
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

Over 800 environmental health professionals convened at NEHA’s 81st Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition to deliberate, learn, and exchange ideas and experiences regarding the urgent issues facing environmental health both locally and nationally. The picturesque Grand River served as the backdrop to five days of workshops, networking, and over 200 educational sessions covering noteworthy, and sometimes controversial, topics such as marijuana edibles, restaurant grading, body art, and environmental justice.

During the Opening Session, Representative Brenda Lawrence (D-Michigan) commenced the AEC by urging everyone to “stay woke” on environmental health legislative issues and delivered an inspiring keynote address that had attendees talking throughout the conference. Representative Lawrence’s address was a rare opportunity to hear a government official speak boldly and knowledgeably on the topics that matter most to environmental health professionals, which demonstrates NEHA’s ongoing commitment to being the national voice for environmental health advocacy.

National and local issues were not the only topics covered during the 2017 AEC. NEHA pushed the boundaries of this year’s theme by welcoming attendees and presenters from across the globe. A global leadership panel discussion was held among environmental health association directors from Australia, Canada, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. to further international connections and facilitate discussions on challenges and insights from around the world.

As always, some of the most important connections at the AEC were made over food and drinks with old friends and new colleagues. There was no shortage of socializing and community in Grand Rapids! Almost 600 environmental health professionals showed up at the Brews, Blues, & BBQ event to share stories and laughs, and sample a bit of the local flavor in “Beer City.”

We look forward to another year of connecting, learning, and having fun at the 2018 AEC being held June 25–28 in Anaheim, California. Check out the 2018 AEC promo on page 51. We hope to see you there!
Representative Brenda Lawrence Claims Environmental Health Workforce Critical to Environmental Justice in 2017 AEC Keynote Address

Representative Brenda Lawrence (D-Michigan) opened the 2017 AEC with a powerful and passionate keynote address on the role of the environmental health workforce in environmental justice. She began by praising the work of environmental health professionals, stating that the “environmental health workforce is critical and is what oils the wheels of this great country…the impact is honorable and based on helping a human being.”

Representative Lawrence is also supporting the environmental health workforce by sponsoring H.R. 1909—the Environmental Health Workforce Act of 2017—that addresses the need for education and training for environmental health professionals. “Every American deserves the right to safe drinking water, clean air to breathe, and a healthy community to raise their children,” Lawrence said. She encouraged 2017 AEC attendees to “continue to do what you are doing” and to use the AEC as a time for learning.

Opening Session: Environmental Justice Panel Discussion

Continuing with the topic of environmental justice, Dr. Renée Branch Canady, chief executive officer of the Michigan Public Health Institute, led a panel discussion, “Aiming for Equity.”

Joining Dr. Canady was Dr. Pamela Pugh, public health advisor for the City of Flint; Dr. Marcus Cheatham, health officer for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department; and Ponsella Hardaway, executive director of Detroit’s Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES) nonprofit organization.

The thought-provoking discussion centered on issues such as water and lead contamination in Flint, water shut offs in Detroit, and the polybrominated biphenyls event in mid-Michigan. The panel spoke of the need to nationally raise key issues in critical health threats.
Over 800 AEC attendees participated in approximately 200 educational sessions, learning labs, workshops, and networking events. Topics ranged from marijuana edibles and the restaurant grading debate to a live tattoo demonstration and body art trends for the 21st century.

It was standing room only with more than 130 attendees engaged in the “Marijuana Edibles: Are They Safe? Challenges and Successes of Our States” panel discussion. Attendees heard from state and local regulatory agencies, legal and laboratory testing experts, and edible industry partners who discussed issues crucial to the safety of the growing process, product development for recreational and medical distribution facilities, legal challenges, and enforcement. The discussion also included how food safety is ensured and the challenges and successes related to dosage monitoring, pathogen testing, labeling and packaging controls, hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) plans, and training.

To gain a global environmental health perspective, a panel of environmental health presidents and directors from Australia, Canada, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. assembled to discuss emerging issues and topics facing their countries during “Global Leadership: Executive Directors Weigh-In.”

In keeping with emerging issues, a late breaking session to address the opioid addiction crisis was added to the agenda with a packed room of interested attendees.

With so many topics covered in areas such as informatics, water, food safety, preparedness, climate and health, and more, the most difficult decision to make for attendees was which tracks and sessions to attend. NEHA thanks all the presenters, moderators, and attendees who made these 200 sessions possible and successful.

Closing Session

Bringing the conference to a close was an incredible panel discussion on sustainability. “Sustainability: What Does Green Mean for Health Officials” was moderated by Josh Jacobs, technical information and public affairs manager for UL. Joining the panel was Walker Smith, director of global affairs and policy at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Gabe Wing, director of safety and sustainability for Herman Miller; and Eric DeLong, deputy city manager for Grand Rapids.

Each panelist gave a presentation on what sustainability means to their specific area and provided examples of projects in which they are involved. They closed the session with a discussion on how sustainability is an integral part of building, procurement, governance, and business, and the need for all to work together.
“I learned various ways to better educate myself and my department. Great information (and support) from peers!”

– AEC attendee

Preconference Courses and Workshops

The 2017 AEC also included a variety of pre-conference offerings that were held from July 8–10.

As in the past, credential review courses and exams were offered for those interested in earning a NEHA credential. A two-day review course for NEHA’s Certified Professional–Food Safety credential was offered and attendees had the opportunity to take the credential exam after the course. New this year, NEHA offered an online review course for the Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) credential prior to the AEC. As part of the online course, a four-hour review course was held at the AEC for those that participated in the online portion of the course. The REHS/RS credential exam was then held afterwards.

Several new preconference workshops were offered this year. Survival Skills for Environmental Health Leaders was developed to meet the multiple training needs of newly appointed and seasoned environmental health officials. The interactive workshop focused on management versus leadership and successful strategies and best practices for leaders. Another new offering was the Affiliate Leadership Workshop. This workshop was specifically designed to share information and tools to assist environmental health association leaders in the management of their organizations. The workshop covered topics on conference planning, board responsibilities, financial management and budgeting, strategic planning, successful fundraising, and membership engagement.

Finally, NEHA offered a workshop on private well water—Private Well Outreach and Assessment of Environmental Health Professionals. This workshop covered best practices for well owner outreach, online resources, and the use of a new assessment tool for the evaluation of private well vulnerability to contamination.

Poster Sessions
The 2017 AEC filled the news wires while in Grand Rapids. AEC attendees and members made appearances on several news outlets.

- NEHA members were featured on Fox News 17 discussing the purpose of the conference, topics covered, and what happens behind the scenes. [www.fox17online.com/2017/07/10/national-environmental-health-association](http://www.fox17online.com/2017/07/10/national-environmental-health-association)

- Michigan Representative Brenda Lawrence spoke to local NPR News and addressed how the profession is working to prevent another Flint water crisis. [www.wgvunews.org/post/michigan-rep-brenda-lawrence-how-prevent-next-flint-water-crisis](http://www.wgvunews.org/post/michigan-rep-brenda-lawrence-how-prevent-next-flint-water-crisis)

- NEHA President-Elect Adam London and NEHA Director of Government Affairs Joanne Zurcher were interviewed on the WGVU Morning Show where they discussed the importance of the environmental health profession. [www.wgvunews.org/post/environmental-health](http://www.wgvunews.org/post/environmental-health)


AEC IS THE TALK OF THE TOWN

#NEHAaec2017 and #EHmatters Twitter Posts

**CDC EPHTracking @CDC_EPHTracking**
Attending conferences are a great way to share & learn about best practices. Our grantees presented at #NEHAaec2017 this year! #TrackingChat

**Pam Protzel Berman @Bermans3Pam**
Interesting session on using innovation to improve environmental health #NEHAaec2017

**Vanessa Lamers @vlamers**
EPA is tackling marine litter, which bioaccumulates up food chain (you don’t want to eat plastic, do u?) #NEHAaec2017

**Enviro-Decon @EnviroDecon**
We’re excited to be attending the #NEHAaec2017 this week. Thanks for having us @nehaorg! Come chat with us at our booth! #AirQuality

**Charles @charlb1**
@RepLawrence What a speech! #NEHAaec2017 #StayWoke

**Joanne Zurcher @JoanneZurcher1**
Environmental Health is Public Health. No.1 Health Crisis Opioid Addiction being discussed #NEHAaec2017 #EHmatters

AEC Social Media and Conference App Winners

New this year, we encouraged attendees to share their conference photos and experiences via social media using #NEHAaec2017 and #EHmatters. Social media winners were awarded a $25 Amazon gift card. Below is a list of this year’s winners.

- Janie Cambron (@Jne310): Received 25+ favorite tweets for “#EHmatters in #grandrapids with 35% tree canopy & awesome local partnerships! Great opening remarks by the @mayorbliss #NEHAaec2017”

- Patricia Facquet (@PatriciaFacquet): Received 20+ favorite tweets for “#StayWoke get informed. Environmental Justice, Social Justice. Stand up say NO. U.S. Great Democracy @AdelphiUtweets #NEHAaec2017 #EHMatters”

- Bryan Brooks (@BryanWBrooks): Received 10+ favorite tweets for “Each year 1 in 6 Americans get foodborne illness; 50% associated with restaurants. @nehaorg #FoodSafetyMatters @CDCEnvironment #NEHAaec2017”

Our ever-popular Connect4 App Gaming Challenge was offered again at the 2017 AEC. Attendees competed for prizes and bragging rights by attending and scanning QR codes for events and sessions, as well as scanning QR codes for exhibitors and attendees. Connect4 App Gaming Challenge winners were placed in a drawing (if scoring 150+ points) and were awarded a $50 Amazon gift card. Below is a list of this year’s winners.

- Erica Craddock, Food Safety Auditor, Advanced Fresh Concepts Franchise Corp.
- Clint Pinion, Assistant Professor, Eastern Kentucky University
- Ericka Sanders, Sanitarian II, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

NEHA’s Lex was ready for the Connect4 App action with his name badge and QR code!
FUN WAS HAD BY ALL AT THE SPECIAL EVENTS HELD AT THE 2017 AEC!

UL Event
This special event held at the Grand Rapids Public Museum had something for everyone! Attendees were able to munch on appetizers and enjoy a cold drink while enjoying all the site had to offer—an elegant galleria with dance floor, the “Streets of Old Grand Rapids,” a carousel, free planetarium shows, and various exhibits.

Brews, Blues, & BBQ
While Mother Nature didn’t cooperate and the event was moved indoors, people still “caught” the excitement and enjoyed some good food and music with friends!

Sponsors, Partners, and Contributors
We appreciate the following sponsors and organizations that helped make this conference possible!

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Sweeps Software, Inc.

Special Thanks
Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs
NEHA Endowment Fund Donators (see page 7)
NEHA’s Technical Advisors
Uniformed Services Environmental Health Association
The 2017 AEC Exhibition was packed with information, new products, and invaluable services to help attendees and their organizations improve their environmental health programs and operations. The Exhibition kicked off Monday night with nearly 700 people at the Exhibition Grand Opening & Party. The new Student Career Center located in the Exhibition provided students the opportunity to obtain new skills, speak with employers, and receive feedback on their résumés. Everyone that attended the evening’s event enjoyed food and fun, in addition to meeting new friends, catching up with old friends, and taking advantage of the opportunity to do business. The Exhibition also gave attendees the chance to view over 40 posters that represented a broad spectrum of environmental health issues and engage with presenters in a lively interactive format.
AWARDS & HONORS

Numerous notable individuals and organizations were recognized at the AEC. For more information about NEHA’s awards, please visit www.neha.org/about-neha/awards.

**Accela/NEHA 2017 AEC Scholarships**
This year, Accela Environmental Health and NEHA partnered to award nine scholarships to professionals to attend the 2017 AEC.
Debra Abramson
LaToya Backus
Ryan Bailey
Karen Brown
Wade Dishaw
Jeremy Maxson
Jason Ravenscroft
Shannyn Sanger
Chris Westover

**AEHAP Student Research Competition**
The Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs (AEHAP) and the Environmental Health Services Branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Environmental Health present this award to students who have conducted outstanding research benefitting the field of environmental health.
Justin Bunn, East Carolina University
Amos Kosgey, Eastern Kentucky University
Ambrose K. Maritim, Eastern Kentucky University
Blake Rushing, East Carolina University

**Davis Calvin Wagner Sanitarian Award**
This award represents the highest honor the American Academy of Sanitarians bestows upon its diplomates.
CAPT John Sarisky

**Dr. R. Neil Lowry Grant**
This award, given by the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals, honors and recognizes public health officials who have made outstanding contributions to advance the public’s healthy and safe use of recreational water.
Quechan Parks & Recreation

**HUD Secretary’s Award for Healthy Homes**
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in partnership with NEHA, give this award to recognize excellence in making indoor environments healthier through healthy homes research, education, and program delivery, especially in diverse, low-to-moderate income communities.
*Public Housing:* Denver Housing Authority (Denver, CO)
*Cross Program Coordination:* Vermont Weatherization One Touch Program (VT)
*Policy Innovation:* Tribal Healthy Homes Network (WA)
*Research Innovation:* Rutgers University, Urban Entomology Lab (New Brunswick, NJ)

**Innovating for Environmental Health App Challenge Award**
By way of an app challenge, teams of developers and creatives competed to build apps that solve environmental health issues. Below are the winning teams from the hackathons in Los Angeles and Detroit.
* AquaData Team:* Herminio Garcia and Sarah Han
*TapCheck Team:* Zachary Collins, Martese Goosby, and Kholob Kognata

**Jack B. Hatlen Distinguished Service Award**
Presented by AEHAP, this award is given to an individual who has demonstrated dedication to the profession through mentorship, education, and promotion.
Carolyn Hester Harvey

**NEHA Affiliate Certificates of Merit**
Awarded to affiliate members and teams who made exemplary contributions to the profession. Each affiliate selects winners based upon its own criteria for recognition.
*Individuals*
Paul Bilowus (Nat’l Capital Area)
Steven Diaz (MN)
Heather Gallant (MA)
James Hodina (IA)
Jennifer Kosak (MI)
Jerry McNamar (KS)
Welford Roberts (Uniformed Services)
Lucas Tafoya (NM)
Cody Talbott (WY)
Rep. Mike Tyron (IL)
Margaret Voyles (IN)

**Team**
FL—2016 FEHA Annual Education Meeting Planning Committee
IA—Iowa Environmental Health Association Legislative Committee
IN—IEHA 2016 Annual Fall Educational Conference Volunteers
ND—Onsite Sewage Treatment System Technical Review and Education Board
NM—2016 Southwest Regional FDA Conference and NMEHA Meeting Host

**NEHA Past Presidents Award**
Each year, NEHA’s Past Presidents Affiliate identifies a hero from the profession who not only accomplishes much on behalf of environmental health but also does a lot of work behind the scenes.
Scott Holmes

**NEHA Presidential Citations**
This special award is given to individuals who have made exemplary contributions to NEHA during the president’s term of office. President David Riggs presented three citations.
Henroy P. Scarlett
Stan Hazan
David Theno (posthumous award)

**NSF International Scholarship**
AEHAP, in partnership with NSF International, offers a paid internship project to students from National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council–accredited programs.
Jacob McGee, Eastern Kentucky University

**Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award**
This award is given annually to local environmental health jurisdictions that demonstrate unsurpassed achievement in providing outstanding food protection services to their communities. The purpose of the award is to encourage innovative programs and methods that reduce or eliminate the occurrence of foodborne illnesses, recognize the importance of food protection at the local level, and stimulate public interest in foodservice sanitation.
Boulder County Public Health (CO)
Kansas City Health Department (MO)
Walter S. Mangold Award

Robert W. Powitz, MPH, PhD, RS, DLAAS
NEHA presented the 2017 Walter S. Mangold Award, its premier honor, to Robert “Bob” W. Powitz. The Walter S. Mangold Award recognizes and honors individuals for outstanding contributions to the advancement of the environmental health professional. It is the highest honor that NEHA can bestow upon one of its members.

Dr. Powitz was selected for the Mangold Award because of his illustrious career and the respect he has earned among his peers and colleagues in the environmental health profession.

Michéle Samarya-Timm of the American Academy of Sanitarians, who nominated Dr. Powitz along with the New Jersey Environmental Health Association, praised him for the impact he has had on the evolution of environmental health. In her nomination letter she stated, “Dr. Robert W. Powitz has spent his career championing evidence-based practice in environmental health; all of his work is framed by a commitment to the sanitary profession and illustrates the opportunities for the professional outside of the traditional health department role. As his long and storied career illustrates, Dr. Powitz’s work has changed the classic meme of environmental health practice. He is the personification of a model sanitary.”

The Mangold Award is a highlight achievement for Dr. Powitz, who has already received several professional awards. Dr. Powitz received his first license as a sanitarian 50 years ago and throughout his career, he has demonstrated initiative, leadership, and dedication in the environmental health field. In 1984, he established R.W. Powitz & Associates, a professional corporation specializing in environmental public health and contamination control advisory services to industry, law firms, insurance companies, and government agencies. He is currently principal and forensic sanitarian for this corporation. He also serves as health director for the Town of Franklin, Connecticut.

Dr. Powitz is active in several environmental health organizations, an author of numerous articles and books, and a member of several boards and committees. He has spent his career working to elevate the practice of environmental health, and his involvement and achievements are impressive and extensive. Dr. Powitz’s peers continually highlight his passion for elevating the environmental health profession and innovation. He has immersed himself in the field and has risen to the top of his field.

To read more about Dr. Powitz’s career, please visit www.neha.org/about-neha/awards/walter-s-mangold-award.

Walter F. Snyder Environmental Health Award

CAPT Wendy Fanaselle, MS, RS, DAAS
NSF International and NEHA presented this prestigious award to CAPT Wendy Fanaselle in recognition of more than 30 years of significant and lasting impact to environmental health and public service. The Snyder Award honors NSF International’s cofounder and first executive director, Walter F. Snyder, who provided outstanding contributions to the advancement of environmental and public health.

“Wendy Fanaselle’s accomplishments reflect the principles expressed by Walter F. Snyder and the public health mission of NSF International,” says Kevan P. Lawlor, NSF International president and CEO. “A hallmark of CAPT Fanaselle’s career has been bringing people together to craft and implement practical and effective solutions to environmental health problems and creating new systems to ensure the sustainability of these solutions. These accomplishments make her a worthy recipient of the Walter F. Snyder Award.”

CAPT Fanaselle is a risk assessment project manager for the Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, where she is responsible for overseeing and developing major food safety risk assessments. In this role, she has led the development of a risk assessment on foodborne norovirus acquired from ill employees in retail food facilities. The assessment quantitatively evaluates the impact of different interventions in food establishments on reducing the risk of norovirus foodborne illness, provides a better understanding of the norovirus transmission pathway, and identifies compliance with removing symptomatic food employees as a priority in preventing norovirus foodborne illness.

To read more about CAPT Fanaselle’s career, please visit www.nsf.org/newsroom/wendy-fanaselle-earns-walter-f-snyder-environmental-health-award-from-nsf.