

## NEHA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT


**CAPT Jill M. Shugart,  
MSPH, REHS, CP-FS, DAAS**

*Agency for Toxic Substances  
and Disease Registry*

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is shining a spotlight on the people within our membership through this new feature in the *Journal*. This month we are pleased to introduce you to CAPT Jill Shugart, the associate director for emergency management within the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in Atlanta, Georgia.

CAPT Shugart attended Ohio University and earned a bachelor of science in environmental health. She attended the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University and earned a master of science in public health. She is a member of the U.S. Public Health Service and holds the rank of captain. She is also a diplomate and board member of the American Academy of Sanitarians. She has been in the environmental health profession for 23 years.

In her current position, CAPT Shugart oversees a team that coordinates preparedness, response, and recovery activities related to environmental health during emergencies for the National Center for Environmental Health and ATSDR within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She has been in this position for 16 months.

**Why did you join NEHA and what aspects of membership have you found most valuable to your career?**

I joined NEHA in 1999 at the recommendation of my environmental health student advisor. I have been a member ever since. I think it is important to support organizations that promote and support your chosen profession—NEHA has provided a strong foundation for environmental health professionals over the last several decades.

**Why did you choose the environmental health field?**

I loved the outdoor environment and learned about the environmental health program while touring Ohio University as a prospective freshman. I quickly declared environmental health as a major after realizing I could study both human health and the environment.

**If you weren't an environmental health professional, what other profession would you like to work in?**

I have dreams of becoming a yoga instructor to improve my overall well-being. I have learned that I cannot lead others if I am not taking care of myself.

**Please describe any hobbies, activities, or causes you are passionate about.**

I love cooking and baking. I especially love making seasonal soups with my immersion blender, which is my favorite kitchen tool. I also enjoy trying new seasonal desserts that will satisfy my sweet tooth!

**What is your favorite vacation spot and why?**

My favorite vacation was a 2-week road trip through Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. It was beautiful and each part of the park offered something different. I also loved the quiet at night and the lack of cell service!

**What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

In 2018, I gave birth to my daughter and made the rank of captain in the U.S. Public Health Service as an environmental health officer. My personal and professional goals came together and I am so grateful!

**Who do you look up to and why?**

One of my fondest mentors was RADM John Babb from the U.S. Public Health Service (retired). I looked up to him because he always believed in me and pushed my boundaries as a senior leader. He also would never let me pay for lunch no matter how hard I tried!

**Is there a resource that you use frequently for your work (e.g., website, book, report, organization) that you would recommend to other environmental health professionals?**

The environmental health reference I recommend the most to others is *Environmental Engineering and Sanitation* by Joseph A. Salvato—whatever edition you can find. I recommend, however, trying to be a continuous learner throughout your career and seeking as many different resources as you can from a variety of sources on topics you might not be as familiar with, including new emerging threats.

**What was the best professional advice given to you?**

Get field experience. I was given this advice early on in my career and I am so grateful! It is one thing to study environmental health in books and webinars, but until you really practice it in the field, you will not have the knowledge, skills, or abilities to solve the complex environmental public health problems we are all facing today.

We thank CAPT Jill Shugart for sharing with us! 🌸