In an effort to attract young people to the clinical laboratory profession, Labs Are Vital(TM), an initiative sponsored by Abbott, has tapped into Facebook, a popular social networking Web site, to reach out to more than four million students with an interest in life sciences.

* Facebook is an online network that connects young people with friends and other peers who work, study and live around them, and is being used as a tool to educate high school and college students about career opportunities in the clinical laboratory science profession.

A Facebook page, sponsored by Labs Are Vital, will enable interested, career-minded high school and college students to meet clinical lab science students or recent graduates and learn about the benefits and challenges of the profession from their peers.

Recruitment is one of many goals of the Labs Are Vital program. Others include improving the visibility of the clinical lab and demonstrating the value of the lab to the greater healthcare community.

Abbott (NYSE- ABT - News) has been joined by many of the most influential and professional organizations in the clinical lab, who share these goals, including: Clinical Laboratory Management Association (CLMA), American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS), American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), American Medical Technologists (AMT), American Association of Bioanalysts (AAB), American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC), Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), and AABB.

According to statistics compiled by ASCP, there currently may be as many as 40,000 unfilled clinical
laboratory jobs in the United States. The shortage of clinical lab scientists is a serious problem, and the stakes are high. According to U.S. Department of Labor projections, approximately 13,800 medical laboratory professionals will be needed every year through 2012 to fill vacant positions. Unfortunately, fewer than 5,000 professionals are graduating from educational programs each year.

Clinical laboratory professionals play a leading role in monitoring health, diagnosing diseases, and assessing the treatment of patients. More than 70 percent of the objective information used to make diagnostic decisions is derived from the clinical lab. This tremendous contribution comes at a great value: most clinical labs take up less than 5 percent of a hospital's operating budget.

Online Scholarship Contest and Other Recruitment Programs:

As part of the Facebook initiative, the Labs Are Vital collaboration is also offering an online scholarship contest for college and high school students. Abbott is joined in this effort by ASCLS, APHL, and Blood Systems, Inc.

Contest entrants must submit a video, advertisement, or T-shirt design that encourages others to consider careers in laboratory medicine. Submissions selected for the semi-finalist category will be available to view online where Facebook members will vote on those that most creatively illustrate why clinical lab science is cutting-edge and how laboratorians make a difference.

Other recruitment activities include the launch of a student-focused Web site, http://www.LabScienceCareers.com, where students can find information on career opportunities and educational programs in clinical lab sciences.

About Labs Are Vital(TM):

Labs Are Vital is a multi-pronged, multi-year education and awareness program sponsored by Abbott that is designed to highlight the critical role that laboratory professionals play in healthcare and to address the issues facing laboratories today. The program -- which includes a public awareness campaign, an Instrument Donation Program, and a variety of Web-based resources for laboratory professionals -- focuses attention on the life-saving work clinical laboratory scientists provide in diagnosing disease and improving health outcomes.

Quotes:

"Social media have been used successfully by Fortune 500 companies in highly targeted recruitment efforts, and we think it's an innovative way to address the labor shortage we're facing in the clinical laboratory sciences. "The primary benefit of Facebook is the peer-to-peer outreach that puts clinical lab science students and professionals in contact with students who may not be aware of the exciting career opportunities in clinical labs, public health labs, and transfusion medicine."

"One of the most critical components to improving some of the problems that face the clinical lab sciences is a broad communications effort initiated by Labs Are Vital to ensure current and future generations understand the importance of the work lab professionals do everyday and consider entering into the profession."


Video:
Clinical Lab Careers video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpn_6PcP6no

Additional Resources:
Labs Are Vital Facebook group page
http://www.LabScienceCareers.com
http://www.LabsAreVital.com
http://www.ASCLS.org
http://www.APHL.org
http://www.bloodsystems.org
http://www.clima.org
http://www.ascp.org
http://www.aml1.com
http://www.aab.org
http://www.aacc.org
http://www.aabb.org
http://www.abbottdiagnostics.com

(Logo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20080225/CLM020LOGO)

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Abbott is a global, broad-based health care company devoted to the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals and medical products, including nutritionals, devices and diagnostics. The company employs 65,000 people and markets its products in more than 130 countries.

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