

## Aqualia (Shauna) Nelson, B.S., M.A., REHS/RS

2021 DR. BAILUS WALKER, JR. DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARENESS AWARD RECIPIENT



### [The National Environmental Health Association](#)

(NEHA) is pleased to announce that Aqualia (Shauna) Nelson is the recipient of the 2021 Dr. Bailus Walker, Jr. Diversity & Inclusion Awareness Award. NEHA introduced the Walker Diversity Award in 2020 and Ms. Nelson is the first recipient. Going forward, the award will be given annually to recognize an individual or group that has made significant achievements in the development or enhancement of a more culturally diverse, inclusive, and competent environment. Shauna serves as a Consumer

Safety Officer for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) where she conducts activities to regulate the manufacture, distribution, and marketing of tobacco products to enforce regulations and ultimately support proposed product standards, to reduce the health burden of tobacco use, curb deaths, and address health disparities amongst those disproportionately affected such as youth, minorities, low-income populations, and LGBTQ+ individuals. As a Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS), Shauna works to cultivate healthier relationships between humans and the environment by providing direction on issues impacting air quality and pollution, healthy homes, water, and food safety, hazardous waste management, and disposal, and Environmental Justice.

Throughout her career, Shauna has been an avid champion for promoting environmental stewardship to create healthy platforms inclusive to all. From conducting investigations into environmental and public health hazards and natural disasters in diverse communities to serving on environmental and public health task forces addressing ways of lessening health disparities in under-resourced or minority communities, Shauna continuously advocates for positive change. She participates in diversity and inclusion (D&I) nationwide career events targeting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics diverse groups, veterans, and people with disabilities. Additionally, Shauna assists in advancing the FDA's D&I program by drafting strategic assessment messaging to promote participation and encourage D&I throughout the workplace to ensure differences are embraced, inclusive culture is supported, and to provide a space where everyone can thrive.

Shauna's commitment to D&I extends beyond her work-life and stretches into the community she serves. She lends her time being an ally for underrepresented groups, advocating to amplify marginalized voices on issues impacting their livelihood. Shauna has served as a Photographer taking action shoots to capture event activities at the AccessAbility Fest and as a Discussion Moderator for the Conversation 360°, facilitating meaningful conversations between disabled residents and the City of San Antonio (COSA) representatives.

Shauna's work at COSA overseeing HUD-funded projects exemplifies her resounding dedication to causes benefiting underserved communities by ensuring access to programs such as Meals on Wheels and Habitat for Humanity and promoting opportunities that build stronger and more resilient communities, provide decent housing, suitable living environments, and economic expansion for low and moderate-income persons. Furthering her commitment to serve, Shauna has completed the University of South Florida's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace Certificate Program.

Shauna's dedication to public service is embodied through a level of care and genuine empathy for others which is showcased in all she does. Shauna believes the best work relationships are reflective of people from diverse backgrounds, value differences, support mutual respect, embrace inclusivity, and provide opportunities for all to thrive to reach their maximum potential. Roy Kroeger, REHS, the awards selection committee chair, noted, "Shauna is well respected by her peers in providing insights and recommendations to improve diversity and inclusion." The NEHA staff, board, and award selection committee are proud to award Ms. Nelson with the first annual Dr. Bailus Walker, Jr. Diversity & Inclusion Awareness Award.

#### **About the National Environmental Health Association**

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is a professional society with more than 6,500 members. NEHA's mission, "to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce" is fulfilled in the products and services offered by NEHA to advance the environmental health professional through credentialing, training, education, networking, professional development, and policy. Learn more at [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org).

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