



# The NIRCL Update

Summer 2018

The Quarterly Report of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Crime Laboratory

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*Joseph Principe and Michael Bonamarte pictured at the 2018 NIRCL General Meeting and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.*

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## Director's Message:

Thank you to all who were able to participate in the laboratory's 2018 General Meeting and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration to make it a great success! It was humbling and an honor to meet and introduce our laboratory dignitaries Mike Bonamarte and Joe Principe. Mike envisioned the original idea for a regional lab to provide forensic services in Northern Illinois and was the first Executive Board President. Joe is a former lab employee and his father Andrew Principe, was the laboratory's first Executive Director who was hired by Mike. It was wonderful to see former lab employees, friends from the Lake County State's Attorney's Office and friends from many of the organizations the lab has interacted with over the years.

It was also a benefit to have the lab staff at the meeting. They were able to put faces to the names they've been working with for many years and it provided for good interactions with investigators at the meeting as well. I would like to see them become regular attendees at this meeting.

We also welcomed two new member agencies, **East Dundee** and **Mount Prospect** Police Departments. East Dundee represents our first organization from Kane County.

We didn't get to talk about it at the meeting, but we put together a new lab insignia to celebrate our 50 years of dedicated service. The new insignia was used to make the lapel pins that were passed out at the meeting and it can be seen in the upper left corner of this update. In this design are elements that represent the lab's mission statement, "To provide accurate, objective and timely forensic services." The "6σ" is recognized as a symbol of Accuracy, the "scales of justice" represent Objectivity, the "hour glass" symbolizes Timely and we are using the



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“original laboratory insignia” to symbolize Forensic Services. It depicts a microscope with wavelengths of light being separated through a prism, an homage to the use of refractometers in early forensic laboratories. The original laboratory insignia also depicted the relative location of the laboratory as the source of light for forensic services in the northeastern region of the state.

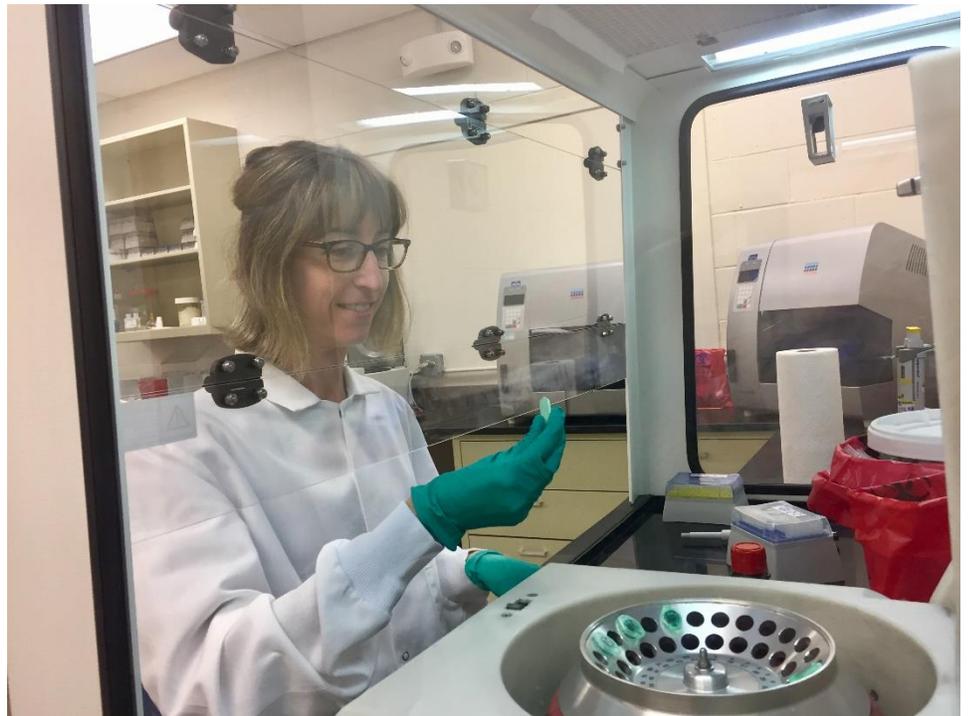
Speaking of symbols, the laboratory has a patch board with the patches of about half of our member agencies; and some of them look pretty old. If you can spare one, would you please send us a new patch so we can update our display and move it to the front of the lab for all to see?

Thank you and thanks always for your support of the laboratory.

Philip T. Kinsey, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## Staffing Update:

After interviewing a very impressive group of candidates for our open DNA position, the laboratory was lucky enough to hire Dr. Sarah Ozanick who began her training program in late May. Sarah earned her Doctorate in Molecular Biology from Marquette University. She also has over three years of experience in forensic DNA analysis from the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory system. Due to her experience level, she is expected to progress through her in-house training program rapidly. We hope to have her on-line in the next couple of months. We are very happy she decided to join us.



*Sarah Ozanick is pictured in the DNA section practicing DNA extractions.*



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## Casework Trends:

Requests Received, Requests Completed, Backlogs and Turn-Around Times (TATs) for quarters 1 and 2 of 2018 are shown below.

	Requests Received		Requests Completed		Final Backlog		Average TATs (days)	
	2018 Q1	2018 Q2	2018 Q1	2018 Q2	2018 Q1	2018 Q2	2018 Q1	2018 Q2
Chemistry	647	657	607	690	98	64	9	9
DNA	272	248	324	305	88	60	68	45
Latent Prints	319	362	382	349	158	161	57	42
Firearms	234	276	276	212	73	137	36	28
Toxicology	143	114	134	125	24	13	13	13

- The **Chemistry** section continues to perform wonderfully.
- After focusing on closing out older cases, the **DNA** section has made remarkable progress in improving turn-around times in spite of a recent transition in staffing.
- The **Latent Prints** section has improved turn-around times while maintaining a reasonable case backlog.
- Increased submissions, the temporary loss of a part-time firearms examiner and the continuation of training provided to our newest Latent Print Examiner have all contributed to an increase in backlogged **Firearms** cases. This section has started working overtime to offset these temporary circumstances.
- A slight dip in submissions has allowed **Toxicology** to reduce case backlogs while maintaining outstanding turn-around times.

## Training Corner:

A two-day training covering the Detection, Collection and Preservation of Latent Print Evidence was conducted earlier this month. Training was provided by NIRCL Latent Print Examiners Tony Spadafora and Barry Adams at the Lake Zurich Police Department Training Facility. Thanks to the Lake Zurich P.D. for providing snacks, AV assistance and an outstanding facility for this training.

*Latent Print Examiner Tony Spadafora teaches students with a range of experience levels about the latest techniques used in the Detection, Collection and Preservation of Latent Print Evidence.*





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There were 22 students from 14 agencies who were given lectures and practical exercises covering the topics of dusting, lifting, other developmental techniques as well as documentation, evidence packaging and submission. Several students were provided LP kits to keep in their squad cars to help in LP evidence processing and collection.

## Laboratory Communication:

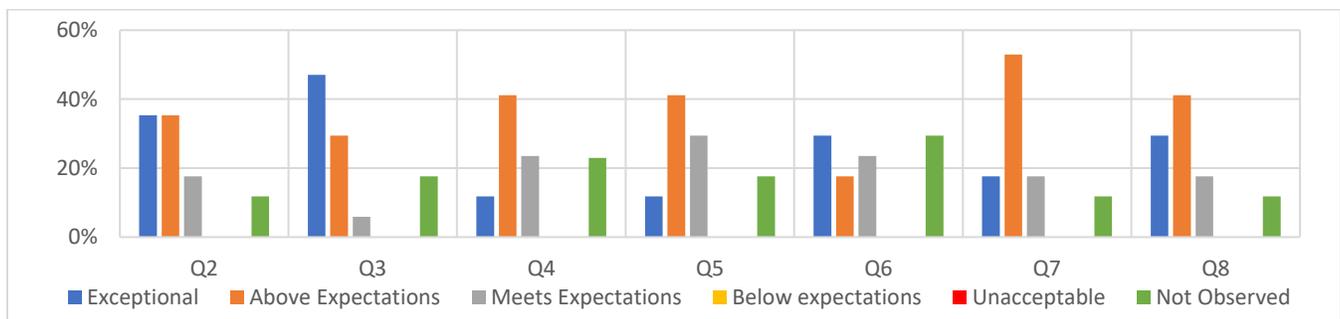
Please let us know how we're doing by taking a few minutes and completing our lab survey! Here is the link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5T57K55>. We did receive some more responses to our survey since the last request for comment. Thank you!

As mentioned in our last Update, a respondent was selected as our winner of a gift card to Starbucks. That winner is Wheeling Police Department's **Pete Rodgers**! Thanks for the helpful feedback Pete!



*Evidence Technician Sherry Fleischhauer presented Pete Rodgers with a NIRCL challenge coin and lapel pin instead of the Starbucks gift card at Pete's request.*

The overall results of this ongoing survey are shown below. Questions 1 and 9 were for ancillary information about the response. For the actual questions asked, I'll refer you to our survey. Hey, and while you're there, why don't you complete the survey and be in the running for the next gift card!





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Notice the absence of Below Expectations or Unacceptable ratings! A few of the comments received included: "Always willing to take our calls and to provide professional analysis and assistance." and "love this!" regarding the service provided when contacting the laboratory and "Lab staff needs to take a greater role with training" regarding the availability of lab personnel for court, training, consultation, etc. As reported in our training corner above, we are paying attention and doing just that!

**Thank you** for using the [clerical@nircl.org](mailto:clerical@nircl.org) email address when requesting information for non-urgent matters. Please continue to let us know what you need along with any pertinent information that would help us get you your information more quickly. This has been very helpful in reducing interruptions to our scientists in the laboratory. As always, for urgent matters, please call the lab directly.

With the success **Mark Milford** has had in providing agencies access their laboratory reports electronically, the lab will officially stop regularly issuing paper copies of reports as of September 1<sup>st</sup>. If any assistance is needed in accessing reports electronically, please contact Mark for help ([mmilford@nircl.org](mailto:mmilford@nircl.org); (847) 362-0676).

We continue to expand using the [www.nircl.org](http://www.nircl.org) website as a source of information about the laboratory. Please check there regularly for updated lab forms and information about policy updates, trainings, meetings, meeting agenda and minutes. Please check out the website for important **DNA policy updates** and reminders [http://nircl.org/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/DNAupdate061118.17670139.pdf](http://nircl.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/DNAupdate061118.17670139.pdf).

As mentioned in the last Quarterly Report, an updated process for **Scheduling Evidence Transfer Appointments** is being implemented to assist the laboratory during Sherry Fleischhauer's upcoming maternity leave. All laboratory staff now have access to edit a scheduling calendar shared lab wide. **Remember, due to being short-handed, the lab will not be able to accommodate unannounced "drop-ins"**. As always, if there is an immediate need for assistance from the laboratory, please call.

Also, as mentioned previously, the laboratory will be **implementing a new phone system** to allow for direct access to the person you wish to contact. The phone will be answered by an automated attendant at which point you'll be able to enter in the extension of the person you wish to contact. Once the system is set up, we'll publish extensions for everyone in the lab for your convenience. If the person cannot pick up at that time you'll be able to leave a message. Our goal will be to respond as soon as possible, and if not by the end of the day, then first thing when the person is back in the lab. For matters that cannot wait, you'll be able to contact the front office by entering that extension. This phone system will cut down dramatically on interruptions of the scientists during their analyses and with informative messages left, allow them to be prepared for your conversation when they return your calls.

### **Appreciation of Laboratory Personnel:**

Cook County Sheriff's Police Sergeant **Ron Sachtleben** came to the laboratory to present certificates of appreciation and pins to laboratory scientists for work done by the laboratory on behalf of the Cook County Sheriff's Police Department. Ron had very kind words of appreciation for the dedication and good work of our staff. He passed along similar sentiments from Deputy Chief **Brian White** and others from their office. While Ron was at the lab, Firearms Examiner **Gary Lind** examined some fired evidence collected the night before to aid their investigation.



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*Thanks for the acknowledgement!  
Sergeant Ron Sachtleben (center) is  
pictured with Latent Print/Firearms  
Examiner Tony Spadafora (left) and  
Firearm Examiner Gary Lind (right).*

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## Impactful Evidence:

**Michael Burns** of the **Wheeling P.D.** recently recovered several different disassembled firearms and firearm parts from a pond. He took care to package the items in the original water from the scene as is appropriate for laboratory submission. After coordinating with lab staff, the evidence was submitted and processed right away for latent prints by examiners **Tony Spadafora** and **Karen Duquette**. Unfortunately, no latent prints were detected. Before transferring the evidence to the Firearms section, they were treated with silicone to limit rusting of the items which allowed Firearms examiner **Gary Lind** to assemble four different functioning firearms from the several parts submitted. The firearms were documented and test fired before they began to show signs of oxidation. Although the test fires did not correlate to any outstanding shooting, one of the firearms was a revolver suspected to have been used in a homicide years ago. Wheeling is now requesting the homicide evidence from court for comparison to this revolver.

These items were fully processed in about four hours. Because of team work and proper collection, preservation and packaging by **Michael**, firearm parts recovered from the pond were successfully processed and assembled for safe test firing for searches against open cases. **Great work** by everyone involved!

Last, but not least, our drug and gun evidence destruction projects were very successful and resulted in the destruction of **2.1 tons of drugs** and **7.7 tons of firearms and other weapons**. Both record setting amounts!

***Stay safe and thanks for reading!***