

The Newsletter of the

# Montana Environmental Health Association

**MEHA**

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*EDITOR, Christine Hughes, R.S.*

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## Conference on the Caldera

### MEHA/WEHA JOINT FALL CONFERENCE

The Fall educational conference in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming – *Conference on the Caldera* is nearing. Be sure to visit [www.mehaweb.org](http://www.mehaweb.org) by September 15<sup>th</sup> to register. By registering early a \$25 Yellowstone Park entrance pass will be included in your registration. Registration

fees will increase by \$25 after September 15<sup>th</sup>.

There is still time, register today for best rates!

If you prefer to register my mail, the form is available on the website. For registration questions please contact Kathy Moore at: [kmoore@co.lewis-clark.mt.us](mailto:kmoore@co.lewis-clark.mt.us)



## Fall Conference Information Updates and Requests

### MEHA Awards Nominations Needed

Please be reminded that awards nominations are still needed. All of the necessary information regarding awards nominations is available at [www.meha.cloverpad.org](http://www.meha.cloverpad.org)

You will find the nomination form, list of previous winners, list of current rookies at the above site. Some awards are only available to MEHA members or Registered Sanitarians. For questions please contact Karen Solberg at [ksolberg@anacondadeerlodge.mt.gov](mailto:ksolberg@anacondadeerlodge.mt.gov) or Christine Hughes at [chughes@lakemt.gov](mailto:chughes@lakemt.gov) The deadline for awards nominations is September 17, 2010.

### MEHA to Offer NEHA Testing at Fall Conference

MEHA will again offer Sanitarians the opportunity to test for NEHA credentials at the fall conference. If you currently know you will need to test for a NEHA exam or would like more information, please contact Carol Newlin, NEHA Credential Specialist at [cnewlin@neha.org](mailto:cnewlin@neha.org)

## MEHA OFFICERS

Crystal Nuño – President

Christine Hughes –  
President Elect

Karen Solberg- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice  
President

Mary Schroeder- Secretary

Kathy Moore- Treasurer

Frank Prescar- Alternate  
Treasurer/Director

Theresa Blazicevich-  
Director

Tom Moore- Director

Jeanna McPherson-  
Director

## MEHA Foundation Silent Auction Donations

The MEHA Foundation will be holding the silent auction at the fall conference again this year. Funds from the silent auction are used for training and professional development for MEHA members. Your donation is appreciated. If you have an item to donate, please contact Mary Schroeder at [schflyfish2@juno.com](mailto:schflyfish2@juno.com)

## NEHA Region 3 Report

*Roy Kroeger, NEHA Region 3 RVP*

### 2010 Annual Educational Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico

This year, NEHA's 74th Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition was held June 6-9, 2010, in Albuquerque and hosted over 940 attendees, including professionals from many other nations. Attendees had a plethora of educational sessions to choose from on twenty plus topics ranging from food safety to onsite wastewater to sustainability. They could also choose from eight pre-conference workshops, hear from preeminent experts on several topics, and attend an impressive poster session or numerous networking and social events.

For many of the attendees, highlights of their conference experience included meeting new colleagues, seeing old friends, sharing research with professionals from around the world, gathering new ideas, and receiving cutting-edge education. NEHA focused on providing a Return on Investment (ROI) this year, which simply means that you would be able to return to your workplace after the conference with the ability to implement program improvements and help create bottom line results for your organization.

I hope many of you have the opportunity to make it to the next NEHA AEC and exhibit in Columbus, OH in June, 2011.

### AEC Scholarships

During the past AEC, NEHA was able to secure \$35,000 of funding from FDA and Decade Software to provide scholarships to the AEC. In 2011, NEHA will continue to work to receive even more funding for more scholarships. FDA has already signed on to help next year, and there is even a possibility of a Hilton/Doubletree Hotels Scholarship.

### Work with ASHTO on workforce services

NEHA was recently asked to join forces with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) on a workforce services project. The State Environmental Health Directors (SEHDs) within ASHTO have made workforce challenges a priority focus area for the coming years. ASHTO recognizes that our workforce has no uniform national credential requirement and is also facing the increased concerns of retaining quality staff and recruiting quality candidates.

### State Affiliate Conference Calls

NEHA is inviting state affiliate presidents to participate in an exciting new forum: affiliate president conference calls. The initial conference call focused on workforce development. NEHA was looking to find out what workforce training is needed across the country and share ideas on how to make training cost-effective and manageable with a busy workload. To find out more about these conference calls, please contact Christ Tate at [CTate@neha.org](mailto:CTate@neha.org) or call 303-898-6361.

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*NEHA Region 3 Report - Continued***What has NEHA done for me!**

Over the past six months NEHA has been active in the support of local environmental health positions in state legislative sessions. NEHA has supported the state environmental health position on: food safety issues in Wyoming and Iowa, radon certification in Missouri, workforce retention in New Jersey and recently a body art regulation in California.

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### Using Data to Develop Effective Interventions: Diarrhea in Lewis & Clark County

*Laurel Riek, Environmental Health Specialist  
Licensed Establishment Program Manager, Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department*

Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department has been maintaining a database on reportable diseases for over 10 years. Analysis of the data gives insight on yearly trends, seasonal incidence and how we compare to national incidence of disease. It also can show an unusual spike in cases that may need attention to prevent further incidence.

We looked for trends in lab confirmed diarrheal illness of *E. coli* 0157:H7, Non-0157 STEC, Campylobacter, Salmonella, Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Cyclospora, and Yersinia. We separated data by age, disease and time of onset. We discovered that in 2007 61% of the diarrhea cases occurred in children aged 0-17; 36% of the cases were in children 0-5 years old. Our 0-5-year-old children are typically preschool and daycare populations.

In an effort to reduce the disease rate in children, we began an education campaign for daycare providers in 2007. Laura Hendley, RS, designed disease prevention and food safety classes for daycare providers that emphasized infants and preschool-age children. As we calculated percentages over the next two years, we observed a drop to 23% in children between 0-5 years.

Several participants in the training classes asked how Lewis & Clark County compared to the state and the rest of the nation in diarrheal disease incidence. We compared the rates of 5 diarrheal illnesses per 100,000 people between CDC's Foodnet data, Montana as a state, and Lewis & Clark County for 2008. The Foodnet data consists of 10 regions in the United States that comprise 15% of the US population. In looking at this data, it became apparent that *E. coli* 0157, STEC, and Salmonella incidence is higher in Lewis & Clark County than elsewhere in Montana and the US.

The rate of *E. coli* 0157 reported was 5.87 times higher in Lewis & Clark County than the Foodnet national rate for 2008. Lewis & Clark County has rates that are 2.86 times higher than the state as a whole. When comparing Non-0157 Shiga-Toxin producing *E. coli*, Lewis & Clark County is 10.9 times higher than Foodnet data and 2.73 times higher than state data. Salmonella was 1.5 times higher in Lewis & Clark County than Foodnet, and 1.8 times higher than the state totals.

*Effective Interventions - Continued*

The data reinforced the importance of work to identify the sources of *E. coli* infection and to prevent further illness. We have targeted three modes of transmission. To address foodborne transmission, we are providing training to day care centers on food handling and food safety. The second is through contact with animals and their environment. This would include livestock, petting zoos, and wild animals. We are advocating handwashing stations at the fair barns, handwashing during school field trips and other opportunities for animal contact. The third method is through exposure to contaminated surface water from swimming and drinking untreated water.

We have developed and distributed a prevention handout to school principals and nurses. We are planning a public education blitz beginning in May. This will include press releases, interviews and brochures for schools and daycares to increase awareness of the prevention strategies. The success of this endeavor will be measured by periodic calculation of incidence rates of diarrheal diseases for Lewis & Clark County and comparison to Foodnet and Montana rates.

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## Northwest Sanitarians Develop Licensed Mobile Agreement

*Christine Hughes, R.S., Lake County*

The Northwest Sanitarians Association which consists of several counties in Northwest Montana recently developed a mobile food establishment agreement. Counties included in the Northwest Sanitarians Association are Ravalli, Missoula, Sanders, Mineral, Lake, Flathead and Lincoln Counties. The idea for a mobile food establishment agreement between counties developed because of slight variations regarding mobile food rules in various counties. Sanitarians were experiencing difficulty when trying to describe to a food purveyor what might be necessary regarding requirements in a mobile food establishment at a location outside of their jurisdiction.

A basic set of guidelines was sought regarding what each county required for licensing as a mobile food unit. The association came up with four basic guidelines that a mobile must have to be licensable in the seven counties. The necessary items are:

- (1) The unit must be a vehicle-mounted, self-contained structure, like an enclosed trailer; or a self-contained push cart. Essential equipment must be permanently installed so there is little chance it will be left behind. All cooking and food prep must be done in the unit or at an approved commissary, except a BBQ may be outside the self-contained area as long as it stays within 25' away of the supporting mobile. This is to ensure that the hand sink is within acceptable distance.
- (2) The vehicle must contain mechanical refrigeration.
- (3) The unit must contain a handwashing sink.
- (4) The unit must contain a three compartment sink.

*Mobile agreement – Continued*

This is not to say all other appropriate ARM's do not apply, but has provided a basic foundation in order to reduce confusion for mobile operators, save time and money by reducing review and workload for sanitarians, promote understanding of local health departments' roles, and to ensure safe food practices throughout the region.

Thus far, the agreement has worked well and enabled sanitarians to provide information to the public when inquiring about what is needed in their mobile food unit in order to travel from county to county. If you would like a copy of the document from the Northwest Montana Sanitarian's Association, please contact Alisha Johnson at [johnsonal@ho.missoula.mt.us](mailto:johnsonal@ho.missoula.mt.us)

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## Excellence in Missoula County

*Shannon Theriault, Environmental Health Specialist, Supervisor, Missoula County*

In July, Jeanna McPherson, R.S., won the Missoula County 2010 Outstanding Employee of the Year Award. Only one county employee receives this award each year. Applicants are judged on attributes such as whether they promote team work, take pride in their job, go the extra mile, and represent Missoula County in a positive and caring manner.

Jeanna was nominated, and ultimately chosen, because she is competent, dedicated and motivated. She's a good communicator, careful to explain the public health reasons for the regulations, thereby helping the regulated community understand why compliance is important. She handles conflict well without becoming condescending or patronizing. She treats people with respect, and when someone does get angry, she doesn't take it personally.

Jeanna has an innate sense of fairness and is willing to speak her mind. She recognizes inconsistencies in policies and practice and brings them to the attention of the team. She understands why consistency between inspectors is important and once the group comes to a decision about how to interpret a particular rule or handle a certain situation, she sticks to it.

Every Environmental Health Specialist's actions and attitudes help form people's opinions about county government in general and the Health Department in particular. Most people want their government to be protective, fair and not over burdensome. Jeanna recognizes this and has played an important role in improving people's attitudes about local government.

At the Health Department, Jeanna's primary duties are in the Licensed Establishment program. She inspects food service, public accommodations, and pools and teaches classes on food safety. She is the Lead Sanitarian for both the temporary food service and pool program. She has worked for Missoula County for three years.

## In Memory of Sheryl Consort



*Sheryl Consort, photo courtesy of the Montana Standard, August 3, 2010*

Long time MEHA member Sheryl "Sheree" Consort passed away on July 25, 2010 from complications of cancer. Sheree worked at DEQ in the subdivision section and those of us who had the pleasure of knowing her and working with her will remember her as a thoughtful and funny lady who was always willing to help out with those thorny subdivision questions. – *Kathy Moore, MEHA Treasurer*

The following is her obituary as printed in the *Montana Standard Newspaper, August 3, 2010*:

Sheryl D. Fleming Consort of Butte died Sunday, July 25, 2010, at 10:17 p.m. in Richland, Wash., at Kadlec Regional Medical Center.

"Sheree" was born in San Francisco on April 12, 1955, at Mount Zion Hospital to Joseph P. and Eva Lou Cox Fleming. She grew up in California in the Walnut Creek–Concord area, attending Palmer School and Ignacio Valley High School. She graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California at Berkeley in paleontology/ geology. She then attended San Diego State University and received her master's degree in geology.

While at San Diego State University, Sheree met the love of her life and future husband, James J. Consort, and they were married on July 7, 1979, in Walnut Creek. Sheree and her husband worked in the San Francisco Bay Area, moving to Richland in 1987.

In Richland, Sheree worked for Kaiser Engineers and other Hanford companies until 1998 when she joined her husband in Butte. In 2000, Sheree went to work for the state of Montana in a job she loved, and she enjoyed the beautiful 70-mile drive to Helena each work day, but loved to live in Passmore Canyon in Butte where she had moose, deer, rabbits, chipmunks and birds of all kinds in her yard. Also sharing their home were her two beautiful dogs, Blue and Brandy, and her tortoiseshell cat, Honey — always at her side.

In December of 2009 doctors discovered Sheree had ovarian cancer in her lungs, and with developing cancer, she was forced to resign in April 2010 from the position that had been held open for her with the state.

Sheree had many wonderful and caring friends in Butte, especially Francine Coombe, who looked in on her daily, brought her communion, took her for her treatments to the hospital, and helped her through the journey with cancer along with many other friends who gave their time generously.

Sheree is survived by her husband, James J. Consort; mother, Eva Lou Cox Fleming of Richland, Wash.; brother, Dr. Darrin P. Fleming and his wife, Margaret, and her nephew, Gregory P. Fleming of Eugene, Ore. She is also survived by her friend, Ana Sherwood, Ana's husband, David, and her two godchildren, Laura and Davey of Richland.

She was preceded in death by her father, Joseph P. Fleming, and her grandparents, Jake and Eva Estelle Waring.

Sheree had a wonderful, sweet disposition that served so well with her love for God, and you were blessed if you were one of her family or her friend.

Mass for Sheree was celebrated at 1 p.m. Friday, July 30, 2010, at Christ the King Catholic Church, 1111 Stevens Dr., Richland, Wash. Inurnment will follow at Sunset Memorial Gardens, 915 Bypass Highway, Richland.

## NEHA Book Distributorship Program

Are you ordering professional books? If so, remember that MEHA is part of the NEHA book distributorship program. When using this program to order books through NEHA, ten percent of sales will go to MEHA. An added bonus is that books will be offered at NEHA member rates.

There are instructions for using this service on the MEHA website under the “news” link.



## MEHA President and President Elect Attend NEHA Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico

*Christine Hughes, R.S., Lake County Environmental Health Department*

*Moving forward*, advancing environmental health into the future. This was the theme of the National Environmental Health Conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico in June 2010. A focus of the conference was our economic deficit and the effect it has on environmental health departments. In addition, return on investment (ROI) was a focus. Meaning, the importance of gaining as much as possible from attending a conference such as this in economically difficult times.

The value of personal meetings and the ability to bring something useful back to your department after the conference was over was emphasized. This year NEHA added the ability to download speaker presentations, view sessions (for a fee), and network online with conference attendees prior to and after the event. Overall, focusing on maximum return and bottom line are needed to keep environmental health programs *moving forward*.

Crystal Nuño, MEHA President and Christine Hughes, MEHA President-Elect attended this year’s conference, along with several other Montana Sanitarians. MEHA funds allow the President and President-Elect to attend each year. This year an FDA scholarship was offered for applicants working in environmental health, which funded the President-Elect’s registration fee. This scholarship will be made available next year, something for all sanitarians to keep in mind.

Overall, the conference was very informational and was a great networking opportunity. The ability to meet environmental health specialists from all over the world is a great opportunity. There were opportunities for face to face meetings with NEHA representatives. It’s always nice to personally meet our NEHA representatives. Broad arrays of topics were presented; everything from food service, wastewater systems, air quality, leadership and development, water quality and more were available. Sanitarians from Montana presented at the conference. Jennifer Pinnow and Crystal Nuño both sat on panel presentations regarding food safety topics.

MEHA is one of the most active environmental health organizations in the U.S. and our numbers are increasing, whereas many are declining in the current economy. Our organization and professionalism are noted outside of our state; a great attribute! On that note, let’s keep *moving forward* and advancing our profession.



*Crystal Nuño, Christine Hughes attending the UL event at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque, NM*