

## Meet the Laboratorian - Eddie Teague

*Compiled by Josh Rowland, State Training Coordinator, NPHL*

Eddie Teague is the Laboratory Manager at Gordon Memorial Hospital in Gordon, Nebraska. Eddie is also the Laboratory Manager for the Gordon and Rushville, Nebraska clinics. Eddie operates a full service laboratory at the hospital and offers hematology, coagulation, and limited chemistry testing at the clinics.



### **What got you interested in pursuing a career in laboratory science?**

I worked in a small hospital in Alabama as an orderly on third shift so I spent a lot of time with the third shift laboratory technician. I was amazed at the things he knew and did and everything seemed so intense. He let me look at WBCs under the microscope and was hooked!

### **Where did you attend medical technology school?**

I attended Gadsden State Junior College in Gadsden, Alabama and graduated with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Medical Technology.

### **How did you get from Alabama to Gordon?**

While working as a laboratory technician for a temporary service out of Texas, I was sent to Pine Ridge, SD for three months. I enjoyed my time in the Pine Ridge and decided to stay past the three months. When my contract expired, the laboratory manager job in Gordon came open so I applied. Although I originally did not want the manager's job, I took the job to get my feet in the door.

### **How long have you worked in your present location?**

I began my job in Gordon in April 2001. All total, I have worked for 27 years in the clinical laboratory field.

### **What is the biggest challenge you face in your job today?**

As expected, things are quite different in rural Nebraska as compared to the urban coastal areas. Accessibility to needed materials and services is much easier in urban areas. For example, service personnel are only minutes or hours away and not days. One of the biggest challenges that I have is to select instruments that will be reliable and that does the job needed to be done. To keep everything running, a lot of maintenance on our instruments is done over the phone. We have to be ready to take care of patients and assist care providers with the information needed for treatment. Another major issue is staffing and trying to maintain an adequate number of trained personnel.

### **What issues do you face when trying to retain/hire staff?**

Unless you were born in the area and have family and friends around, or you love to hunt, there is not a lot to offer someone who's used to city life. As many Nebraskans know, the weather can really get ugly! However, there is much to enjoy in the rural setting. People however, often do not stay long enough to get accustomed to the environment. Someone recently said, "You either love it or hate it out here". For me, nothing beats pheasant hunting!

### **What advice would you give to a first year medical technologist?**

Don't try to do everything at one time. The laboratory today is complex and can overwhelm someone just starting out. Do the best you can, and keep focused on why you

do what you are doing. The end result will be better patient care.

**What do you think is the single biggest change in the laboratory since you started?**

When I finished college, computers were new and could only be found in the business office. Everything done today from accessioning, to testing, to resulting, is handled through a computer.

**What do you like most about your job?**

You never hear a patient say what a great job the laboratory did while they were hospitalized. The best thing about this job is helping the patient. A lot of problems are solved in the laboratory that most folks don't even know exist because of our training to recognize the abnormal or anything that stands out from the ordinary. When blood is drawn from a child and you can make them understand that it's not so bad, the smile gives an incredible feeling of doing something good. To help our providers make things better for patients gives satisfaction that we have done our jobs. Just about the time you get discouraged, a patient or their family will tell you how much they appreciate how you treated them and made things a little easier for them.