

► **DirecTalk** MUSINGS FROM THE 10TH FLOOR

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## Doing the Right Thing in Anaheim

“Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.” Mark Twain had a way with words. Our 2018 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition is a few weeks away, and we, too, feel we have done this one right.

First, the city. In keeping with my commitment to provide a family friendly conference environment, this year we will be in beautiful Anaheim, California. Disney California Adventure Park and Disneyland Park are just one and two miles, respectively, from our host hotel. Mexico is a 90-minute drive away. Newport Beach, Bolsa Chica State Beach, and Laguna Beach are nearby. The site of our annual UL Event, Anaheim’s Angel Stadium, is a few blocks away.

We also continue our commitment to affordable food and beverage options within walking distance from the host hotel, as well as within the host hotel. That is, when you need it. On Monday, June 25, the Exhibition Grand Opening & Party will include finger food, and there will be coffee breaks provided to attendees throughout the week. On Wednesday, June 27, the National Restaurant Association is sponsoring the Breakfast & Town Hall Assembly. Finally, we are hosting a special social event—Good Vibrations! Reception—that will feature southern California fare on the evening of Wednesday, June 27. These events and meals are included in all full conference registrations.

While food and location are important, our Chief Learning Officer Kristie Denbrock has canvassed the country to produce a superb educational program. In keeping with our

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conference theme—Bridges, Bonds, and Benefits—we have enticed some the biggest names in the profession to share their insight and wisdom with you. The opening Keynote Address will feature none other than Frank Yiannas, vice president of food safety and health for Walmart. He will describe private sector efforts to bridge to those of us in the public sector. Yiannas is reportedly a dynamic speaker, and we are pleased that he plans to spend time bonding with our Business & Industry Affiliate.

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials will convene their annual meeting of state environmental health directors at our AEC for the first time. They will host a panel discussion of state environmental health directors during our Opening Session and have invited Yiannas to join them. The panel will discuss the linkages between federal, state, and local practitioners, as well as how those parties work in concert with the private sector.

We are thrilled and honored to have Rear Admiral Stephen Redd, MD, kickoff our

educational sessions on the second day of the 2018 AEC. Dr. Redd is the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. We have met with Dr. Redd several times over recent years to advance conversations around public health emergency preparedness capabilities and the need to create a separate capability for environmental health. I’m personally looking forward to his presentation.

The educational sessions promise to provide you with a menu of fascinating subject matter content. For starters, we received almost 400 abstracts this year, which I understand is a record. We have accepted 280 of those abstracts, which is a lot of content to pack into three days. We will be recording select high-demand sessions for those of you who may be concerned about the difficult decision of which session to attend because of scheduling conflicts.

The 2018 AEC Closing Session will be hosted by our friends at the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL). As we migrate into an era where big data and informatics are becoming increasingly central to our work, we are delighted that APHL’s Executive Director Scott Becker will be present to help us sift through the roles and responsibilities of public health laboratories, their relationship with the environmental health profession, and how we can better collaborate in a madly evolving profession. The title of this session is Opening the Big Black Box: Partnering With Public Health Laboratories to

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Address Community Environmental Health Problems. Don't miss this one.

While I have described some of the major touchstone sessions, let me be clear, there are plenty of sessions to pique and hold your interest no matter what part of the profession you represent. Some of these sessions include

- Disasters on the Rise: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Harris County Environmental Health Perspective on the 2017 Hurricanes;
- Opioids;
- San Francisco Bay Area Cannabis Foodborne Illness Outbreak Collaborated Response;
- Protecting the Public From West Nile Virus, Zika Virus, and Other Mosquito-Borne Illnesses Through Public Health Collaborations;
- Frequently Asked Questions About Unregulated Drinking Water; and
- Environmental Health and Wildfires.

Finally, a few words about our valued cohosts—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes. We are very excited that they and many of their grantees will be joining us again this year. You may recall that past HUD Secretary



Representative Brenda Lawrence (D-Michigan) addressed attendees at the NEHA 2017 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photo courtesy of Casey Stormes, Fresh Look Video.

Julian Castro electrified our 2016 AEC attendees in San Antonio, Texas, and we are hoping that current HUD Secretary Dr. Ben Carson can squeeze us into his schedule to share his vision. There will be an abundant selection of healthy housing and built environment educational sessions from which to choose.

I'd like to finish at the beginning. We will offer several preconference workshops and credential review courses the weekend prior to the conference. We will deliver review courses for our Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian, Cer-

tified Professional—Food Safety, and Certified in Comprehensive Food Safety credentials, as well as food safety auditor and instructional skills trainings. The Survival Skills for Environmental Health Leaders Workshop will be hosted by Bob Custard and Dr. Sandra Whitehead. NEHA Membership Director Jonna Ashley will again offer an Affiliate Leadership Workshop intended to provide our state partners with ideas around best practices for small associations. New this year will be our Health Impact Assessment 101 Workshop. These review courses, trainings, and workshops are being offered to ensure that you and your local programs receive technical assistance and training to increase the likelihood of your success.

Bridges, Bonds, and Benefits. Your NEHA staff has collectively spent the last year securing the best talent, national influencers, and thought leaders for our 2018 AEC. We believe in bridges to other health professions. We value creating bonds with the private sector. The benefits of these values and beliefs will pay dividends well into the future. This conference feels right. We hope you are gratified and astonished. 🐼

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