

## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Roy Kroeger, REHS

As I sit down to write my second column, I am trying to find topics that will be relevant when you read them. September is National Food Safety Education Month and food safety is where the majority of our members work, so I feel this topic will be relevant. I am sure each of us can recall an incident when an establishment or maybe even a person disregarded food safety rules and made someone else sick.

In my case, I recall a lawsuit in which I had to testify when a restaurant allegedly made a person ill with *Salmonella* in October 2010. My testimony did not occur until summer 2014. The victim, who had doctor bills totaling more than \$650,000, was awarded \$11.37 million. A few days before the victim ate at the restaurant, my office marked the establishment with 18 violations. How many of you can think of a similar tragedy in your jurisdiction? This foodborne illness case is but one that describes the importance of food safety to our profession.

As I mentioned earlier, with each September comes Food Safety Education Month. I am confident it will be the busiest Food Safety Education Month ever for the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). In my last column, I briefly mentioned that NEHA received a large grant from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to improve food safety. I wanted to expand on that a little more in this month's column.

In May 2021, NEHA received a cooperative agreement award from FDA to provide pass-through funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial retail food regulatory agencies to advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards (Retail Program Standards).

## Great Opportunities for Environmental Health

*In May 2021, NEHA received a cooperative agreement award to provide funding to retail food regulatory agencies to advance conformance with the Voluntary National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards.*

To facilitate this grant, NEHA has assembled a cadre of subject matter experts who will be assisting jurisdictions in their efforts to reduce the occurrence of foodborne illness through the implementation of the Retail Program Standards. Many of you might be familiar with the previous grants offered, but the NEHA approach will be different. We are managing the grants with you, the professional, in mind. We will collaborate with FDA and other experienced retail food safety subject matter experts to ensure participating jurisdictions meet their program goals. NEHA plans to offer enhanced technical support, subject matter expert assistance, and guidance to ensure applicant success throughout the grant cycle.

NEHA will also collaborate with the National Association of County and City Health Officials to implement the NEHA-FDA Retail Flex-

ible Funding Model (RFFM) Grant Program, similar to the previous program. We will also work with the Conference for Food Protection to offer a dedicated educational program to address advancement and conformance with the Retail Program Standards. NEHA will open the grant application portal in September, the month that we observe food safety.

I hope that by now, many of you have seen the new grant categories and qualifications and are ready to request as much as \$100,000 to support your food safety programs. NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack and several of my predecessors have espoused how environmental health is profoundly local and how we need to mold our programs to meet local needs. The Retail Program Standards allow you to achieve this endeavor while maintaining a consistent regulatory structure. If you are not aware of the new opportunities, please visit [www.neha.org/retailgrants](http://www.neha.org/retailgrants) for more information.

If you have additional inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact our NEHA-FDA RFFM Grant Program Support Team via email at [retailgrants@neha.org](mailto:retailgrants@neha.org) or toll-free at (833) 575-2404. Our team is waiting to help you!

With the RFFM Grant Program, FDA is asking NEHA to be intimately involved with the pass-through funding. NEHA will assist jurisdictions in both the application process and throughout the 1- or 3-year life cycle of the grants. Our assistance will help food safety programs meet their goals so that these jurisdictions are prepared to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness more effectively. If food safety programs take advantage of this funding to improve food safety, everyone benefits—inspectors, industry, and consumers. Together

we can prevent foodborne illness and future lawsuits like the one I mentioned at the start of this column.

The NEHA-FDA RFMM Grant Program is a significant project for our association and it will take a considerable amount of staff time and resources to implement successfully. Still, we cannot ignore other important projects that benefit our members and the profession. One of these projects is our student internship program, the National Environmental Public Health Internship Program (NEPHIP). NEHA has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to secure funding to provide paid internships through NEPHIP for more than 60 student interns for

each of the next 2 years. NEHA was pleased to learn this news as we had heard previously that the federal funding had been eliminated.

As an environmental health major from the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (EHAC)-accredited program at Colorado State University (CSU), I am elated to hear this news. It has been nearly three decades since I received my bachelor of science degree, but as I recall, one of the most stressful times in my program was during my senior year when I was looking for an internship. Most places I applied to were willing to mentor an intern but none of them had funding to pay for it. I ended up taking an internship with no compensation

in Cheyenne, Wyoming, which was a 1-hour drive from CSU. Internship grants would have made the experience so much easier for both the department and my student budget.

As many of the seasoned environmental health professionals are retiring from public health careers, the need for new professionals is more critical than ever before. NEPHIP encourages students attending EHAC-accredited programs to intern at a public health department as I did so many years ago. My 3-month internship led to a wonderful 28-year (and counting) career. 🐶

*Ray Kuoze*  
President@neha.org

## SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

**T**he NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for 1 year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at (303) 756-9090. You can also donate online at [www.neha.org/donate](http://www.neha.org/donate).

*Thank you.*

### DELEGATE CLUB

(\$1–99)

*Name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Oyetunde Adukanle  
Tunde M. Akinmoladun  
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Steven K. Ault  
David Banaszynski  
Gina Bare  
Jeffrey Barosy  
Edward Barragan  
Logan Blank  
Marnie Boardman  
Glenn W. Bryant  
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Deborah Carpenter  
Kathy Cash  
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Thomas P. Devlin  
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Wendy L. Fanaselle  
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Philip Leger  
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Dillion Streuber  
M.L. Tanner  
Ralph Utter  
Kendra Vieira  
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Phebe Wall  
Dawn Whiting  
Lisa Whitlock  
Edward F. Wirtanen  
Erika Woods

### HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

(\$100–499)

*Letter from the NEHA president and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

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Eric Bradley  
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Michael G. Halko  
Donna K. Heran  
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Sharon L. Kline  
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John A. Marcello  
Wendell A. Moore  
Priscilla Oliver  
James E. Pierce  
Matthew Reighter  
Joseph W. Russell  
Michèle Samarya-Timm  
John H. Shrader  
Jill M. Shugart  
Jacqueline Taylor  
Linda Van Houten  
Sandra Whitehead

### 21st CENTURY CLUB

(\$500–999)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free 1-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Thomas J. Butts  
Amer El-Ahraf  
Ned Therien  
Leon F. Vinci

### SUSTAINING MEMBERS CLUB

(\$1,000–2,499)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free 2-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

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Harry E. Grenawitzke  
George A. Morris  
Peter H. Sansone  
Walter P. Saraniecki  
Peter M. Schmitt  
James M. Speckhart

### AFFILIATES CLUB

(\$2,500–4,999)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Robert W. Custard  
David T. Dyjack

### EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(>\$5,000)

*Special invitation to the AEC President's Reception and name in the Journal for 1 year.*

Vincent J. Radke