

*President's Column*

Sandra Rosen-Bronson, PhD, D(ABHI)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As I begin my year as ASHI's President, I am honored by your trust and humbled by the challenge ahead of me. Let me begin by telling you a bit about my background and how I began my career in histocompatibility and immunogenetics. I was born in a small town in northwestern Minnesota and grew up nearby on my family's dairy farm. Having been blessed with wonderful parents who encouraged their five children to seek a college education, I attended Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn., and received a BS degree in medical technology. After working for a few years and in a few different places as a medical technologist, I found my way to Burlington, Vt., where I got my first taste of histocompatibility testing from Dr. Bruce MacPherson and his two wonderful technologists in the HLA laboratory at the University of Vermont. After completing a master's degree in Vermont, I followed my future husband to Washington, D.C., where I worked as a research technologist at the NIH Clinical Center Blood Bank, which, at the time, was directed by Dr. Paul Holland. Shortly after joining the NIH Blood Bank, I was given the opportunity to establish the first HLA typing laboratory at NIH. I eventually started working toward a PhD and ultimately landed at Georgetown University, working on my dissertation research with Dr. David Eckels. After completing a post-doctoral fellowship back at NIH in the Immunogenetics Division of the NIAID, I returned to Georgetown as a faculty member, where Drs. Carolyn Hurley and Chinky Johnson took me under their wings, helped me through those first few grant applications, and gave me the opportunity to gain experience and expertise in directing a clinical histocompatibility laboratory.

I've mentioned only a few of the many ASHI members who over the years have helped, encouraged, mentored, and befriended me. In reality, the list is far too long to name them all; suffice to say that I see the opportunity to be the president of this wonderful organization not only as a honor, but also as a chance to pay back and to say thank you to all the people who have taught and nurtured me during the last 25 years.

In the past two and one half years, we have come a long way toward gaining recognition and the respect of related organizations. We have begun to build strategic alliances with some organizations and have improved communication and understanding with others. I truly believe that we've been able to accomplish these goals because we've had a unified focus that stems from the strategic plan developed more than two years ago. One of the key pieces of our strategic plan involved restructuring our leadership and our overall operations so that we could focus on critical, more global issues and on the goals mandated by our strategic plan. With the recent approval by the membership of the complete, streamlined bylaws, we have nearly accomplished the transformation of ASHI into an efficient and financially stable Society.

One of my primary goals for the upcoming year is to ensure the continuity of this metamorphosis. We need to have the right policies, procedures, and systems in place to ensure that we keep moving forward with the same unified focus. At the same time, we need to keep appropriate checks and balances in place to be certain we stay true not only to our roots, but also to the mission and goals laid out by our strategic plan. I will be continuing to work with the board of directors and our executive office to compile a comprehensive Standing Policies and Procedures Manual.



Another critical component for the ongoing success of our Society involves identifying ways to maintain the continuity of our leadership, as well as ways to ensure a balanced leadership. To accomplish this, ASHI needs to have strong active committees because they are the source of our future leaders. Therefore, another of my goals for the upcoming year will be to establish an efficient mechanism for identifying members wanting to become involved in committee work. With the help of Kimberly Glenn, our assistant executive director, and Donna Phelan, our VP of operations, I hope to establish an ongoing database of members interested in joining committees. A database such as this would not only allow members to easily volunteer, it would provide committee chairs seeking new members with a ready pool of willing individuals to call upon.

Many challenges still lie ahead, but together we can grow and evolve while still holding fast to our stated mission of a professional Society dedicated to advancing the science and practice of immunogenetics and its impact on the quality of human life. I look forward to serving as your president for the next year and I thank you for the opportunity. In my future columns, I will share with you the projects, strategic alliances, and initiatives that your board of directors will be focusing on this year. As we move forward, if you have suggestions and ideas, please feel free to share them. We all welcome and value your input.

Finally, I would like to thank the ASHI Board and all of the individuals who expressed kind words of comfort and support with the recent passing of my mother-in-law. The flowers were beautiful and very much appreciated by the entire Bronson family.

Sandra Rosen-Bronson