

July 7, 2004

Dear IEHA Members -

I was proud to be Idaho's IEHA delegate at the Alaska NEHA Annual Educational Conference, May 9 - 12, I've been wanting to give you a brief report from the Council of Delegates meeting and other meetings I attended as president of IEHA.

Bob Erickson, District V, received a very special honor during the opening awards ceremony in Anchorage, receiving the National Certificate of Merit in recognition of his outstanding contributions to our profession. At March, 2004, IEHA AEC Bob was awarded the prestigious EHS of the Year, and for that reason was nominated for the NEHA Certificate of Merit. Congratulations Bob!

Here are the main highlights from the annual Council of Delegates meeting held on Wednesday, May 12.

We heard from our new NEHA president James Balsamo whose goals include:

- (1) Expanding NEHA's efforts in Washington D.C
- (2) Upgrading NEHA's credentialing program
- (3) Expanding our professional recognition and development.
- (4) Opening up and making transparent NEHA
- (5) To push student efforts and mentor them.

It was announced that NEHA's newly elected 2nd Vice-President was Rob Blake, from Atlanta, Georgia. We are proud of our very own Rich Gabriel who ran against Rob, but unfortunately did not get elected. Rich remains the Region I NEHA representative.

Boise, Idaho is in the mix for being selected as the site for the 2008 NEHA AEC, along with 7 other possible cities under consideration. In an interest to consider less expensive cities NEHA is looking at a number of second tier cities for its 2008 Conference. The Boise Convention and Visitor's Bureau has been actively involved with NEHA in providing promotional material and the infrastructure abilities to host such a conference. A decision will be made at the December, 2004 NEHA Board of Directors meeting.

NEHA has an emerging Governmental Affairs Program, with a committee of four who oversee these efforts. They are finding ways to bring more influence to bear on public policy discussions having to do with the environmental health profession and the thousands of people who practice in it. They have been actively involved this past year in national agencies, councils, partnerships, coalitions, programs, and initiatives. Watch the NEHA Journal for news relating to their efforts.

One of these areas has been a partnership with CDC to develop a blueprint for the rebuilding of environmental health in our nation. A host of different organizations are also involved with CDC in this effort. More detail on this effort and the specifics of the CDC plan can be found on the CDC website: <www.phppo.cdc.gov/phtn/envhlth>. Nelson Fabian states that this is the single most significant project to emanate from the federal government in years concerning our profession and the practice of it.

First and foremost, however, NEHA functions primarily as an educational resource for the environmental health profession. NEHA's website reflects the resources, training programs, workshops, and educational opportunities currently available to its members. Go to their website at <www.neha.org> to discover what you can take advantage of. One of its key efforts this past year is in its focus on food safety education and training. NEHA now offers a registered food safety trainer program.

A status report was given on the REHS/RS possible name change, which in recent years has been given a lot of discussion. It was no surprise that a survey of NEHA members this past year revealed that there is no big desire for change. 44% were in favor of a change, and 37% were not in favor. A decision will probably be made sometime this coming year on this issue.

I was also privileged to attend the annual Affiliate President's meeting where there was an open discussion on what the various state associations (affiliates) were doing and what the associations were concerned about.

Lastly, I participated in focus group meetings. Each year NEHA seeks the affiliate president's opinions on an issue of national significance to the profession. During the Anchorage focus groups we discussed the role of environmental health in terrorism response and emergency preparedness. Lots of discussion and ideas! These are to be compiled and then approved by the NEHA board of directors, after which they will be published in the NEHA Journal. Be watching!

Thanks for letting me represent the Idaho Environmental Health Association at the Anchorage NEHA conference. It was my pleasure indeed!

Paul Guenther, President
Idaho Environmental Health Association