

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

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President's Message

Like many in our field I am a graduate of the Southern Connecticut State University's Public Health Program. To graduate the undergrad program, I completed my internship with the Mohegan Tribal Health Department, an experience that inspired me to pursue a career in Public Health. The same person who inspired me to get into Public Health is also responsible for my efforts in CEHA. Other professionals that have been involved with CEHA have pushed me to continue my education to earn my Masters in Public Health, which I am completing now. Fellow board members urged me to step up and take on the leadership role with CEHA and that is my public health journey to this point. So what does the future hold?

We are at a crossroads with the field of public health and the concentration on environmental health. Most inspectors have heard about the proposed adoption of the FDA Model Food Code (by reference) and the most recent re-birth on the discussion of regionalization of health departments. It is important to note that we do not limit our focus to just large items like this. This organization will continue to remain focused on monitoring and providing feedback regarding legislation and policies that impact you, our members. I want all of our members to know that the Board and I are here to help you in your trade. How do we do that?

We do this through input and involvement with you, our members. I urge you all to consider attending a board meeting and speaking with board members. If you have a public health issue that you think needs to be addressed, contact us. Members are welcome to bring such matters to the boards attention, please just contact me (matthewpayne@manchesterct.gov) so you can be allotted time on the agenda if you wish to speak at a meeting. You can attend trainings and/or provide us input and feedback through our website (www.cteha.org) for past or future trainings. Have an idea or article for the newsletter, submit them. This organization works for you and you have a say in matters. Know and talk to your standing and technical committee chairs.

I look forward to serving the environmental health professionals and hope to have a productive and successful year.

Sincerely,
Matthew Payne
CEHA President

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President

Matthew Payne

Publicity

Chair/Editor

Jeff Catlett

Past Presidents Message

Stacey Herbette

It's hard to believe that it has already been a year since I was sworn in as President. Time really does fly by fast. During my time as President, CEHA had many accomplishments throughout the year. Our biggest accomplishment was hosting this year's Yankee Conference on September 21st and 22nd at the Hilton Hotel in Mystic. Over the course of two days, attendees were able to sit in on topics for food, drinking water and subsurface sewage. Participants all across New England who attended the Yankee Conference gave CEHA positive feed-back on putting on a very successful conference. The Yankee Conference planning committee put in a lot of hard work and dedication for this year's conference.

Usually it takes someone two years before they serve as President for CEHA. I had a unique situation in which I was Vice President for one month before I got moved up to President Elect. There were many times that I thought I wasn't going to be prepared to be President with not having enough experience on the board. With the help of the executive board and the rest of the members of CEHA, I was able to fulfill my duties as President. It has truly been an honor and great experience to serve as President for the Connecticut Environmental Health Association. I enjoyed my time being President and working with the executive board. I have gained so much knowledge with this position. As I "pass on" the gavel to our newest President; Matthew Payne, I wish him all the best of luck and for another successful year for CEHA. I look forward to working with him and the rest of the executive board for another year.

Some Thoughts on Third Party Food Safety Auditors
Jessica Fletcher, Chair of the Technical Advisory Committee on Food Safety

For some time now I have been aware that certain retail food establishments employ private third party auditors to inspect their kitchens- a sort of “inspection prior to inspection”. Recently, the manager of a small privately-owned chain asked me if I could recommend an auditing company because after hearing all the bad publicity surrounding Chipotle he was worried and thought that paying for additional inspections was a worthy investment. But does engaging a third party auditor actually provide extra protection towards preventing a foodborne illness outbreak? I asked the manager what he thought an auditor could do for his business that his managers couldn’t do for themselves. In this particular case I convinced him to embrace the concept of “Active Managerial Control” as described in the FDA Program Standards (Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards) and to invest in developing a system of routine self-inspections performed by the managers. They agreed, and are currently implementing in-house training and use of a daily checklist for managers focusing on monitoring and verifying cooking temperatures, cooling, hand hygiene, dish machine sanitization, and managing employee health.

After thinking about this issue I decided to conduct an informal poll and discovered there were more private auditors inspecting food establishments in my jurisdiction than I originally thought. What is causing this trend? I perused the websites of two well-known food safety auditing companies: Ecosure and Steritech. Both websites seemed impressive, offering links to other food safety websites, regulatory updates, whitepapers, and reports on what different jurisdictions are doing to promote food safety. It is important to note that these companies can design a package of services that includes other things besides food safety like ways to increase customer satisfaction, employee work safety, and quality control. These are services that might be beneficial to any food service operation. But why are restaurant owners and managers turning to these auditing companies for help with managing food safety?

Here are a few theories:

1. Certified Food Protection Managers (QFO's) are overwhelmed by the workload of running a restaurant and the additional duties required to develop SOP's, train food employees and monitor behavior.
2. Retail food chains feel that local inspections are inconsistent from state to state or between towns.
3. Paying for an inspection implies that it will be of more value than an inspection that is "free".
4. A large, well-publicized food safety company may offer the perception of protection from liability.

After talking to several restaurant managers about this I reviewed a few of their third party auditor inspection reports. I noticed what I thought were regulatory inconsistencies as well as important food processes that were clearly not assessed by the auditor at the time of the inspection. This led me to wonder about the requirements for working as an auditor at one of these companies and to question if they are any better trained or more experienced than a local food service inspector. It is possible that food establishments may not always be getting their money's worth. Additionally, the 2013 Food Code requires that the Person in Charge at a food establishment demonstrate knowledge of food safety and perform the duties required to ensure the service of safe food which means the food establishment is still ultimately responsible. Given this reality, it is surprising that so many food establishments are willing to pay for a perceived sense of security when with a little effort they can successfully manage their own food safety system. Most local health departments would be more than willing to offer guidance. So does hiring a private auditor ultimately increase food safety and prevent foodborne illness outbreaks? It is unclear to me right now but it is something to keep in mind when conducting your own future inspections.

Scholarships were awarded at the Annual Meeting on November 4, 2016 at Anthony's Ocean view in New Haven, CT

Marvin L. Smith Scholarship

Congratulations to Caleb Cowles

Yankee Conference Scholarship

Congratulations to Michael Spano

Odds and Ends

The next CEHA Executive Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday December 14, 2016 at 12:00 PM at the Public Works Facility, 321 Olcott Street, Manchester, CT. Please notify Matt Payne (matthewpayne@manchesterct.gov) if you would like to attend. Remember every member has a voice in the association.