

## NEHA NEWS

**NEHA Membership Vote**

By Jonna Ashley ([jashley@neha.org](mailto:jashley@neha.org))

NEHA will be holding a special election this fall asking all eligible voting members to approve amendments to the membership sections of NEHA's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Specifically, we are asking to reduce the number of membership categories from nine (active/individual, sustaining, institutional, life, student, emeritus, international, and subscribing) to five (professional, emerging professional, retired professional, international, and life), and to remove barriers in the membership criteria.

As a current member, you will find that the new membership categories are comprehensive and allow you to be flexible in choosing the category that best fits your career from year to year. Students and new professionals would be incentivized by a membership category designed to meet their needs. We propose to sunset the Sustaining and Educational membership categories. At the same time, we are committed to aligning our membership program with our original mission to advance the environmental health professional. NEHA will continue to partner with colleges and universities to advance our shared goal of educating and engaging the next generation of environmental health professionals. NEHA will work with our sponsors and exhibitors to ensure that we are offering high quality options for advertising and exhibiting with us.

Our long-term aim is for NEHA to be the most essential and influential environmental health professional association in the world. To achieve that, our membership categories should reflect the needs of our constituents and provide membership categories that reflect today's career paths. In the process, we hope to attract new members and retain current members so that we can speak with a louder and more effective voice on behalf of environmental health professionals.

**Increasing Innovation in Environmental Health**

By Solly Poprish ([spoprish@neha.org](mailto:spoprish@neha.org))



Phone, desktop, and website applications (apps) have the power to inform, prevent harm, and educate. By integrating technology and environmental health, we can create a culture of health that uses public data to create

innovative tools and resources for communities.

By way of an app challenge, teams of developers and creatives competed to build apps on various environmental health topics. For example, apps might function to share symptom data, create community-around alternative transportation, educate users on health risks—the opportunities are endless.

The 2017 Innovating for Environmental Health App Challenge, sponsored by Hedgerow Software, was launched in May 2017. NEHA participated in three weekend-long, in-person events as a part of AngelHack's Global Hackathon Series where teams competed to build community-focused apps.

The first event was held in Los Angeles, California, on May 13–14. The second event was held in Detroit, Michigan, on May 19–21. And the final event was held in Silicon Valley, California, on July 29–30. NEHA attended these events to advocate for environmental health and to inspire and guide teams to create apps to help solve water quality issues and better utilize environmental health data. At the end of each event, NEHA selected a winning team and awarded each team a monetary prize and a stipend to attend NEHA's Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition.

At the Los Angeles event, there were over 100 participants and five teams that pitched unique apps to NEHA that were aimed at solving water quality issues. Los Angeles County Department of Environmental Health staff also attended to provide support and a local environmental health perspective. The weekend's winner was the AquaData team, which created a reporting app that enables users to report location-based data such as water leakage from pipes and spills. The data are then translated into a reporting format and sent directly to relevant agencies to address the issues faster.

The Detroit event was larger in size, with over 200 participants, and was led by Wayne State University. The winning team that weekend was TapCheck. They utilized publicly available U.S. Environmental Protection Agency water system data to create an app that instantly provides drinking water quality information based on geographic location and the corresponding municipal water system.



NEHA's Solly Poprish (third from left) poses with the Los Angeles and Detroit 2017 Innovating for Environmental Health App Challenge winners at the 2017 AEC. Photo courtesy of Casey Stormes, *Fresh Look Video*.

The Los Angeles and Detroit winners attended the 2017 AEC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, this July and presented their apps during an education session to an audience of over 50 attendees. When audience members were asked to raise their hands if they could imagine implementing these apps in their own communities, almost every hand went up. In addition to presenting, the teams received the Innovative App Award at the AEC Awards Ceremony [see photo above]. AquaData team member Herminio Garcia expressed that he "had a great experience learning about

# NEHA NEWS

all the ins and outs of environmental health, as well as interacting with all of the attendees at the conference.”

NEHA participated in the final event of the summer in Silicon Valley, California, in July. The weekend was the largest event of the series with over 300 attendees. Over 10 apps were pitched to NEHA, each with the mission of better utilizing environmental health data. The winning team created Safe California, a platform and model for easily sharing environmental health data to educate and empower residents. The weekend's winners will attend the NEHA 2018 AEC in Anaheim, California.

The 2017 Innovating for Environmental Health App Challenge series was an exciting and collaborative opportunity. It introduced developers to the environmental health community and showed the tangible potential of bringing these two areas together. If you have ideas in regard to this initiative or would like to learn more, please contact Christl Tate (ctate@neha.org) or visit [www.neha.org/eh-topics/health-tracking-0/innovating-eh](http://www.neha.org/eh-topics/health-tracking-0/innovating-eh). 🐼



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### DirectTalk

*continued from page 66*

role for our industry. Who can we cooperate with to learn more about the needs of women in the workplace? What implications are there for the ways and means of executing our field work? What workplace policies should NEHA employ to accommodate our association workforce, which is, by the way, almost 70% female?

Our AEC is a great place to explore how to engage in cooperation and improvisation. This commitment will be on full display at the 2018 AEC in Anaheim, California. The opening panel session will highlight our state environmental health colleagues represented by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO). The

panel will characterize the interdependence of local practitioners with state agencies and describe how we can more effectively work with our state counterparts. We have also offered ASTHO meeting space to encourage them to convene their annual environmental health meeting at our AEC host hotel. We can accomplish a lot together with ASTHO, which will require a healthy dose of improvisation and cooperation.

We have also invited the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the Association of Public Health Laboratories to hold sessions at the 2018 AEC that will examine cross-disciplinary issues such as data, surveillance, and emerging diagnostic technologies. The private sector will also be well represented as a globally-recognized leader in food safety has already agreed to provide the

opening keynote address. Bridging and bonding. Cooperating and improvising.

I close by observing that the speaker who defaulted on his commitment to speak at the 2017 AEC inadvertently did us a favor. His decision led to us embarking on a discovery that changed our perception of our professional role in opioid addiction. We collaborated with new talent. We improvised. We took risks. We emerged better off than when we started. While there are limits to this approach, I now have a refreshed perspective for the road ahead. 🐼

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