

▶ DIRECT FROM AAS

Students, Prospective and Novice Environmental Health Professionals: You Must Attend This Virtual Conference!



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Editor's Note: In an effort to provide environmental health professionals with relevant information and tools to further the profession, their careers, and themselves, the National Environmental Health Association has teamed up with the American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS) to publish two columns a year in the *Journal*. AAS is an organization that “elevates the standards, improves the practice, advances the professional proficiency, and promotes the highest levels of ethical conduct among professional sanitarians in every field of environmental health.” Membership with AAS is based upon meeting certain high standards and criteria, and AAS members represent a prestigious list of environmental health professionals from across the country.

Through the column, information from different AAS members who are subject-matter experts with knowledge and experience in a multitude of environmental health topics will be presented to the *Journal's* readership. This column strengthens the ties between both associations in the shared purposes of furthering and enhancing the environmental health profession.

Brian Collins is the chair of AAS, a past president of NEHA, former director of environmental health, and a registered environmental health specialist for over 30 years.

Sanitarians and environmental health professionals are expected to competently and scientifically anticipate, recognize, evaluate, prevent, and mitigate risks that pose threats to humans and the environment. As a student or a prospective or novice environmental health professional, it is important to learn and be aware of trends in population health, the environment, business, and technology related to the practice. Overarching these trends, and especially in the era of social distancing and COVID-19, it is critical to connect or reconnect with the practice of

environmental health and the people within the profession. The most efficient method by which professionals can optimize time, opportunity, learning, expense, and return on investment in achieving competence is through attendance at professional conferences.

The advent of virtual conferencing creates an efficient method for students, prospective professionals, novice professionals, and tenured professionals to optimize time, opportunity, learning, expense, and return on investment in achieving competencies. The American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS)

endorses the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) 2021 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition Three-Part Virtual Series as an ideal opportunity to learn, network, enhance professional competencies and create vertical career opportunity.

Virtual professional conferences offer:

- **Education:** Receive training, coaching, and mentoring from experts and industry professionals that are current and relevant. Professional continuing education units are a bonus!
 - **Relevance:** Hear about new ideas, methods, and technologies. Ask questions, seek feedback, share, contribute, and grow.
 - **Inspiration:** Learn and interact with celebrity environmental health professionals, experts, mentors, coaches, vendors, and cohorts. Enthusiasm and passion are contagious!
 - **Motivation:** Learn what others have done, or in some cases not done, that led to success or enabled them to avoid pitfalls. Meeting with high achievers makes one realize you have the same potential. It can be transformational!
 - **Exhibition:** Exhibitors introduce new technologies, products, software applications, and educational materials.
 - **\$\$\$\$:** Conference attendees are more likely than nonattendees to advance their careers and make more money. Enough said!
- The NEHA 2021 AEC Virtual Series will be held in three parts and is bound by the theme, “Together a Safer and Healthier Tomorrow.” Dates for the conference series are April 20–21, June 1–2, and July 14–15. Diplomates of AAS will participate in various live sessions with question and answer opportunities and

interactive polls; networking (individually and in forums), breakout sessions, and in the virtual exhibition. AAS is also working with NEHA to provide student sessions, coaching and mentoring opportunities, career advisement to novice environmental health professionals, and serve as ambassadors at the NEHA 2021 AEC Virtual Series. And finally, AAS will concurrently hold its second virtual Annual Business Meeting and General Membership Meeting on July 13.

Empirically, it used to be that people who have more knowledge command and acquire the most success and influence. AAS Dip-

lomates have learned that people with the greatest ability to *connect* knowledge and people acquire and command the most success and influence. By extension, this virtual conference provides students, prospective professionals, and novice professionals an interactive, cost-efficient nexus for learning, networking, competency, success, and influence. Opportunity is presented that can build a path to being one of those who can connect knowledge with people to enhance the practice and profession of environmental health.

Please visit www.neha.org/aec for NEHA 2021 AEC Virtual Series general information,

dates, registration information, session topics, and the schedule of events. Consider the return on investment extended with the great conference rates (the student registration fee for all sessions is just \$95).

Final thoughts: You must attend this virtual conference! Success comes with not only who you know but also who knows you! 🐼

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