President’s Message

This has been a fantastic year for our Connecticut Environmental Health Association and the Environmental Health Professionals working in Connecticut. The Governor of Connecticut officially recognized August 24th 2018 as Environmental Health Professionals Day in CT*. The request to the Governor’s office to have a day of recognition for Environmental Health Professionals in Connecticut was submitted by the Connecticut Environmental Health Association. In addition the Executive Board of CEHA was the recipient of the National Environmental Health Association Certificate of Merit. During the upcoming CEHA Annual meeting our executive board will formally present this award.

I am so proud of our profession and grateful to our Executive Board for all the hard work they do and the support they have given to me this year. As the President of CEHA I had the honor of representing Connecticut at the National Environmental Health Association Annual Educational Conference (AEC) in Anaheim California June 24-28, 2018. Being a part of an event with over 1,500 Environmental Health Professionals was empowering on so many levels, professionally and personally. The networking, participation in sponsored events, and meeting such incredible Environmental Health Professionals was invaluable. I was so inspired by the presentations and conversations outlining the incredible work they are doing. Such examples include the resilience and bravery of our colleagues at the San Bernardino County Health Department following the tragic loss of 14 of their coworkers or the amazing response and work performed by the Harris County Public Health Department following Hurricane Harvey and the work the Environmental Health Professionals in California are doing following wildfires.

I attended the Annual Council Meeting of NEHA Affiliate Presidents and was provided information and updates from NEHA leadership and fellow affiliate presidents. In my many discussions I was proud of the work CEHA is doing on behalf of our membership and shared many of our successes.

Included in this newsletter are some highlights and pictures from the NEHA AEC.

It has been my privilege to serve as your CEHA President this year and I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished. This was only possible due to the dedication of the executive board and working as a team with common goals for our membership and association.

(Continued on page 2)
Subsurface Sewage Advisory Committee Update

The Subsurface Sewage Advisory Committee has been working on several issues and will continue the 1) planning and discussion on a proposed training event for septic system field inspection techniques, including the use of various survey tools; and 2) follow-up discussion of the new water treatment wastewater disposal system requirements. Bob Scully from DPH provided a response to my questions and concerns for certain language in the new Section X of the Technical Standards referencing B100a (e) compliance for these systems. These WTW dispersal systems should be looked at as either small systems for discharges of<150 gallons, not likely to affect the soil or hydraulic conditions on the lot, or large systems for discharges > 150 gallons, that might affect soil or hydraulic conditions. When the larger systems are proposed, a B100a(e) evaluation is warranted.

Using this information as guidance, the Eastern Highlands HD has since changed our requirements for the WTW plan reviews. Initially this year, we were requiring B100a compliance for all proposed dispersal systems, but now we will only require B100a compliance for those systems receiving discharges greater than 150 gallons per day or per dose. The few plans we have received so far this year have all fallen into the small discharge size.

Information will be sent to our CEHA membership regarding future trainings for septic system field inspection techniques.

-Jeffrey Polhemus Chair Subsurface Sewage Code Advisory Technical Committee

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Save the Dates!

CEHA Annual Meeting THURSDAY, November 1, 2018 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM
Anthony’s Ocean View 450 Lighthouse Road, New Haven CT 06512

Water Well Workshop, November 14, 2018
CEHA Fall Chloride Workshop ,DPH Laboratory 395 West Street Rocky Hill, CT.

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President’s Message (Continued)

As my term as CEHA President concludes this November, I promise to continue to advocate for the Environmental Health Profession in Connecticut. I will continue to promote the sharing of information and public health outreach programs among health departments and districts in CT. and encourage increased networking and the use of social media to inform and educate the public.

In closing I thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your President.

*CEHA is planning to create a newsletter dedicated to this special day in Connecticut, so please submit photos and articles showcasing the work efforts, events in your communities, public health outreach, initiatives and the daily work performed by you and your Environmental Health team. We hope to receive submissions from all health departments and districts to include in the newsletter.

Send submissions of pictures and articles by September 30, 2018 to : Heather.Oatis@southwindsor.org

Phyllis Amodio, MPH, RS, REHS
Highlights from NEHA Annual Educational Conference

Opening conference remarks from Frank Yiannas, Walmart Vice President of Food Safety and Health provided a fascinating insight into proven behavioral science principles with suggested applications on how they might be used to advance food safety and environmental health. “As environmental health professionals, getting others to comply with what you’re asking is critical, but it’s not always easy. When it comes to food safety, people’s attitudes, choices, and behaviors are some of the most important factors influencing the overall safety of our food supply. If you’re trying to improve the food safety performance of an organization, industry, or region, what you’re really trying to do is change people’s behaviors”.

Local environmental health directors shared real life experiences and lessons learned in the wildfire preparedness and response in their communities.

Within the past five years, Denver has seen an exponential increase in the number of licensed mobile retail food establishments. The Denver Department of Environmental Health, has responded to this rapid growth by prioritizing many initiatives to ensure the safety of the city’s investigators, mobile food truck employees as well as the public. The department has taken a holistic approach to food truck safety by collaborating with other city agencies to make proactive changes.

Climate change is creating an increasingly warmer and wetter environment, with noticeable effects on public health. The health impacts of climate change are especially challenging for children, older adults, and individuals with chronic diseases. As environmental conditions change, it is critical that environmental educators communicate climate change information to prepare community members for individual action.

Amid a 2017 state-wide hepatitis A outbreak, Denver Environmental Health Investigators applied a regulation set, adopted in the 1990s as a part of the city’s collaborative approach to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, to minimize the transmission of the viral illness in bathhouses and adult arcade establishments by identifying key environmental controls. Faced with unique challenges of inspecting facilities designed with unmonitored complex maze areas, group use areas, private booths and theaters used heavily by patrons, Investigators responded to gain compliance using a balance of education and enforcement.

Understanding the Needs, Challenges, Opportunities, Vision and Emerging Roles in Environmental Health (UNCOVER EH) is a national initiative among NEHA, CDC, and Baylor University to develop an in-depth understanding of the environmental health (EH) profession, its areas of practice, and the complex challenges and issues it faces. UNCOVER EH presented an unprecedented opportunity to collect critical information directly from EH professionals working at health departments across the nation through a comprehensive web-based survey and in-person focus groups. The results are producing essential information for ensuring the EH workforce is equipped and prepared to address current and emerging EH issues. This session provided an overview of the UNCOVER EH initiative and offered a glimpse into the initial results from the survey, which launched in late 2017.

This “fishbowl” session, a creative panel discussion allowed members of the audience to become an active part of the panel and be essential elements to a lively conversation on women in environmental health. Attendees and these women leaders considered concerns such as overcoming obstacles & failing forward, rethinking risk, and building supportive networks & connections. By the end of this session, participants pinpointed some peer-to-peer strategies for handling issues, as well as identifying areas of potential focus for NEHA to promote the participation, empowerment, & leadership of women in environmental health.
Photos from NEHA Conference
Getting Involved With the Conference For Food Protection

As Connecticut moves closer to the implementation date for updated food establishment regulations, it’s important for all certified food inspectors to begin thinking about getting involved with organizations, conferences, trainings, or committees on the national level. There is so much one can become involved with, including the Association of Food & Drug Officials (AFDO) and their regional affiliate (NEFDOA), the Integrated Food Safety Centers of Excellence in New York (CoE), or the Conference for Food Protection (CFP), just to name a few. I’ve had the opportunity to recently become involved with the CFP and wanted to share my experience with everyone with the hope that it will inspire you to become involved as well. I have Jessica Fletcher to thank for getting me started on my journey with CFP, and I have to say that it has been quite the thrilling and exhausting experience over the past two years! CFP is not really a conference as we are used to in terms of an “educational” conference. Rather, CFP is the parliamentary process to create change within the regulatory framework we all know as the Food Code. Think of CFP as a congress instead of a conference. It is very formal, very structured, and follows Robert’s Rules of Order at all times. There is an Executive Board, three Councils, each headed by a Chair and Vice-Chair, multiple committees, and an Assembly of State Delegates. The conference meets every biennial and in-between the conference meeting is when all the work gets done for the upcoming meeting.

At Jessica’s suggestion, I joined CFP and as a member, I had the opportunity after the 2016 CFP meeting to sign up for any committee that I thought would be interesting. When you sign up for a committee, you are asked whether or not you would consider being the Chair or Vice-chair for the committee. I signed up for the newly created Mail Order Foods Safety Committee and of course checked off that I could be considered for a Chair or Vice-chair position, not fully understanding what that meant. Low and behold, I was chosen to chair the committee and my Vice-Chair was the Director of International Supply Chair for Little Caesar’s Corporation. From 2016-2018, I worked diligently to understand the CFP, its processes, how to work on a committee let alone be the Chair for one, conduct conference calls every two weeks with my entire committee, submit progress reports to the Executive Board, learn how to write and submit an issue for consideration at the 2018 meeting, and at the last minute learned that I would have to actually stand in front of the entire Council and present my issues for deliberation! It was an exhausting but completely fulfilling two years of committee work. In the end, our committee wrote and submitted a guidance document for businesses engaged in the mail order food industry to help them implement a food safety program within their business model. If you are interested in taking a peek at it, our document can be found at http://www.foodprotect.org/media/site/cfp-mail-order-committee-draft-document-per-2018-iii-004.pdf

After my committee work was finished, I received a phone call at my office from the Vice-Chair of Council III, who was moving up to become the Chair of Council III for the 2018-2020 conference.
Getting Involved With the Conference For Food Protection (Cont.)

Being a member from industry (the Director of Quality Assurance for a major food purveyor), his Vice-Chair needed to be a member from the regulatory sector and he was calling to solicit me to be his Vice-Chair for the next biennium! I was flattered that he felt my committee work showed enough potential to choose me as his Vice-Chair, but again I had no idea what this new position entailed. Yet, I still said “yes” and have been working since April 2018 in this new role and looking forward to working with newly created committees in Council III to help them meet their goals for the 2020 conference. As the Vice-Chair for Council III, I am also a non-voting member of the Executive Board, which has provided another exposure to the inner workings of the CFP. It is here that I’m learning how the Conference really functions and operates. After the 2020 conference, I will automatically move up to be the Chair of Council III and will be looking for a Vice-Chair who must be a member from the industry sector. Again, it will be an entirely new experience for the 2020-2022 biennium.

At the 2018 CFP meeting in Richmond, VA, I represented one-half of the Connecticut vote during the Assembly of State Delegates. This takes place on the last day of the conference and each state sends a representative(s) to cast their vote on behalf of their respective state. Connecticut Department of Public Health shares our vote with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) and in 2018, Amanda Valden was sent to represent DCP. It was Amanda’s first time at CFP as well! All 50 states, as well as all US Territories have representation during the Assembly.

My work with CFP these past two years has been an awesome experience. I found that I love being involved with this organization and its processes to create change based on science. I have met so many wonderful people from industries such as Amazon, Little Caesar’s, Wal-Mart, Performance Food Group, the National Restaurant Association, Servsafe, Target, and many more. I see the same state and local regulators at other conferences and events and have made lifelong contacts and friends that I continue to interact with both professionally and personally. I now have friends in Alaska, California, Iowa, Delaware, Kansas, and of course all around New England that I can connect with at any time. These are some of the best people in our regulatory circle and have become vital assets in my professional career.

At every level of the Conference for Food Protection, there is local health department representation. As a local regulator here in Connecticut, I encourage you to check out the Conference and should you choose to become involved, there are many avenues you can take. From being part of a committee, to being on a Council, being part of the Executive Board, or just being a member of CFP and being able to experience the process in person, all are a rewarding experience that everyone should do at least once. And who knows, you may just find that it suits you and you agree to.....well.....almost anything!

-Christine Applewhite
August 24th 2018 has been officially recognized by the Governor of Connecticut as Environmental Health Professionals Day.

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