

## NEHA NEWS

**Call for Nominations**

By Angelica Ledezma ([aledezma@neha.org](mailto:aledezma@neha.org))

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is governed by a board of directors who oversee the affairs of the association. There will be four board positions up for election in 2022:

- Region 4 vice-president (represents Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; 3-year term);
- Region 6 vice-president (represents Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio; 3-year term);
- Region 9 vice-president (represents Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont; 3-year term); and
- second vice-president (national officer; 5-year term that progresses through the national offices and will serve as NEHA president in 2025–2026).

We seek diversity on the board in terms of gender, ethnicity, and a balance between regulatory officials, academia, and industry. Most importantly, we want people who will help us develop a new strategic vision, have experience managing diverse organizations, and can open doors for NEHA in building relationships with industry, academia, federal and state agencies, foundations, and other associations.

Requirements to serve on the board include:

- membership with NEHA (individual or life) for 3 consecutive years prior to assuming office on July 1, 2022;
- not simultaneously holding a voting position on the board of a NEHA affiliate;
- endorsement by at least five voting members of NEHA (from members residing in the region for regional vice-president candidates and from members residing in at least three different regions for second vice-president candidates); and
- willingness to commit the time necessary to actively serve on the board.

If you are interested in serving on the NEHA Board of Directors, please visit [www.neha.org/elections](http://www.neha.org/elections) for information on the nomination and election process. You can also contact NEHA Immediate Past-President Sandra Long, chairman of the NEHA Nominations Committee, at [ImmediatePastPresident@neha.org](mailto:ImmediatePastPresident@neha.org). The deadline to submit a nomination is December 1, 2021.

**NEHA Embarks on Rebranding Process**

As an association grows, welcomes new generations of members, and takes on increasingly more ambitious endeavors, its identity and brand should grow alongside those changes. With that purpose, NEHA has begun the important task of rebranding the association.

Branding is a term often used in industry to describe efforts to compete for market share through advertising, marketing, and use a recognizable logo with a distinctive design. While the environ-

mental health profession has not typically sought market share, we do desire to communicate effectively and consistently to enhance our professional community standing, recognition, respect, and support. Our communications, advocacy, and programs are not the brand, and neither is the logo. Branding is a marketing practice.

A brand conveys that something is different about us as an organization—differentiating values. Our values are compassionate leadership; integrity and accountability; technical expertise; and diversity, equity, and inclusion. In public health parlance, brand is equivalent to our image or our personality. Brand is what comes to mind when community members, elected officials, funders, partners, clients, policy makers, and other stakeholders think about us.

Our communities value environmental health but often do not connect this value with our profession. To successfully promote our profession it is essential that we be visible and valued by governments, funders, policy makers, private sector partners, and the community at large. Our aim is to be a valued, effective, and trusted voice of the profession.

NEHA has assembled a team of two board members, along with five staff members ranging from fresh hires to senior staff to bring the largest possible variety of background, experience, and perceptions to this project. The team is working under the guidance of The Bain Group, a rebranding firm with extensive experience in the science and strategy of rebranding. Committee members include Seth Arends, graphic designer; Jonna Ashley, membership manager; Gina Bare, associate director of Program and Partnership Development; Roy Kroeger, NEHA president; Sandra Long, NEHA immediate past-president; Jordan Strahle, marketing and communications manager; and Christl Tate, training operations and logistics manager of the Entrepreneurial Zone. Oversight support for the committee is provided by Kristie Denbrock, chief learning officer, and Dr. David Dyjack, executive director.

The rebranding process involves a deep examination by the committee of NEHA's history, current identity, strengths, weaknesses, competition, and membership composition. After auditing these important factors, the team will then look forward to the future goals of our organization and how we see members and their needs changing over time.

An important aspect of the rebranding process is identifying what makes NEHA unique and why our members value their relationship with our association. For some, NEHA membership is most valuable because it provides discounts and resources related to their credentials. For others, the value comes from NEHA events, predominantly the Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition. These are a few examples the rebranding team has identified as reasons for how our organization provides value to our members. While it is crucial we identify what currently makes NEHA a valuable asset, we must also recognize that NEHA is constantly gaining new generations of members and identify gaps, or areas of opportunity, to meet the ever-changing needs of our community.

Only after this work of introspection and identification of our goals can the exciting task of developing a new logo take place. Designing a logo does not simply consist of appealing shapes and deciding if we like blue more than green. We must look at the deep values that make up our organization and the persona we want to portray with our logo. For example, do we value innovation over tradition? Do we want to be seen as an association for everyone or a more exclusive institution that serves a more niche market? Are we fast moving and risk taking or methodical and structured? These are just a few examples and a brand will rarely fall to the extreme of any of these values. Identifying where NEHA falls in the spectrum of these principles will then drive the deliberate elements behind the development of our new logo. Each element of the logo will be thoughtfully designed to represent our unique identity in the market.

The NEHA rebranding team is currently working hard to be introspective, listen to the needs of our members, and be intentional about who we are and what we hope to be for our members. It is important to understand that no one organization can be all things to all people and we offer more value when we understand our identity and how that aligns with the needs of our members. We are confident that our new brand will reinvigorate our board of directors, staff, and membership, as well as paint a clearer picture of our future.

The rebranding team is currently in the process of discussing several new logo concepts and will decide on two options that will be presented to the NEHA Board of Directors in November. The board will have the final decision regarding which logo they feel best portrays our value and persona. The rebranding team expects to unveil the new NEHA logo in 2022.

## NEHA Staff Profiles

As part of tradition, NEHA features new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their 1-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know the NEHA staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to two NEHA staff members. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on pages 46 and 47.



### Gina Bare

I had the pleasure of joining NEHA in November 2020 as the associate director of Program and Partnership Development (PPD). As a long-time NEHA member, I have always admired the organization but it wasn't until I took on this role that I truly understood the extraordinary value NEHA brings to its members and the profession.

I have been in the medical and public health fields for over 25 years. Most recently I worked at Boulder County Public Health as

both a registered nurse and an environmental health professional. Stepping into my new shoes at NEHA gave me a chance to reflect on the work of my colleagues in environmental health who had been going nonstop since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to save lives and serve their communities. The dedication of my fellow environmental health colleagues at Boulder County, throughout Colorado, and across the nation has left me in awe.

We know that environmental health professionals are the second largest public health workforce behind nursing. The NEHA COVID-19 Rapid Needs Assessment conducted in 2020 highlighted the massive role environmental health professionals have played during this pandemic. From developing infection control plans, performing case investigations, and running vaccine clinics, environmental health professionals do it all. These professionals wear their invisible cloaks while they silently protect our food, water, air, and health of the public in general. They respond to hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and pandemics. They are and will be vital in moving the needle on climate change. What I really want people to know is that here at NEHA, we SEE YOU! We will work tirelessly to advocate for you and the profession. I couldn't be prouder to carry out NEHA's mission to "build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental workforce." I genuinely am passionate about the members we serve and the work we do.

As the associate director of PPD I get to work with an amazing team that secures funding and creates and disseminates educational and training resources to environmental health professionals. The department implements the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program; creates policy and position statements; leads member program committees; and creates, implements, and evaluates a variety of workforce development programs. I assist in the day-to-day management of the PPD team, including entry-level through career professional employees. Some other key functions of my position are assisting the director of PPD with grant writing and award management, as well as consistent reevaluation of project and budgetary management to meet expectations and support the goals of the PPD department.



### Christopher Walker

I joined NEHA in November 2020. It has been an absolute pleasure to work for an organization that is so passionate about what they do to support the environmental health workforce. Every day is a chance to make a positive impact in the field of environmental health. I am a senior program analyst at NEHA where my focus is primarily general environmental health and emergency preparedness in PPD. In this role I am able to engage in dialogue with stakeholders while working on different project and committee activities. I truly enjoy all aspects of environmental health and this role provides me the opportunity

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to share my passion in areas such as air pollution, body art, child-care, institutional facilities, onsite wastewater, recreational waters, and water quality, to name a few. I am an educator at heart and relish chances to teach and be a resource to others.

I have practiced as an environmental health specialist for over 16 years. I received my undergraduate degree in environmental health from East Carolina University (ECU)—go Pirates! I worked in local government as an environmental health specialist in North Carolina for over 10 years before going back to ECU where I graduated with a master of science in environmental health.

After graduation, I had the privilege of working for Whole Foods Market as a regional safety specialist and the Durham County Health Department as an environmental health program specialist/field supervisor. Though I loved what I was doing in North Carolina, my wife was offered the opportunity to practice law in the Washington, DC, metro area. It was not an easy decision to leave our family and friends to move to Maryland but we both believed that we were meant to be in the Washington, DC, area. Thankfully, I was still able to practice as an environmental health specialist where I worked at the Fairfax County Health Department in Virginia and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental

Protection in Maryland before choosing to join the NEHA office in Washington, DC.

I was born and raised in rural Rocky Mount, North Carolina. If you talk to me long enough, you may hear a southern accent. I am married to my college sweetheart and best friend of almost 23 years. We lived mostly in the Raleigh–Durham area in North Carolina. We have three wonderfully spoiled rotten children—two girls and one boy. My oldest daughter is a junior in college while my younger daughter is a freshman in high school. My son is our youngest child and he is in middle school. To say that they keep me busy is an understatement. When I am not working, I love to cook, sing, watch movies and sports, hit the gym, and travel. I am a comic nerd and have spent some late nights binge watching Marvel or DC films. Anything that causes me to smile or laugh is fair game.

Outside of NEHA I love to garden, read, and am an avid photographer. My two amazing teenagers are always teaching me new things about our world and myself. I love to travel, meet new people, and learn as much as I can. I never want to stop being curious. I am thrilled to be working at NEHA and look forward to working with you to improve environmental health programs nationally. 🐼



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