

► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Mel Knight, REHS

NEHA's International Vision: Environmental Health Knows No Borders or Boundaries

As NEHA president, I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to participate in NEHA affiliate educational conferences. During the first half of my term I have been privileged to attend and speak at the Texas, Illinois, and Yankee conference meetings. While each affiliate is somewhat unique, the major issues facing environmental health professionals are clearly universal and I am always reminded that our similarities far outnumber our differences. This universal commonality was reinforced at an international level by my participation in the 65th Annual Educational Conference and Exhibition hosted by the Jamaica Association of Public Health Inspectors (JAPHI) in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, this past October.

Jamaica Welcomes NEHA

JAPHI has been an affiliate of NEHA since 2000 and has established an active presence at recent NEHA conferences. I first met with the JAPHI delegation at the Columbus, Ohio, Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition last summer, and I was subsequently invited to participate in their annual meeting.

The JAPHI conference program was similar in content to the programs you would find at conferences in the U.S. Topics included foodborne illness investigations, commercial fish processing, the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act, asbestos abatement, recreational water monitoring, cell phones as a fomite or source of electromagnetic field exposure, and much more. The presentations were

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some of the best I have seen in my career, and I was truly inspired by the engagement and enthusiasm of the attendees. I returned with a heightened awareness of the culture and great appreciation for our association with NEHA's Jamaican affiliate.

NEHA International Affiliations

Since we are foremost a national organization, it might come as a surprise to some that NEHA has affiliates and members in other countries. NEHA has a long history of active members who reside in Canada; the NEHA International Environmental Health/Climate Change Section is currently chaired by Ron DeBurger from Toronto. We also have many members from throughout the world who work or are

stationed outside the U.S. For example, Jamaica and Saudi Arabia have sought and obtained affiliate status. NEHA's services are valued beyond our borders, and we have always strived to be responsive to all areas of request.

As a member of the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH), NEHA has hosted past IFEH meetings, and we look forward to hosting the 2014 IFEH World Congress. We have maintained close relationships and participated in professional exchanges with the United Kingdom's Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI). NEHA's primary focus will always be the U.S., and our active participation in the international environmental health community benefits our members and environmental health stakeholders throughout the world.

NEHA International Activities

During the past several years, NEHA has increasingly been establishing an international presence. Our training, credentialing, and publications are now utilized worldwide. We have participated in donations and shipments of books and supplies to developing countries in Africa and the Caribbean. Our web-based training and the "virtual" content from our AEC are readily available from anywhere on the globe.

NEHA International Vision

Led by Regional Vice President Bob Custard, the NEHA board of directors has adopted an "International Vision" platform that provides the roadmap for future NEHA participation in the

world environmental health community. Some of the major concepts include the following.

- As in the U.S., NEHA's goal will be to build environmental health workforce capacity through training, continuing education, and professional credentialing;
- complementing, not competing with, IFEH and other international environmental health organizations;
- becoming partners with, not patrons of, environmental health organizations in other countries;
- providing environmental health consulting in the areas of environmental health program development and management;
- partnering with existing international health organizations to leverage their resources and capabilities;
- establishing a new category of NEHA affiliation: the International Partner Organization (IPO);
- connecting NEHA members with opportunities to travel, train, and serve in the developing world;

- working with accredited environmental health degree programs in the U.S. to offer distance learning, student internships, and faculty exchanges;
- helping our IPOs to leverage resources by connecting them with donors of relevant and functioning technologies, equipment, computers, laboratory supplies, and training; and
- establishing a Global Environmental Health Fund that can be used to support or subsidize the costs associated with many of the activities listed above.

NEHA recognizes the role and importance of the many established international organizations and has no intention of replacing or displacing these groups. NEHA plans to add value to these existing efforts by sharing our resources and capabilities where needed and requested.

A Shrinking Planet

Web-based technology has enabled worldwide communication as an everyday occurrence.

Modern transportation has made international travel affordable and practical. We import and export foodstuffs to and from all corners of the globe. We are all part of a global community, and environmental health knows no borders or boundaries.

As reinforced by my recent experience in Jamaica, many international environmental health professionals and organizations are interested in partnering with NEHA and we have a responsibility to expand our mutually rewarding partnerships in the worldwide environmental health community. 🌍

Postscript: If a NEHA affiliate is interested in inviting either the NEHA president or Executive Director Nelson Fabian to address your annual conference, please feel free to contact either Nelson or me directly. Nelson can be reached at nfabian@neha.org.

Mel Knight REHS

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NEHA OFFERS Exchange PROGRAM TO ENGLAND OR CANADA

N EHA offers wide-ranging opportunities for professional growth and the exchange of valuable information on the international level through its longtime Sabbatical Exchange Program. The sabbatical may be taken in England, in cooperation with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), or in Canada, in cooperation with the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI). The sabbatical lasts from two to four weeks, as determined by the recipient. The exchange ambassador will receive up to \$4,000 as a stipend, depending on the length of the sabbatical, and up to \$1,000 for roundtrip transportation.

The application deadline is **March 1, 2012**. Winners will be announced at the Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition in San Diego, California, in June 2012. The sabbatical must be completed between August 1, 2012, and June 1, 2013.

For more information, contact Terry Osner at tosner@neha.org.

To access the online application, visit www.neha.org/about/awardinfo.html.