



Nonie Hicks



I grew up on a 220-acre farm in the small town of Oldtown, eastern Kentucky, where we had a small gas station/convenience store, a post office, and an elementary school serving grades one through eight. There, we grew corn, tobacco, and hay, raised cattle and pigs, and we always maintained three gardens for canning/freezing fresh vegetables to eat during the upcoming winter.

Our farmland flourished with wild blackberries and ginseng, persimmon trees, and "Papa bushes."

There, my parents instilled in me many of the values I hold to this day:

"Nothing is worth doing unless you give it your best effort."

(Theodore Roosevelt)

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

(from a poem, Perseverance, by William Hickson in 1836)

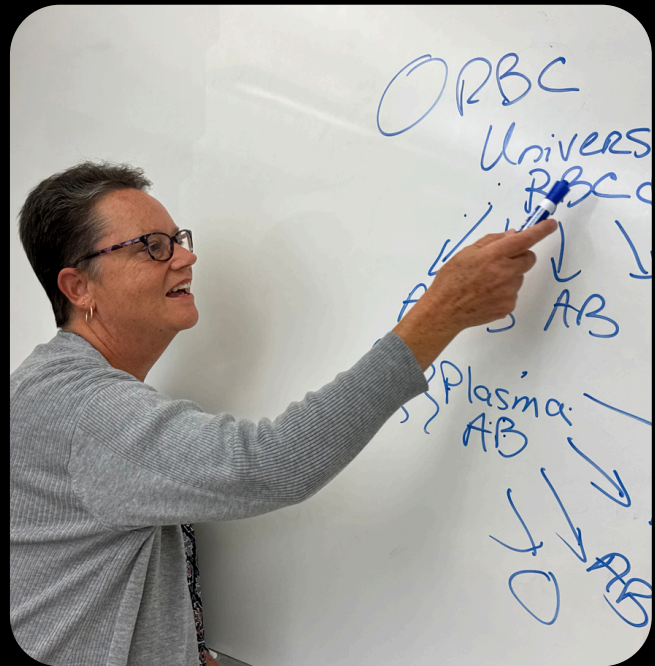
"love your neighbor as yourself" and "treat others as you wish to be treated"

(the Bible Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31).

I graduated from Greenup County High School in Greenup, Kentucky, and began my advanced educational journey at Morehead State University (MSU) in Morehead, Kentucky. After my freshman year, I participated in a four-week summer immersive program at a local hospital. During that experience, I rotated through all departments of the clinical laboratory, which also included observing an autopsy and visiting the radiology department. The moment I saw my cells in a peripheral blood smear in Hematology, I was immediately hooked.



My career as a “medical technologist” began after I graduated in 1985 from MSU with two Bachelor of Science degrees and a certificate of completion in medical technology from the University of Louisville, Kentucky. In 2004, I earned a Master of Science in Transfusion and Transplantation Science from the University of Cincinnati/Hoxworth Blood Center in Ohio, along with certification as a Specialist in Blood Banking (SBB) from the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP).



This marked a pivotal moment in my career, as I had the opportunity to conduct laboratory research experiments and participate in the development of the first in vivo mouse model of Transfusion-Related Acute Lung Injury (TRALI). This work subsequently led to my first scientific publication, thanks to the renowned immunology researchers I worked with, Dr. Fred Finkelman, Dr. Richard Strait, and Dr. Brian Susskind (who was my thesis advisor) (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22025304/>). With the help of these and other wonderful, giving mentors along the way, I have published several articles and abstracts, as well as spoken at AABB, as well as regional and state professional blood bank meetings throughout my career.

Most recently, I was honored to co-author the sixth edition of **Basic & Applied Concepts of Blood Banking and Transfusion Practices** with Paula Howard (Elsevier, 2025) (<https://a.co/d/3xeJfSC>). I have educated and mentored numerous new employee trainees and students in programs for specialists in blood banking/transfusion medicine (SBB/TM), medical laboratory science (MLS), medical laboratory technician (MLT), and blood bank technology (BBT) programs through both in-person and distance learning formats.



*Celebrating the printed copy
of the book is out (May 2025)!*

Besides co-authoring the textbook with Paula, teaching awards are the most valued honors I've received in my career. I was proud to be nominated by students at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, and subsequently I received the ***“Excellence in Teaching Award”*** by the Student Government Association Executive Council (SGAEC) in May 2009 (<https://www.uthsc.edu/studentsuccess/student-life/sgaec/excellence.php>). During 2010-2011, the Memphis Society of Clinical Laboratory Science (MSCLS) recognized me with the ***“Medical Technology Educator of the Year”*** award. Most recently, in 2020, the South Central Association of Blood Banks (SCABB) presented me with their prestigious ***Larry L. Trow Memorial Educational Award*** (for significant contributions in immunohematology education). Each of these honors only deepened my commitment to supporting and guiding the next generation of laboratory professionals. While I am grateful for the recognition I have received, the most meaningful aspect of my career has been witnessing my former students continue their growth and make valuable contributions within the field.



*Blood Bank Technology Program Graduation Day (June 23, 2023):
The class's very own "Organization Team" gifted me a T-shirt
personalized with one of my most frequent class sayings, "If you
want to be a good blood banker, you've got to be a good tube shaker."*

My love for teaching was undoubtedly influenced by a long line of educators in our family. My paternal grandmother (pictured below) started her teaching career in a small one-room schoolhouse in eastern Kentucky. My mother, sister, and aunt all had long careers in education. I have been, and always will be, a lifelong learner. Whether in the classroom, outdoors observing nature or gardening, taking pictures at the beach or a wildlife refuge, or expressing my creativity on canvas or in a new teaching module, I consider it a blessed day.



I share all of this to explain the main reasons I founded the Let's Learn Blood Bank (LLBB) website: to encourage and support other hardworking educators, students, and laboratory professionals in reaching their goals and advancing their careers, just as the mentors I had along the way helped me. With the growing number of vacancies at hospitals and blood center laboratories across our nation, it is essential to share our knowledge and encourage others to pursue their passion for helping others and pursue a career in medical laboratory science. Since 2021, I have been a triple-negative breast cancer thriver (see last treatment day below).



That was one exit door I was most grateful to pass through!

That experience has reinforced an understanding that, above all, I should continually be thankful for my countless blessings and pursue what I am passionate about. I find pleasure and satisfaction in creating engaging learning activities and developing curriculum, watching “lightbulbs go on!” I appreciate collaborating, sharing, and learning from others. Therefore, I sought out an outstanding team of extraordinary, experienced professionals who shared my values and vision, providing a flexible platform of educational content to support the advancement of students, educators, instructors, mentors, and laboratory professionals alike. Together, the LLBB team has brought nearly two centuries of combined working and teaching experience to the LLBB website. Please allow me the honor of introducing each of our talented contributors.

Meet the Rest of the Team