

## **Annual Lab Products Animal Technician Award**

### ***One Technician's Experience***

As the winner of the 2011 District 8 Lab Products, Inc. Travel Grant, I cannot convey how impressed I was by the experience. Just like many of you, I received an email saying that nominations for this award would be occurring in the upcoming weeks. One of the major requirements to be nominated was to have never attended an AALAS National Meeting in the past. I made a brief, passing comment to my co-workers and they must have listened! Nominations by my supervisor, coworkers and our department veterinarians were secretly submitted without my knowledge. A few weeks had passed and I was notified that I had won and was completely shocked! It was truly a group effort that helped me win this award and I cannot thank everyone enough for their kind words.

The 2011 AALAS National Meeting was held in beautiful San Diego, California and the weather could not be more perfect! The Lab Products Travel Grant Award covered airfare, hotel for 3 nights, and spending money for incidentals. The meeting was held at the San Diego Convention Center and it was packed with just under 5,000 participants. It was truly a great feeling to see so many people involved in animal research and the progress that is being made across the country.

During the national meeting you are able to take advantage of all the seminars and platform sessions that were being offered. There were over 110 presentations available and I often encountered many that overlapped, which made scheduling tricky. Many of the sessions I attended related to my job and current research interests. The Poster Session, with more than 330 research posters on display, took hours to go through. Another big event of the national meeting is the Product Show in the enormous exhibit hall with all the vendors. Multiple company representatives told me they got there a week in advance to set up. Companies were showcasing the newest in innovation of autoclaves, cage washing equipment, animal caging, food and water systems, lab products, diagnostic services and so much more. Almost every vendor was giving away free stuff and you left with bags of goodies!

One of the evenings was set aside by Lab Products, Inc. and they held an awards ceremony for all the winners from each district. This was followed by a celebratory dinner and cocktails with the owner and executives of the company. It was a great feeling to be honored and to interact with the other winners and discuss their animal background and job positions. It was an evening to remember!

I finish up my Master's degree this year and this experience has inspired me to present my own research poster at this year's National AALAS Meeting in Minneapolis. I encourage anyone who has not had the opportunity to attend the National Meeting to apply and get the experience of a lifetime, I know I did! - *Justin Towne BS, RLATG, University of Arizona*