



MEHA JOURNAL

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WINTER 2010

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, Gene Paez

The holidays were wonderful but hectic. Hope all of you are as blessed as I am to have family, friends and colleagues to share another holiday with. *However*, I am now glad to have some time to myself to reflect on the past and get back to work. There have been some great revolutionary and historical changes in our society in the past 10 years, from *Nine-Eleven* to electing Barack Obama. We have *wars* going in Iraq and Afghanistan. Who would have ever thought GM would go bankrupt and that we would have almost *15% unemployment*?

From a public health view, SARS reared it ugly head in 2003, killing 774 and infecting 8100 people. H1N1 became a world wide pandemic, infecting tens of millions; Swine Flu in the US has killed 10,000 and hospitalized over 20,000; in Michigan it has killed 59. A great pandemic is predicted just around the corner. Is the Ice Cap really melting? Those may be our next big challenges in the future.

MEHA has experience many changes also. Membership has varied from a peak of over 700 members in the mid 2000s to a low of 400 this year. We were able to present 3 full educational conferences for most of the decade, but now we can only project one major conference yearly. We will continue to pursue full licensure in 2010. The organization was able to establish Endowment, Strategic and Reserve Accounts to help promote and foster the organization. We currently have over \$110,000 in these accounts. The great news is that the organization is **operating in the black**.

Where do we go from here? It seems to me that no matter what happens history repeats itself. We will grow again and I am confident that we will be able to promote three full conferences ***in time***. As far as the escrow accounts are concerned, I would like to see the **ENDOWMENT FUND** continue to grow well into the future, *until it becomes self-supporting*. The **STRATEGIC FUND** was set up to help support *registration and licensure* of sanitarians some years ago. With the new effort to obtain *licensure* there may be a need to access this money this year. At the Annual Business Meeting, there will be a discussion and vote on whether to continue to make this fund available for this activity or to allow the Board to use the fund for other activities at their discretion. The membership voted in 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2007 to continue this fund for licensure activities only. The Board fully supports making this money available for licensure activities. If, however, our licensure effort is terminated, we will revisit the dispersal of this fund at next AEC. Do not hesitate to contact a board member or me and express your opinion on this important matter. We look forward to healthy discussion on this and other matters at the AEC.

The planning for the AEC is in its final stages. We have great speakers and topics on the schedule. Keep a look out for information via your email or visit the MEHA web page at meha.net. We are trying to do MEHA business electronically so please be patient with us until all the bugs are worked out. If you prefer to receive information via snail mail let us know. **KEEP YOUR EMAIL UPDATED**. CHECK YOUR SPAM BOX. Sometimes new stuff gets sent to spam.

We are off and running, it's going to be a great year for MEHA especially with *Lynne Madison* as your next President. I am sure she will do a wonderful job, we look forward to talking too many of you regarding issues and concerns you may have. See you at AEC in March.

Environmentally Yours,

Prez Paez

PS - Great time to get involved and volunteer to serve one of many committees that will be opening up this coming year. IT IS REWARDING

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

December 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009

Checking Account

Checking account balance 11/30/2009 **\$ 21,341.22**

Deposits: Total Deposits: **\$ 95.99**

Debits: Total checks and adjustments: **(\$ 130.10)**

ENDING CHECKING ACCOUNT BALANCE 12/31/09 **\$ 21,307.11**

WELLS FARGO ADVISORS ACCOUNTS:

	Balance last report: 11/30/09	Current balance: 12/31/09
Strategic Fund	\$ 13,501.09	\$ 13,708.61
Reserve Fund	\$ 9,902.02	\$ 9,902.19
Endowment Fund	\$ 79,104.13	\$ 80,362.72
TOTAL ASSETS: (ALL ACCOUNTS)		\$125,280.63

Respectfully Submitted,

John F. Texter, Treasurer
January 12, 2010

Regional Reports

The **Upper Peninsula Environmental Health Association** (UPEHA) steering committee has been hard at work trying to achieve the many goals set forth by our environmental and public health principles. The association has slightly grown by adding a 7th member to the steering committee last year as our Constitution and Bylaws were revised. The 7th member consists of someone working in the Environmental Health field outside of the local health department setting. Currently this change has been extremely positive. Over the course of the past year, the individuals serving on the UPEHA committee, like several other departments have been faced with budget constraints and set backs which restricted travel to and from Marquette for our monthly meetings. Be that as it may, we have been hosting our meetings via teleconferencing for the entire winter. This wasn't easy at first, but steering full speed ahead, the UPEHA committee has planned an excellent conference for 2010. Ishpeming in February will be in my opinion one of the most memorable of training conferences in the history of the association.

The committee applied for the MEHA Affiliate Training funds and was awarded \$1200 towards speaker costs for the 2010 Conference. This was spectacular news since we were successful in soliciting speakers at the National level.

As a committee, we also have been flirting with various ways to raise money for the association. The on-line silent auction is a prize winning achievement for fundraisers. We received a reserved escorted trip to the top of one of the Mackinac Bridge Towers for two people, along with a one-night stay for two people at the Bay View Motel in St. Ignace, Michigan. that has been very popular so far. I look forward to seeing the final price on this once-in-a-lifetime gift.

In closing, I can say that every year the committee is stronger, the conferences get better, and the UPEHA membership keeps growing. But what stays the same is the true meaning of what UPEHA stands for. This long lasting tradition for EH Professionals to learn ways to improve their services and protect the public's health has served us well! If you've never been to an Upper Peninsula Environmental Health Association Conference – check it out. I guarantee you a great time YOOPER style.

Sincerely,
Christine Daley, UPEHA Chair

October 2009 presented **Southwest MEHA** members with a successful seminar in Charlotte with 39 individuals in attendance. We are looking forward to the spring seminar on April 30th in Lawton. Take this opportunity to learn more about the critical dune program, acidified foods, and community supported agriculture. A round table discussion with EH directors covering several hot topics in environmental health such as body art and the smoking ban are also planned.

Regional Reports

The **Southeastern Michigan Environmental Health Association** held its Winter Education Seminar on December 11, 2009 at the Bavarian Inn Restaurant in Frankenmuth, MI. This seminar was free to the first 75 registrants and T-Shirts imprinted with the SEMEHA logo and "Environmental Health Making a Difference You Can See" were given to all attendees. Additionally, Scott Whittington of City of Detroit Health Department won a \$25.00 Bronner's gift certificate.

The seminar began with "Environmental Health and the DNR" by Daniel Lee, Enforcement Officer with Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Lee's presentation focused on the Department's efforts to prevent the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Mr. Lee pointed out that although the disease has only been found in one deer kept in a breeding facility in Kent County in 2008, the DNR is taking aggressive steps, including a ban on all deer baiting to prevent the spread in free-range animals. Mr. Lee also discussed how Environmental Health professionals and the DNR have worked together on a range of environmental enforcement issues.

Our next speaker, Brant Fisher of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality presented "Michigan's Water Withdrawal Legislation". Part of Mr. Fisher's presentation focused on the background rationale for the passage of Part 327, Great Lakes Preservation of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended. The law establishes requirements for registration and water use reporting for large quantity withdrawals (LQWs). Mr. Fisher also explained the use of the Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool (WWAT) which LQW drillers must use to assess whether their proposed well will cause an Adverse Resource Impact (ARI), which can happen if a LQW impairs a lake or stream's ability to support its fish populations.

After a great lunch featuring the Bavarian Inn's traditional chicken dinner, members were treated to a very interesting presentation titled "Michigan's Liquor Control Commission 101" by Gloria Blanchard of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission. Members were impressed to learn about the various aspects involved in the licensing of businesses that sell alcoholic beverages and the challenges involved in the enforcement of liquor laws.

During the General Business Meeting, members approved an amendment to the constitution that clarifies the role and responsibilities of the SEMEHA representative on the MEHA Executive Board. The Business Meeting also included the elections of officers: Janet Phelps of Genesee was elected as Region B Rep. and Mike Dey of St. Clair was re-elected as Region D Rep.

** Due to a shift in positions, SEMEHA is currently seeking candidates for the Executive Board position of Secretary. Interested persons may contact a Board member for more information.*

The **Northern Michigan Environmental Health Association** is currently seeking nominations for Secretary and Treasurer. Interested persons should contact Becky Krzyzanowski at KrzyzanowskiR@michigan.gov for further details. The NMEHA is hoping to have a conference/training by late Fall of this year, however, they are badly in need of volunteers to help organize. Once again, please contact Becky if you can help.

Endowment Fund Silent Auction – *We Need Donations!*

The MEHA Endowment Fund Silent Auction will be held during the Annual Educational Conference at the Double Tree Hotel in Bay City on March 24 – 26, 2010. As in the past, the Endowment Committee is seeking item donations from members to help drive this auction. We are looking for artwork, handcrafted items, a weekend retreat or any item that you think other members may be interested in.

As many of you know, the money generated from the Silent Auction is put into the Endowment Fund. Our goal is to reach \$100,000 in the Endowment Fund. When this happens we will be able to take the interest generated from this fund and provide educational scholarships to our MEHA members and their families.

If you are unable to donate an item, please make sure to stop by the silent auction room. We are anticipating some fabulous donations. Some items we already have include a basket from Kilwin's Chocolates, passes to the Detroit Zoo, a gift certificate from the Day Escape Salon & Spa and some hand made jewelry.

If you would like to make a donation, no matter how big or small, please contact Tricia Dreier, at (616) 355-1339 or t.dreier@cityofholland.com to register your donation for the 2010 Silent Auction. Tax deductible forms are available upon request.

Thank you for helping to make this year's silent auction a success! See you at the AEC!

Submitted by:
Tricia Dreier, Endowment Committee Chair

Save the Date!

MEHA - ANNUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

March 24, 25, & 26, 2010

Doubletree Hotel
Bay City, Michigan

More information available at: www.meha.net

Licensure Committee Update

Dear Fellow Members:

Licensure of Sanitarians has been a recognized goal for MEHA for some time. In 1979, 1986 and again in 1993, MEHA was successful in turning back Legislative attempts to sunset Sanitarians Registration and abolish State Recognition of the Environmental Health profession in Michigan. In 1994, a Strategic Fund was established by MEHA member vote to provide financial support for changing State Law to provide for mandatory licensing of the profession in Michigan. In 1997, 2001, 2004, and 2007, the MEHA membership voted to preserve this fund for its initial purpose and to return the question to the membership after a three year period had elapsed; as has been done since the inception of the fund.

Why does MEHA continue to vote on this issue? By motion and member vote, and during four subsequent assertion ballots, the fund exists for only one purpose: financial support of a State of Michigan Licensure effort. At anytime during the past 15 years, should the licensure effort have succeeded, or become unobtainable, the MEHA membership reserved the right to determine the fate of the fund.

As members of MEHA you will be asked again in 2010 to vote on continuing the fund or abolishing the fund.

Much has happened in the 36 months since MEHA last voted on this issue. A problem statement, and draft legislation has been written. Templates for the construction of this language were provided to MEHA by the Michigan Department of Community Health, Bureau of Licensing and Regulation. The document drafting and redrafting was accomplished by following an open participatory process. These documents are available to you on the home page of the MEHA website. To date, a coalition of interest groups has endorsed the written documents and the MEHA strategy for proceeding. That coalition includes, the Michigan Environmental Health Association (MEHA), the Michigan Association of Local Environmental Health Administrators (MALEHA), the Michigan Public Health Association (MPHA) and the Michigan Association for Local Public Health (MALPH)

MEHA has approached the Michigan Legislature and is seeking a bi-partisan, bi-cameral introduction of our legislative package and we hope for enactment legislation, passage of the bill and signature by the Governor this calendar year (2010). After two decades of effort our goal is in sight.

As such, the fund question MEHA members are about to vote on and the continuation of that fund is important.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patrick Donovan, RS
Co-chair, Licensure Committee

Licensure: FAQs

1. *I am currently a Michigan R.S. Will I get a license?*

The statute language proposes that licensure replace the current registration, any R.S. in good standing will receive a license. Any individual who holds a current, in good standing REHS from NEHA will receive a license upon request. You must request the license, there is no automatic system for licensing.

2. *I do not have a RS or REHS credential, how can I get a license?*

Any individual who is currently working inside the scope of practice will have a grace period in which they can be granted a license upon request. Those persons must be working inside the scope of practice, they must be otherwise eligible to hold State of Michigan professional license (i.e. no criminal history) and they must obtain the license within 6 months of the enactment date of the statute. After the six month grace period elapses, any individual who seeks a license must obtain the required academic credentials to be eligible to sit for the NEHA REHS/RS exam; pass the exam, serve the internship and apply for license in Michigan.

3. *My Michigan R.S. has lapsed. Can I get a license?*

Yes. Within the initial six month grace period, you will be granted a license upon request. After the six month grace period, you must sit for the NEHA exam and pass it.

4. *Once holding the license, do I have requirements to maintain my license?*

Yes. You must complete a set regimen of continuing professional development (CDP) also called Continuing Educational Units (CEU). You must complete this training and provide documentation of successful completion each license interval (2 years), the training requirement is the same as the NEHA CEU schedule. There will be a Board of Sanitarians overseeing the documents and also administering the Public Health Code for license holders who violate the public health code in their practice. There is a method for suspension and revocation of licenses for malfeasance.

5. *Does having a license guarantee me an increase in income?*

No. Various employers in the public sector, private sector, corporate sector and academic sector have set pay schedules in place already. Licensure will not immediately impact those pay schedules. There are instances where Registered Sanitarians and non credentialed Practitioners are employed along side fully licensed professionals (such as Registered Nurses or Engineers). In some instances those pay schedules are already the same. Licensure may save the licensed staff from pay reductions if they did not have the license, but will not likely result in pay increases. Private practitioners charge a rate which the market will bear. Licensure will prevent non-credentialed individuals from delivering substandard services, as they will not be able to practice inside the scope without having the credential and following the public health code.

Calendar of Trainings

- February 17 - 19 U.P. Environmental Health Association's Annual Education Conference
Ishpeming, MI
- March 19 Michigan Public Health Association's Epidemiology Conference
East Lansing, MI
- March 24 - 26 Michigan Environmental Health Association's Annual Education Conference
Bay City, MI
- April 30 SW Michigan Environmental Health Association's Spring Conference
Lawton, MI
- June 6 - 9 National Environmental Health Association's Annual Education Conference
Albuquerque, NM
- October 27 - 28 Michigan's Premier Public Health Conference 2010
Bay City, Michigan

Have an idea for the MEHA Journal?

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Editorial

The Future of Environmental Health

How you think when you lose determines how long it will be until you win.

The wise G.K. Chesterton penned those words nearly a century ago but they seem especially appropriate for our current situation. In recent years, the environmental health community in Michigan has been losing. We have lost funding; we have lost senior sanitarians to retirement; lost junior sanitarians to layoffs; we've lost programs, projects, and clients; but perhaps most disturbing of all, we've lost our sense of direction. In order for us to regain our sense of direction it would be wise to consider another Chestertonian proverb:

It isn't that they can't see the solution. It's that they can't see the problem.

Just possibly, the problem isn't the rotten economy or slashed funding for public health services. Perhaps it is something more fundamental than that. Maybe we have become part of the problem? The first sanitarians of the past several hundred years were sanitarians by accident. By training, they were doctors, epidemiologists, and microbiologists. These professionals identified disease occurrence, causative agents, and intervened with appropriate measures. Those actions, and the public awareness which followed, set forth a chain reaction of events which lead to the enactment of federal legislation such as the Pure Food and Drug Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and many others. Our own Michigan Public Health Code and local sanitary codes were developed as well. All told, these regulations and the funding they provided have been essential ingredients of a public health renaissance which greatly improved the quality and longevity of life in the United States. However, they may have also stunted the development of the sanitarian as an enduring profession by focusing our collective attention primarily on compliance with regulations and producing inspections and permits. When demand for those inspections and permits diminishes, so does the environmental health workforce – *but did the environmental public health need really diminish?*

Environmental health professionals would be well served to rebuild the skills which served our predecessors so well. This means bolstering existing regulatory strengths by building additional strengths in the following two areas – professional development and environmental epidemiology.

In regards to professional development, MEHA has worked fervently towards gaining licensure status for sanitarians in Michigan. Much progress has been made and the association expects a bill to be introduced very soon. The sanitarian remains as the only public health occupation in the Michigan Public Health Code which is not licensed by the state. Formal licensure will improve our profession and public health by establishing minimum criteria for those who provide environmental health services. These criteria will include continuing education for all sanitarians in Michigan. One only needs to look to states which have ceased to recognize the sanitarian in order to see the professional deterioration which ensues. For example, a recent job posting for a sanitarian in Hawaii required only a high school diploma/GED for employment. Not surprisingly, the position only offered \$12.50 per hour. MEHA's effort has always been about public health and not about increasing salaries, but it becomes increasingly difficult to protect public health if those salaries become insufficient to attract and/or retain properly educated people. Licensure goes a long way towards improving quality and professionalism in the environmental health workforce, but it doesn't ensure it – only you and I can do that. Ultimately, professional development is the responsibility of the professional. We are the only people who can re-cast the image of the sanitarian as something more than merely an inspector or permit generator. The work that we do and the manner in which we present ourselves will have the greatest impact on the future of our profession.

Editorial, *continued...*

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The other critical area of growth for the future of our profession is environmental epidemiology. Again, we have become so focused on work outputs that we have lost sight of the outcomes. Can you, without looking, recall how many cases of cryptosporidiosis were reported in your county last year? How about campylobacter, shigellosis, salmonellosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, anything? And those are simply a handful of our age-old acute nemeses; we have barely begun to scratch the surface with chronic infectious diseases. What if we could tell the public and elected officials that arthritis, asthma, type I diabetes, and a variety of cancers are caused by environmental exposures which we may be able to help control? The case for that statement is building rapidly. The future of environmental health may depend on our ability to retool and meet non-traditional challenges from chronic disease, climate change, and other emerging issues. Our collective ability to understand the epidemiology of those topics will determine if we are able to provide environmental health answers.

As Chesterton said, how we think *now* will determine when we start winning again. Please consider what role you can play to help our profession think like a winner. Your active participation with MEHA is an important part of that equation. Hopefully, you will be able to attend next month's Annual Education Conference in Bay City. The agenda and registration materials can be found at www.meha.net.

- Editor

-Have an opinion about an EH topic? Send a letter to the Editor!

alondon@meha.net

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