

NEHA NEWS

NEHA Partners With NNPHI for Project Firstline

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is proud to partner with the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) for Project Firstline (www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/projectfirstline/index.html). Project Firstline is a collaborative of diverse healthcare, public health, and environmental health partners who have come together to provide foundational knowledge of infection control.

To stop the spread of infectious disease threats, including COVID-19, professionals in healthcare, public health, and environmental health need a knowledge of infection control and should understand and be ready to implement infection control protocols and procedures in their work duties and functions. This collaboration will provide these professionals with valuable infection control training to aid them in protecting their communities and the nation from infectious disease threats.

On March 30, 2021, NEHA and NNPHI cohosted a Project Firstline Environmental Health Q&A Session aimed at providing environmental health professionals with infection control training. Presenters of the session included Gina Bare, associate director of NEHA's Program and Partnership Development, and Dr. Timothy Landers, infection prevention control specialist and associate professor within the College of Nursing at Ohio State University.

Learn more about NEHA's involvement in Project Firstline at www.neha.org/eh-topics/preparedness-0.

NEHA and NCHH Release New Guide for Safer Cleaning and Disinfection

NEHA and the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) have compiled a *Healthy Homes Guide to Cleaning and Disinfection* in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of a larger strategy that includes practicing social distancing and wearing a mask, cleaning and disinfection can help keep yourself, friends, family, and communities safe and healthy. Cleaning and disinfecting are also important for protecting against the seasonal flu and other infectious diseases.

Developed for the general public, including homeowners and residents, this resource is a compilation of expert guidance, key messages, and a summary of information with links to external resources. Topics addressed in this guide include homes, hand hygiene and personal protective equipment, products, ventilation, and more.

Due to federal recommendations and other state and local directives, you are likely cleaning and disinfecting as part of a larger personal or professional strategy to prevent COVID-19 transmission and infection. This guide will help you make decisions and navigate the processes of cleaning and disinfection safely and effectively. Learn more at <https://bit.ly/NCHHinfoSafeClean> about the expert guidance on cleaning and disinfection to protect yourself, your home, and your community to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. 🙏

IN MEMORIAM

Dennis Catanyag

On January 14, 2021, Dennis Catanyag was fatally wounded while performing duties protecting and serving his community as a registered environmental health specialist (REHS) for Sacramento County in California. "He had a passion for public service and the health and safety of people in the community. He was very well liked by his colleagues, who enjoyed his lively personality and respected his professional integrity," stated Ann Edwards, Sacramento County acting executive, in a letter to county employees. "The death of Dennis is an extraordinary loss to his family, the county, and the community. Our hearts go out to his friends and family as they cope with this incomprehensible tragedy."

Catanyag earned his bachelor of science degree in biological sciences with a minor in chemistry in 1998 from California State University, Sacramento. He became an REHS in August 2002. He worked for Sacramento County for 15 years in the Environmental

Health Division conducting food protection, recreational health, and Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) inspections. Catanyag most recently worked as the program lead for CLPPP where he was able to practice his commitment to protecting children from lead exposure in their homes. His professional integrity, empathy, and friendly demeanor made him well respected.

Prior to working in Sacramento County, Catanyag worked in San Joaquin County as a senior REHS for 4 years conducting Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) inspections. He was a dedicated employee who was committed to his family and his job. He had a passion for protecting public health, especially children.

"I think about his balance and intensity, both of which I try to emulate. One may see these as opposing but that was the irony that made Dennis unique. He was intense in a sense that he was fiercely competitive. Tennis, poker, marathons, escape rooms—he always tried to win. Super focused and relentless. He put his best

DirectTalk

continued from page 46

Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence (D-Michigan) may reintroduce the Environmental Health Workforce Act. The act could receive serious consideration in this Congress given its constituency and progressive orientation. Our fingers are crossed.

While these glimmers of renewed interest in our profession are reassuring, now is not the time to breathe a sigh of relief. The National Association of County and City Health Officials Chief Executive Officer Lori Freeman and President Jennifer Kertanis spoke to our board in February. Approximately 20% of the local health officials nationwide have resigned, retired, or been forced out of office as a function of the pandemic. The White House has released preliminary climate plans that regrettably failed to include the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I am apoplectic. The prior U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administrator runs point on domestic climate issues, she knows better, and we can do better.

Amid these developments, I have commissioned the creation of a short, 2.5-minute animated video. This video will be targeted at elected officials, boards of health, and influencers. It will not be technical. It will not be scientific. It will not be complicated. The through line is that our profession is the guardian angel that protects our nation's health, safety, and economic security. The



Mono Lake at dawn. Photo courtesy of David Dyjack.

colors, narration, and sequencing have been meticulously considered. While the success and impact of the video are uncertain, I feel that if we are ever going to change the narrative around our profession, we need to take measured risks and experiment with unproven ideas like this one. Your careers and the health of the nation deserve no less.

Mono Lake at dawn is breathtaking. The lake, which is 2–3 times saltier than ocean water, is also a vibrant ecosystem comprised of algae, brine shrimp, and alkali flies. These comprise the base of a food chain that nourishes millions of migrating shorebirds. In

many parts of the country, the public health enterprise has had its resources redirected to other parts of government, leaving environmental health as the elegant and inspiring tufas in an ecosystem otherwise drained of leadership and pummeled by some elements of society I, for one, thank you and am inspired by your courage, tenacity, and commitment to your communities. At the dawn of a new era, you stand out as an inspiration. 🐼

Dave

ddyjack@neha.org
Twitter: @DTDyjack

IN MEMORIAM CONTINUED

foot forward on everything he did and I had a deep admiration for that. With respect to balance, I envied how he was able to juggle everything he had in his life and how well he did it. He lived life to the fullest and no one facet was lacking,” stated long-time friend John Lai in his eulogy for Catanyag.

Donations can be made to the GoFundMe account set up to provide support for Catanyag's family at www.gofundme.com/l/dennis-catanyag. An online memorial site dedicated to him can be viewed at www.forevermissed.com/dennis-catanyag.

NEHA extends its deepest sympathies to the family, friends, and colleagues of Dennis Catanyag. His passion and devotion to protecting the health and safety of the communities he served, as well as the love and joy he brought to those around him, will not be forgotten.

Source: California Environmental Health Association, Oregon Environmental Health Association, Sacramento County Environmental Health Division, and www.forevermissed.com/dennis-catanyag. 🐼

Editor's Note: If you would like to share information about the passing of an environmental health professional to be mentioned in a future In Memoriam, please contact Kristen Ruby-Cisneros at kruby@neha.org. The *Journal* will publish the In Memoriam section twice a year in the June and December issues, or in other issues as determined appropriate.