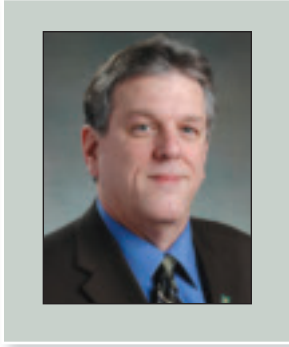


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Keith L. Krinn,
RS, MA, DAAS, CPHA

NEHA's International Perspective

I had the opportunity in early September to travel to Canada with NEHA's Executive Director Nelson Fabian and former NEHA President Dick Pantages to represent NEHA at the 11th World Congress of the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH). The federation works to disseminate knowledge concerning environmental health and promote cooperation between nations where environmental health issues are trans-boundary. It promotes the interchange of people working in the environmental health profession. The federation seeks to provide means of exchanging information and experience on environmental health, to hold bi-annual meetings (congresses) to discuss subjects relevant to environmental health science and administration, to represent the interests of environmental national governments and international organizations, and to promote field studies of environmental health control. The federation is an organization whose full members are national associations like NEHA representing the interests of environmental health professionals throughout the world.

That event was held in Vancouver in conjunction with the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors' 76th Annual Educational Conference. Vancouver is a world-class multicultural city located between the majestic coastal mountains and the Pacific Ocean. I was certainly impressed by its beauty and its culture of sustainability. For two days before the joint conference began, IFEH held its council meeting; NEHA holds three seats on that council. The council is the governing body of IFEH.

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Now quite frankly, NEHA has not been exactly a robust player in IFEH for a number of years even though NEHA is the second-largest member in the federation based on membership numbers. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health—the British NEHA—is actually twice the size of our membership with some 10,000 members. That's primarily because it's also the national credentialing entity, so membership is required to practice the scope of environmental health in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

NEHA had several reasons for staying on the sidelines of the international organization. IFEH's World Congress, held every other year, is usually in some faraway place in the world, such as Singapore or Australia. Therefore travel expenses for a NEHA delegation are considerable. In fact, NEHA was last at a council meeting when the World

Congress was held in San Diego in 2002; our California affiliate was actually the host of the event. Additionally, in the off-years the congress is not held, the council still meets, again overseas. In a nutshell, the prevailing thought from a consensus of our board of directors at the time was that the dividend for participating was not commensurate with the expense. Since the 11th World Congress was being held in Vancouver, the decision was made to attend and to feel out our place in the world body of environmental health.

For the first day of the council meeting, Nelson and I said little, as we were mostly in a reconnaissance mode. Since NEHA had been out of IFEH for so long, we didn't want to inject ourselves too deeply into discussions with people the NEHA leadership hadn't worked with for years. We wanted to get a feel of how things worked on this governing body. On the second day we jumped into the discussions with both feet and Nelson had a primary role in crafting a revision to the federation's strategic plan. The council also discussed and developed positions on a number of important environmental health-related global issues.

By and large, we both recognized the potential presented with our involvement in IFEH. Over the last couple of years, we in NEHA have been concerned with our own situation and the effect of the Great Recession. The economic downturn has played out on the world stage as well and has had similar repercussions all over the globe. What's more, it was very powerful to see how our profession is adapting to change in both developed and developing

nations. IFEH is really the only body capable of monitoring and reporting on that change. The international environmental health community traditionally hasn't had a voice, and in its young life of just over 20 years, the federation shows the promise to be that voice. We are now fully aware of international environmental health issues such as global climate change, the global food distribution system, sustainability, peak oil, and the zoonotic emergence of pathogens implicated in human disease. No one nation can adequately address these issues. IFEH provides a forum for the "NEHAs" of the world to come together to develop science-based positions and then communicate those positions to their respective governments.

I must admit, in spite of my 35-year career in this profession that has included stints of leadership with two of our affiliates, I had never even heard of the International Federation of Environmental Health before I became a national officer with NEHA. After seeing it up close including both the inner workings of the council and its first-rate educational conference that ensued over the following five days, however, I am totally convinced NEHA should be actively engaged in this international body. Given the gravity of current global environmental health problems, not least of which is global climate change, we can't stay away from the international forum any longer. I also believe a great benefit exists for our membership to be engaged in thinking about global environmental health. Through our national professional organization, our nation could lead efforts to build the environmental health infrastructure in the developing world.

In Vancouver I was able to attend presentations about international environmental health issues. A number of these issues are quite disturbing to say the least. When one considers that more than 6,000 children around the world die each and every day from diarrheal dehydration caused from waterborne disease, it's really hard to conceptualize it. That's almost 2.2 million children who die every year just because they do not have access to clean water. Additionally, over a billion human beings—20% of the global population—do not have access to clean drinking water, and 2.6 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities.

Those alarming figures certainly reflect that particular global environmental health issue, but here's another issue with stagger-



NEHA President Keith Krinn with his British counterparts of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health at the 11th World Congress of IFEH in Vancouver.

ing statistics. Every 30 seconds a child in sub-Saharan Africa dies of malaria—mosquito-borne malaria. That's 3,000 more children added to the 6,000 dying from waterborne disease in just one day. This is repeated every day. An estimated 20% of the world's population—in the world's poorest countries—is at risk of contracting malaria. Malaria causes more than 300 million cases and kills at least one million people worldwide every year.

By becoming more engaged in the global environmental health community and becoming familiar with those huge global issues, we can help drive organized outcomes in ways that increase the capacity of environmental health infrastructures in those parts of the world and at the same time demonstrate to our constituents here in North America the fundamental importance of environmental health here and abroad. It's altogether fitting that we take our place among our environmental health colleagues from around the world and commit to a sustained and natural leadership role. I also want to let our membership know that in recognition of NEHAs' revitalized stakeholder role in the international perspective, the International Technical Section has been reestablished and we will endeavor to bring more international content to our membership.



For more information about IFEH and the 11th World Congress, visit their well-maintained Web site at www.ifeh.org and familiarize yourself with the environmental health global issues that I just barely scratched the surface about. Read IFEH's position on climate change, for starters. Click on the October newsletter for more detailed information about the presentations delivered at the Congress.



Past NEHA President Dick Pantages and NEHA President Keith Krinn with former NEHA President Diane Evans upon her receiving the Eric Foskett Award, IFEH's highest honor.

At the banquet on the last evening of the conference, an event occurred that should make all NEHA members very proud. Diane L. Evans, NEHA president in 1994–95 and former president of IFEH, was awarded the Eric Foskett Award, IFEH's highest honor, for her notable contribution to the work of the federation. The Eric Foskett Award is named for the founder of the federation and is presented at IFEH World Congresses. Congratulations, Diane!

In closing my fifth presidential column, I'd like to mention just four more quick items.

The March deadline for submittals for the 2011 Samuel J. Crumbine Award is fast approaching. The Crumbine Award is a prestigious national award given annually to local environmental health jurisdictions who demonstrate excellence and continual improvement in a comprehensive food protection program. The purpose of the award, of which NEHA is one of 10 sponsors, is to encourage improvement and stimulate public interest in

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President's Message

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food service sanitation. Only local or tribal environmental health jurisdictions with the responsibility for food protection in the U.S. and Canada are eligible to apply for the award. I urge local jurisdictions who believe they have a stellar program in food protection and wish to share their success in demonstrating improvement over time to put together a submittal. More on the award can be seen at www.fpi.org/EXPAGES/crumbine.asp.

Also with a March deadline for submissions is NEHA's highest individual honor, the Walter S. Mangold Award. Walter S. Mangold was a sanitarian in California at a time when environmental health was just developing into a profession in the U.S., with its own educational requirements and performance standards. Mangold also was instrumental in the founding of NEHA's predecessor, the National Association of Sanitarians, in California. The Mangold Award was established in 1955, and now, over 50 years later, the award continues to recognize outstanding contributions to the preservation of the environment by the environmental health professional. Nominations for the award can be made by an affiliate or by five NEHA members. If you have an associate who you feel is deserving of this high honor, kindly think about submitting his/her name for consideration.

The third March deadline I want to mention is for NEHA's Sabbatical Exchange Program. NEHA is proud to present an opportunity for one member to spend two-to-four-week sabbaticals in either England or Canada observing, questioning, and sharing environmental health practices and information. The sabbatical is administered by NEHA, Britain's Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, and the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors. One award is given annually for either England or Canada. For a four-week sabbatical, the stipend is \$4,000, plus round trip airfare up to \$1,000. The criteria and application process may be viewed on the NEHA Web site by clicking on "Awards and Sabbaticals."

Finally, I want to take this opportunity as December sets in to express to all of the NEHA membership my heartfelt wishes for a joyous holiday season and especially a safe, prosperous, and successful New Year!



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