

NEHA NEWS

NEHA General Election 2017—Results

By Kristen Ruby-Cisneros (kruby@neha.org)

Elections are a critical part of the democratic process and are one way to provide members a voice in the running of their organization. NEHA voting members have an opportunity to vote for candidates of contested board of directors and regional vice-president positions, as well as cast votes regarding proposed Articles of Incorporation and Bylaw changes.

National officers of NEHA's board of directors serve a one-year term in each officer position (second vice-president, first vice-president, president-elect, president, and immediate past-president) for a total of five years. Regional vice-presidents serve three-year terms.

The following are results from the 2017 general election.

Second Vice-President

There were two qualified candidates for the second vice president position: Stan Hazan and Sandra Long. In addition to the candidate profiles that appeared in the March *JEH* and on NEHA's Web site, both candidates had profiles posted on the online ballot. Eligible voters were encouraged to vote during the month of March. The deadline to vote was March 31, 2017.

Voters elected Sandra Long as the second vice-president. Long will assume this position at the closing of NEHA's 2017 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition in July.

Regional Vice-Presidents (RVPs)

NEHA's membership is broken down into nine regions that represent U.S. geographic areas, as well as members in the U.S. military and abroad. The terms of three RVP positions expired in 2017: 1) Ned Therien, Region 1; 2) Sandra Long, Region 5; and 3) Tim Hatch, Region 7.

No eligible candidates for Regions 1 and 5 were confirmed prior to the election. Per board policy, these positions were filled by vote of the board. The list of candidates was based upon individuals who had indicated interest in response to e-mail outreach sent to members in those regions. There were two candidates for the Region 7 vacancy and those residing in Region 7 were able to vote for the candidates via the election ballot.

The new vice-presidents for the three regions are 1) Matthew Reighter, Region 1; 2) Tom Vyles, Region 5; and 3) Tim Mitchell, Region 7. These individuals will assume their positions at the close of the 2017 AEC and their terms will expire in 2020.

A listing of current NEHA national officers and RVPs, along with state breakdowns for each region, can be found on page 52. More information about NEHA's governance, including its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, the election processes, and associated deadlines, can be found at www.neha.org/about-neha/governance.

Thank you to all members who participated in this year's election and submitted their votes!

What's New in Washington, DC?

By Joanne Zurcher (jzurcher@neha.org)

Environmental Health Workforce Act of 2017

NEHA is thrilled to announce that in response to the efforts of our Washington, DC, staff educating members of Congress about the importance of the environmental health workforce, our new champion in the House of Representatives, Representative Brenda L. Lawrence (D-Michigan) has reintroduced the Environmental Health Workforce Act. The bill was reintroduced on April 5, 2017. This bill ensures that there is a consistent set of guidelines and standards for the training and education of environmental health professionals across the nation.

Only 28 states currently require a credential for environmental health workers.

The Environmental Health Workforce Act of 2017 will

1. direct the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) secretary, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, to develop model standards, guidelines, and technical assistance for credentialing environmental health workers;
2. direct HHS to develop a comprehensive environmental health workforce plan that identifies and addresses ways to strengthen the environmental health workforce; and
3. direct the comptroller general of the U.S. to examine and identify best practices in six states related to training and credentialing requirements for environmental health workers. This report will compare the best practices of three states that currently have credentialing requirements (Maryland, Ohio, and Washington) and three states that do not have such requirements (Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania).

As our members know, credentialing serves as verification that a professional has achieved a baseline level of competency and is an impartial, third-party endorsement of an individual's professional knowledge and practical experience to perform relevant work responsibilities. Since 1937, NEHA has offered the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian credential, which defines a set of competencies that are evidenced through testing and maintained through continuing education.

Given the diversity and complexity of recent environmental health issues that have been a high priority for public safety—lead-contaminated drinking water, food tainted with *E. coli*, and potential outbreaks of Zika virus—this legislation is a key component to ensuring we have a highly skilled workforce to find the best solutions and protect future generations.

Capitol Hill Briefing

On June 8, 2017, NEHA and Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) are cohosting a congressional staff briefing in the U.S. Capitol that will focus on keeping America's food safe. Senator Tim Kaine (D-Virginia) is sponsoring the event and will provide opening remarks. NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack will moderate the panel and NEHA Past-President Bob Custard will give NEHA's

perspective. AFDO President Steven Mandernach will give AFDO's perspective. Also present at the event will be a foodborne illness victim, who will share their story to connect federal policy to real people.

NEHA's Second App Challenge! Innovating for Environmental Health: Water Quality

By Solly Poprish (spoprish@neha.org)

In March 2016, NEHA, with the support of Hedgerow Software (www.hedgerowsoftware.com) and Esri (www.esri.com), launched its first app challenge—Innovating for Environmental Health. Individuals competed to develop apps that would achieve one of the Healthy People 2020 environmental health objectives as identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The mission of the competition was to create apps that could be used by environmental health professionals or the communities they protect, as well as inspire data-driven solutions to public health issues.

A total of 13 apps were submitted, which varied in environmental health topic and user audience. The first-place team developed Biky, an app that integrates alternative transportation, physical activity, and community building to tackle air contamination and promote a healthy lifestyle. Angela Jimenez attended the NEHA 2016 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibit on behalf of her team to present and receive the app challenge award. To learn more about last year's app challenge and submissions, please visit <https://innovatingeh.devpost.com>.

This year we launched our second Innovating for Environmental Health App Challenge with continued support from Hedgerow Software. This year's app challenge is different because it focuses on a specific environmental health topic—participants are competing to develop apps that use public data to solve water quality issues.

Water quality impacts us daily. We drink it, play in it, and grow our food with it, all of which have a direct impact on our health and well-being. Water quality issues that developers might focus on include increasing access to drinking water that meets Safe Drinking Water Act regulations, reducing waterborne disease outbreaks, reducing the global burden of disease due to poor water quality, and more.

Please visit www.neha.org to learn more about the app challenge and see how you can get involved.

If you are attending the NEHA 2017 AEC, please join us at the "Innovating for Environmental Health: Water Quality" session to hear about the innovative winners of the competition, and to learn the potential of integrating public data, technology, and environmental health.

NEHA Releases New Credentials in Food Safety Auditing

By TJay Gerber (tgerber@neha.org)

NEHA been working for several years on the development of a credential to meet the needs of an independent guarantee of a capable

workforce for all levels of food safety auditing. NEHA gathered subject matter experts (SMEs) from around the globe to assist in the creation of the Certified in Food Safety Supplier Audits (CFSSA) and Registered Food Safety Auditor (RFSA) credentials. These credentials will build the international capacity of qualified, vetted professionals that will be needed to meet the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

Development of the Credentials

NEHA's credentialing department is well versed in the creation and maintenance of credential programs. The department currently offers eight credentials, which includes the CFSSA and RFSA credentials. The credentialing department partnered with psychometricians from Professional Testing, Inc. to ensure that the credential exams, eligibility requirements, scoring, and continuing education requirements were valid, reliable, and legally defensible. The process took place over seven multiday meetings and involved the combined efforts of nearly 30 SMEs from government entities, regulatory agencies, academia, and other organizations. With guidance from the psychometricians, the SMEs discussed the various knowledge, skills, abilities, and job tasks that a future credential holder would require to be competent in the food safety auditing world.

Lead psychometrician Dr. Cynthia Woodley, who has developed certification programs for over 20 years, said, "The program that has been developed for NEHA is a really solid program. It not only is a knowledge-based program, but it is also measuring skills." The finished product is an impartial, third-party endorsement of an individual's professional knowledge and experience that verifies they have achieved a baseline level of competency in food safety auditing.

Throughout the creation process of the CFSSA credential, the SMEs discussed the importance of requiring experience in third-party audits. They stated, however, how difficult it might be for a food auditor to conduct a third-party audit without working for a certification body. By definition, a third-party certification audit is one conducted by a certification body. Thus, the RFSA credential was born.

The RFSA credential builds upon the knowledge of the CFSSA by requiring a certain number of audits in one food sector or category, as well as passing a witness audit checklist in one food sector or category. Trish Wester, one of the SMEs involved in the credential creation process, stated, "A witness audit will confirm that the candidate has the necessary technical knowledge to produce a product safely and knows how and where to gather information about what a site is doing."

Eligibility

The CFSSA and RFSA credentials require a high level of food safety knowledge. For this reason, SMEs discussed the various avenues a candidate would be able to apply for the credential. One such avenue is to hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent with 30 semester hours of core science education, 3 years of experience in food production or in conducting regulatory food inspections at a super-

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visory or advanced capacity, evidence of hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) training, and evidence of the Professional Food Safety Auditor Training Course or equivalent. A candidate that can provide proof of the requirement is eligible to sit for the CFSSA exam. Once an individual passes the CFSSA exam, they are eligible to apply for the RFSA credential to become a third-party auditor.

Credential Exam and Continuing Education

An individual that is eligible to sit for the CFSSA credential exam will need to achieve a passing score covering a variety of food safety auditing topics that include conducting an audit, conducting post-audit activities, verifying prerequisite programs, planning food safety audits, and verifying food safety programs. The exam has 175 multiple-choice questions and individuals have 3 hours to complete the exam. Upon successfully passing the exam, the CFSSA credential holder will be prepared to complete first- and second-party audits. The CFSSA credential can also lead individuals into a career path to become a third-party auditor, where they will be one of the last lines of defense in the complex global food supply chain. After earning the CFSSA credential, individuals will need to submit 24 hours of continuing education units for the CFSSA. The RFSA credential requires 36 hours of continuing education, which covers the requirements of the CFSSA.

NEHA's credentialing department was well suited for the task at hand. With the assistance of SMEs from around the globe, we were able to create two credentials that are perhaps the most robust of all food auditing credentials currently available. Ultimately, the goal of these credentials is to create competent, qualified individuals to carry out the functions described in FSMA. Likewise, qualified individuals are needed to audit the effectiveness of internal food safety programs and supplier programs, as well as participate as an external third-party observer.

Find out more about the CFSSA and RFSA credentials at www.neha.org/credentials.

Focusing on Local Solutions, National Influence at the NEHA 2017 AEC

By Kristie Denbrock (kdenbrock@neha.org)

The NEHA 2017 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition will examine how local solutions can influence the health of the nation and the globe. The 2017 AEC, our 81st one, will take place July 10–13 at the DeVos Place Convention Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Environmental health professionals, industry leaders, government officials, and academics will share innovative tools of the trade, discuss multiagency coordination, and debate the hot topics.

The 11 educational tracks of the AEC represent 25 environmental health disciplines including water, food safety and defense, tracking and technology, healthy homes and communities, emerging issues, workforce and leadership, climate and health, infectious

and vectorborne diseases, and a wide variety of environmental public health issues.

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Michigan) will deliver the keynote address on Monday, July 10. Stabenow is the ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Following the address is the opening session, "Aiming for Equity," an environmental justice panel facilitated by Dr. Renée Branch Canady, chief executive officer of the Michigan Public Health Institute.

Educational session highlights include "The Great Restaurant Grading Debate: Is Restaurant Grading an Effective Practice or Are We Misleading Ourselves and the Public?" NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack will moderate the debate as the audience listens to the pros and cons of grading from Terri Williams, director of environmental health for Los Angeles County, and Mick Miklos, senior manager at the National Restaurant Association.

Dr. Richard Raymond, former U. S. Department of Agriculture's Under Secretary for Food Safety, will lead a panel discussion on antibiotic resistance. Included on the panel will be Dr. Terry L. Dwelle, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Dr. Bruce Stewart-Brown, senior vice president of Food Safety and Quality Live Operations, Perdue Farms.

The closing session will focus on sustainability and how the U.S. government and local entities view sustainability and human health connected through air and water pollution, indoor air quality, and the procurement of more sustainable products. Panel participants in the session will include Walker Smith, director, Office of Global Affairs and Policy, Office of International and Tribal Affairs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Gabe Wing, director of Safety and Sustainability, Herman Miller; and Eric DeLong, deputy city manager for Grand Rapids.

Additional educational sessions include:

- Got Water? Community Preparation and Response to Water-Related Emergencies and Outbreaks
- IPM in Housing: Overcoming Obstacles
- Communication Is Key (UL Restaurant Code)
- Regulation in the Body Art Industry: Views of the Body Art Practitioner (demo)
- Norovirus in Schools and Hotels
- Green and Healthy Homes Initiatives
- Food Fraud

The AEC will also feature an exhibit hall, poster session, and a variety of networking and social events including the UL Event at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, Tuesday, July 11, 6:00–9:30 p.m., and the Brews, Blues, & BBQ on the beautiful Gillett Bridge featuring local foods, microbrews, and live music, Wednesday, July 12, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

For additional conference and registration information, please visit www.neha.org/aec. We hope to see you there!

NEHA Staff Profile

As part of tradition, NEHA features new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their one-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know the NEHA staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to one NEHA staff member. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on page 53.



Santiago Ezcurra

I moved to Denver in March 2016 with my wife and started to look for a job right away. After months of interviews and trips all over town, I got struck by luck—I joined NEHA in May 2016 as a temporary employee to help with some online courses that were being updated. I was given the opportunity to work on other projects and apply some of my experience in video editing and animation. That's how it all started.

Now I'm NEHA's media production specialist, helping to create online courses; managing our e-Learning platform; and filming, editing, and animating videos.

It's really a sum of awesome coincidences that NEHA and I crossed paths. Although my degree is in advertising, I always had a passion for video creation that I developed as a hobby. I've worked in the educational industry in different countries as a language teacher. This experience helps me approach my online training work at NEHA from that perspective. Also, my career has been related to environmental health as I worked in that industry for several years in China. All the elements were there! And the truth is, I'm truly happy. Making a difference while I work on my passions is more than I could have believed prior to moving to the U.S.






As for my future, I'm an optimist. I always expect the best, but I take responsibility for the part that I need to play in order for things to happen. I think that we might have a couple of tough years ahead of us, but that will unite and empower the environmental industry, getting us ready for the challenges of the next decade. I am excited about improving my skills and learning more, which will enable me to develop new tools that will help environmental health professionals and create new content that can inspire more people to join NEHA. 🍷

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