

AOAC Membership Stories: Why AOAC?

The following is part of a series of articles written by AOAC members on the topic “Why AOAC?” highlighting the value of membership through different members’ perspectives. This installment is written by **Stephanie Kobany**, a research chemist at Medallion Laboratories/General Mills in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. She credits AOAC membership for her professional growth, broader perspective, and valuable connections with colleagues from around the globe. She shares how AOAC, in particular AOAC Annual Meetings, surpassed her expectations and inspires her to contribute as a volunteer. Here is her story on “Why AOAC?” What will be your story?



Stephanie Kobany

I attended my first AOAC Annual Meeting in August 2018 as a new member. While I anticipated the opportunities to expand my technical knowledge and deepen my connections within the analytical chemistry field, the AOAC community surpassed my expectations. As a first-time attendee, I felt welcomed and immediately inspired to become more involved within this organization.

As a research chemist in the early stage of my career, becoming an AOAC member and attending the Annual Meeting put many aspects of my daily work into perspective. Working at Medallion Laboratories, I focus on method development and single-laboratory validation for food products

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and dietary supplements. It is common practice to start each new endeavor by searching the *Official Methods of Analysis of AOAC INTERNATIONALSM*. *AOAC Official MethodsSM* are trusted by our clients because they are globally recognized, reliable, and highly vetted. After observing expert review panels and method validation recommendations at the Annual Meeting, I witnessed the effort and commitment to excellence that is put into each method.

At the scientific sessions, I was able to broaden my perspective on different analytical approaches. The need for collaboration across scientific fields was an apparent theme. This idea was not only communicated in several symposiums, but it was showcased in workshops and roundtable discussions. These different ways of examining scientific topics expanded dialogue by allowing each attendee to share their

own experiences and knowledge.

Participating in the AOAC Annual Meeting First-Time Poster contest gave me the opportunity to showcase the work my team had conducted to advance microbiological methods for dietary supplements. Having a platform to discuss method development successes and challenges with other scientists was very rewarding. It was refreshing to have scientists from different disciplines, and stages in their career, come together and have open interactions about science.

For me, the most impactful aspect of being an AOAC member has been the opportunity to expand my professional network. From multiple networking receptions to exhibitor presentations, the AOAC Annual Meeting had endless opportunities to connect with other members and vendors. Being able to hear other members’ experiences and how they have influenced the organization has been motivating. I am excited to see how my AOAC membership can enhance my professional development and connections in the upcoming years. ■

—Stephanie Kobany
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