receiving training and continuing education can be challenging under such circumstances. Finding the most affordable training and education that is within the budget *and* beneficial to the agency can be difficult. There are a number of training options but many involve time away from the laboratory/department, great expense, or both. An available alternative is online training and continuing education. The word wide web offers forensic professionals an additional means of getting the continuing education that they need to build or improve their job skills.

The internet gives forensic professionals access to the continuing education that they need with the ease of computers. There are a variety of forensic science courses that are offered online. One has to be cautious of some of the "so-called training" that may be found on the internet. Most legitimate training or continuing education is affiliated with a university or government agency. Some may offer degrees while others simply offer various courses on specific topics.

When participating in training or continuing education (whether it is online or at another location), one should know the difference between the two. Most training is advance and intensive. It requires some previous knowledge of the subject. And the trainee will be attending for a predetermined amount of time. Once completed with the training, one may be considered an expert in that field. Continuing education is different in that most of the instruction is geared toward the beginner level or as a "refresher" course in specific subject areas. Continuing education is not as intensive as training but can be equally as valuable. In most instances, a certificate of completion and/or continuing education credit is given to the trainee.

West Virginia University's Forensic Science Initiative is one of the institutions which have developed online continuing education courses for forensic professionals. The courses that are currently being offered online are Hair Evaluation for DNA Analysis, Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems (AFIS), Ethics in Forensic Science, and Roles in Forensic Science: The Sociological Perspective. Courses that will be available this spring are The Science of Fingerprints, Forensic Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FT-IR), The Basics of Biological Evidence, and Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS). Other courses that are being developed are Forensic Mass Spectrometry, Bloodstain Pattern Analysis, Forensic Photography, and Forensic Fiber and Textile Analysis. The courses are self-paced and have a set deadline for completion, which is usually between eight and ten weeks. Over 200 professionals have completed the available course and provided WVU with wonderful feedback.

WVU in conjunction with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is providing these courses free to practicing forensic professionals to alleviate some of the common burdens that continuing education and training can present. Courses are chosen based on the requests of forensic professionals as to what information they need and what subjects would be most beneficial. Many other groups are working on similar approaches to continuing education due to an outcry from the forensic community. Online continuing education is a great advancement for forensic science and hopefully many more practitioners will participate.

To learn more about these courses you can check the West Virginia University Extended Learning website: <http://elearn.wvu.edu> or email fsi@mail.wvu.edu for further information.

– *Samantha Huffman
Instructional Coordinator
WVU Forensic Science Initiative*

2007 YFSF Annual Breakfast Meeting

Don't Mess with Texas! An approach to getting your first job and keeping it! This is the theme for the 2007 Young Forensic Scientists Forum-Breakfast Session. As February quickly approaches we have been saddling our horses with a schedule for this year's session. The theme ties in with what we have planned for this years meeting. For those of you looking for some revamping of resumes and a face-lift to those curriculum vitae's or a critique on your cover letter, please have them ready to hand in at the YFSF Special Session on Tuesday February 20th, 2007. They will be reviewed by our distinguished panel and given back to you at the Breakfast Session on Thursday morning!

Richard Rosner, AAFS Past President (1996-97), will welcome the audience and speak on his topic of "Are There Meta-Ethical Foundations for the Normative Ethical Guidelines of the AAFS?"

Carl Selavka, Director of the Massachusetts State Police Crime Laboratory, will offer some real-world insight to the emerging field of forensic science from the Lab Director side.

Along with a few other presentations, we are hoping to get the CSC: Crime Scene Cleaners, Co. to discuss with us their job duties of cleaning up a crime scene once it has been processed and released. "Because someone has to do it."

Time has also been set aside for an important Q&A session to answer all of those questions stomping around in those brilliant minds!

Many thanks to those who have agreed to take part in this meeting. Thank you to my colleague, Sherri Menendez, for helping me organize my thoughts. If you have any questions regarding this session please feel free to contact **Erica Blais** (Erica.blais@pol.state.ma.us). We look forward to joining you in San Antonio!

– *Erica Blais, BS
YFSF Breakfast Chair*

YFSF BYOS

The annual AAFS meeting is quickly approaching and the YFSF BYOS presentations are coming together! The Young Forensic Scientists Forum Bring Your Own Slides (BYOS) presentations are an opportunity for “new” forensic scientists to share professional experiences. These 10-minute presentations showcase research, case studies, mock crime scene evaluations, and innovative techniques that are being used in the field.

This year we have a wonderful program planned covering topics from dog hairs to DNA detection. The presenters consist of students and forensic scientists who have been in the field of forensic science for less than five years. Everyone is welcome to attend the BYOS presentations so even if you are not presenting, please come and support the efforts of Young Forensic Scientists on **Wednesday February 21, 2007, from 5:30-7:00 p.m.**

We hope that you will come and get a glimpse of the future of forensic science!

Are you using original techniques or instrumentation? Are you conducting exciting research? Do you have a case study that you would like to share? It is not too late to be part of the fun! There are still spaces available if you or someone you know would like to present at this years BYOS. This is a great opportunity to practice public speaking in a scientific forum as well as building your resume. Please contact **Robin Bowen** (robin.bowen@mail.wvu.edu) or **Missy Smith** (aurora8289@yahoo.com) if you are interested in educating your peers.

— Missy Smith and Robin Bowen
YFSF BYOS Program Co-chairs

**Do you have something to add
to the YFSF Website?**

**The YFSF is giving our website a
new look and we want to include you!**

We are looking to add the following:

- photos from previous YFSF sessions
- advertisements for internships
- potential forensic science mentors
- any other contributions you feel are interesting or important

**Please send all contributions to:
Amy Aylor
amyaylorr@gmail.com**

YFSF Poster Session

For all new forensic scientists, what can be better than presenting your research, paper or unique cases in a comfortable and educational setting? The YFSF Poster Session provides students and new forensic scientists a chance to present their work to the many interested meeting participants. The poster session is geared toward introducing young forensic scientists to the wide and interesting field of forensic science. The YFSF Poster Session is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 20, 2007, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.** Last year's session was a great success and we hope to have even higher attendance this year. We would like to represent as many institutions and fields as possible, so we encourage students from all schools and laboratory systems to submit a resume and abstract (no more than one page) to **Jennifer Mercer** and **Melissa Ely** at YFSFposter@gmail.com. Remember abstracts received before January 1st will be preferentially accepted.

The YFSF Poster Session hopes to represent as many institutions and fields as possible, thus students from all academic institutions and laboratory systems are encouraged to submit an abstract.

— Melissa Ely
YFSF Poster Session Co-Chair
MelissaGEly@gmail.com
— Jennifer Mercer
Jennifer.W.Mercer@gmail.com

About the YFSF

The YFSF is dedicated to the education, enrichment, and professional development of young forensic scientist. YFSF participants can be non-AAFS-members while organizers must be AAFS members from any section within the AAFS. The Forum provides a medium to educate and network with young forensic scientist to facilitate their establishment within the forensic science community. The YFSF is composed of a Special Session, a Poster Session, a Bring Your Own Slides Session, and a Breakfast Session during the AAFS Annual Meeting. **In order to participate in YFSF events, pre-registration is required!** Outside the Academy meeting the YFSF works to further the endeavors of young forensic scientists through the YFSF newsletter and the YFSF website (<http://www.aafs.org/yfsf/index.htm>). YFSF President **Allison Curran** (amcurran@gmail.com) and YFSF Secretary **Jeannette Perr** (jeannette.m.perr@usdoj.gov) can answer any questions about the YFSF and are looking to many different levels of young forensic scientist participating next year's session.

— Jeannette Perr, PhD
YFSF Secretary