2014 Annual Educational Conference

By Michael Baker, AEC Chair

After a unanimous vote, the Board of the Washington State Environmental Health Association (WSEHA) has decided to move forward with the 2014 Annual Educational Conference (AEC). Building on the success of the 2013 AEC and feedback from WSEHA members, the conference will once again be held at the Great Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound on May 12-13, 2014.

This is an exciting time for WSEHA, as we move forward with our purpose of being a strong advocate for environmental health professionals and programs. In 2013, the WSEHA Annual Educational Conference showed us why Environmental Public Health remains the cornerstone of public health services and programs. In 2014, we hope to show how the profession has been able to adapt to the ever-changing world while remaining relevant to those we serve. From providing traditional services, like water and food safety programs, to having a strong voice in public health preparedness or global sustainability, environmental health professionals have remained the leaders and experts in these areas. The Annual Educational Conference gives environmental health professionals the opportunity to come together to share, learn, and benefit from the experts in our field.

The goals of the Annual Educational Conference are:

- Provide a variety of educational opportunities to WSEHA members during the AEC,
- Identify emerging environmental health issues that require education and training,
- Establish connections among environmental health professionals in all agencies and arenas,
- Encourage professional standards of practice.

Tell us what you want!
In order to meet the educational and professional needs of our members, it is important to hear what you want from this conference. Let us know the training, topics, information, or presentations that you would like to see.

Want to be involved?
- There are lots of volunteer positions remaining within the AEC committees. Consider volunteering your time, resources, or expertise.
- Consider sharing your accomplishments and submit an abstract.
- Encourage co-workers and partners to present.
- Check the WSEHA website for news and announcements about the 2014 AEC.
- Attend the AEC!

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The Washington State Environmental Health Association Newsletter is the official publication of WSEHA. Membership in WSEHA includes a subscription to the newsletter. Manuscripts for publication must be type-written and submitted via e-mail to kerri@wseha.org, or on a computer disk mailed to WSEHA at the address above. Membership in WSEHA is not required for acceptance of articles in the newsletter.

Opinions expressed in articles published in the WSEHA newsletter should not be accepted necessarily as statements of policy or opinions of WSEHA.

Next Newsletter Deadline: Friday, November 29, 2013

Did you know job openings are on the WSEHA website? http://www.wseha.org/professional-development/job-postings/

If you have a job related to environmental health that you would like posted on our website, please email our Executive Secretary with the job title, closing date, job description and application information (or a simple link to the job announcement will do).
President’s Message

By Kay Massong, WSEHA President

Wow, what a great year! Wasn’t that a spectacular AEC? WSEHA’s mission is to provide educational opportunities for person growth and professional development. As Environmental Health Specialists, we are responsible for ensuring clean water, safe food, removal of waste products, and much, much more.

The challenge that we face is two-fold: First, the current economy has created budget cuts that affect our daily lives. As Environmental Health Professionals, we are asked to do more with less. Second: A new generation of sanitarians is coming up to replace the “old” timers that are retiring. WSEHA needs to rally and provide them with the educational and net working experiences that was provided for the “old” timers.

I am very excited to be a part of this mighty force. Please keep in mind that WSEHA exists because of volunteers that want to promote environmental health related opportunities. I challenge every one that reads this article to get at least one new WSEHA member between now and December 31, 2013.

As always, keep your eyes on the future and help make this world a better place.

Staff Changes: Kittitas County & Department of Ecology

By James Rivard

In June of 2013, Central Regional Vice President, James Rivard, left Kittitas County Public Health as the Environmental Health Director and accepted a position with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) in the Central Regional Office as the Regional Manager for the Waste 2 Resource program. Waste 2 Resources provides technical assistance in managing solid waste facilities and issues and helps provide local governments with financial assistance to solid waste and health departments. Without financial assistance through the Coordinated Prevention Grant (CPG) or Community Litter Cleanup Program (CLCP) from Waste 2 Resources, many local jurisdictions would not be able to provide services such as moderate risk waste collection activities or local litter abatement programs resulting in many hazardous and recyclable materials being diverted unnecessarily into landfills across the state. CPG also provides a funding source for departments to perform solid waste enforcement complaint investigations and facility inspections; without a funding source, many permit fees would be substantially higher and complaint investigations would be an unfunded mandate.

Beginning on September 23, 2013, Holly Meyers will start at Kittitas County as the Environmental Health Supervisor and will be James’ replacement. Holly comes from a background as a permit writer for the Sewage Treatment Plant in Yakima and a past 15 year veteran of the Ecology’s Air Quality program. She will have many challenges in her new role. In 2009, Upper Kittitas County groundwater withdrawals were put to a halt by the Ecology. Kittitas County now has a deadline to comply with the Washington State Supreme Court’s Order to comply with the Growth Management Act for Lower Kittitas County, which will require the county to be more protective of groundwater withdrawals from exempt wells. There is a current proposal to limit new exempt wells to only 350 gallons a day but environment groups and Ecology have made it clear that full water right mitigation is needed so that new uses do not impede on other’s rights.

Holly has her work cut out for her. Good luck Holly and welcome aboard!
Gary Fraser Retires!

By Nancy Bernard, DOH

Gary Fraser, the Washington State Department of Health Water Recreation Safety Manager, retired at the end of August after a forty-three year career in Environmental Public Health. As the Washington State water recreation expert for over three decades, Gary’s career was dedicated to preventing injury, illnesses, and drownings in pools, spas, water parks, lakes, rivers, and public beaches.

Gary graduated from the University of Washington’s Preventative Medicine Program in 1970 and spent five years at the Snohomish Health District where he worked primarily in drinking water. He began a noise program while there and started to work in pool safety.

Gary and his wife Pat packed up their growing family and moved to Bozeman in 1975 where he earned a MS in Microbiology and EH Administration. He did a graduate internship for DOH – evaluating their swimming pool program. He concluded that DOH should keep the pool program if safety could be added to the work.

Gary began work at the Washington State Department of Health September 1976 in the NW region drinking water program as a water supply specialist. The five percent of his time in the pool program would grow into a full time focus. Gary saw a need to be more educational in pool operations and safety. He worked extensively with pool operators, pool owners, and local health jurisdictions to bring about important changes to the program, gaining the respect of industry and local health departments. He developed state-wide training courses in pool operation, safety, and maintenance, and in 1981 developed the Swimming Pool Operation Manual into a comprehensive tool to address effective disinfection, drowning and injury prevention, equipment operation and maintenance.

Gary followed the research in all areas of water recreation - diving accidents, drownings, infection control, and filtration – and worked to apply it in prevention strategies, trainings, and resources. He trained local health jurisdictions on how to conduct investigations of fatalities, drowning-survivor, or serious incidents. He was early to recognize and address the unique hazards of spas and hot tubs and water parks. Gary’s work to protect the public took a major step forward when the legislature passed specific rules for recreational water contact facilities and for swimming pools and spas.

Dr. Michael Beach, CDC, spoke for many of us when he wrote to Gary – “I heard last week that you were retiring and wanted to congratulate you on this transition as well as convey the mixed feelings I have losing such a strong advocate for improving the health and safety of the swimming public....Clearly your impact has been felt by public health professionals, the aquatics industry, and most of all, through decreased adverse health and safety outcomes in your state.”
Safe Waters

There once was a man named Gary
Who’s passion for rec waters was amazing
It all started in the seventies you see,
In Smith Towers in Seattle with space of plenty
Of water recreations boxes and piles and stacks of plans aplenty
He was truly becoming a most learned and passionate man
Of rules and procedures for Rec-safety.

In the nineties you see a move was key,
To a small cube in the maze of Washington’s governmental See.
There were stacks and piles galore but very little room it was to be.
Through it all he persevered over it with a grin,
Ever ready moving forward with new plans to begin,
Seeking safe waters for all and their kin.

He ever had a ready smile,
His faith and dignity carrying him through many miles.
A background expanding over the next several years,
His expertise and persistence won the respect of his peers.
He quietly explained and convinced a majority to understand and hear,
That a RCW was needed for those safe waters to prevent tears.

His wisdom and facilitation became legend,
As he taught and educated Aquatic operators to the next level.
He was always ready to help,
And so many tools he sought to develop.
That allowed rec safety to become the rule,
And a pool operators manual that is still considered cool.

A founding member of the Washington Drowning Prevention Coalition
Which he fostered nurtured and supported with great mission.
A president of WSEHA and John Nordin winner award,
Far and wide he became known,
Dedicated to the bone,
A gentleman of the highest ethical tone.

So here is to a man of legend
Who has always worked to save the life of the many.
We will miss him as he for truly was a man of great blessing.
May he be a consultant forever to any.
New Committee Chairs

Lauren Brinker......Education Committee

I am very pleased to be serving WSEHA as the Education Committee Chair and look forward to working with the current board and members to provide valuable training and educational opportunities.

My career in environmental health began upon graduating from Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, with a Bachelor’s in Environmental Science and Political Science. I worked for Eagle County, Colorado, focusing most of my time on their food safety and onsite wastewater programs.

I returned to Lehigh University and obtained a Master’s Degree in Environmental Policy Design in 2009. I have since been employed with Public Health - Seattle & King County and currently hold the position of an Environmental Health Specialist in the Food and Facilities Program.

We are all so lucky to work in such a beautiful state with a responsibility to protect the public and the environment that we all value so much. Personally, I am looking forward to further serving WSEHA and connecting with my colleagues around the state doing the same important work.

Please consider volunteering with WSEHA. We need volunteers on the Education Committee! Your participation will not only provide individual growth but will also help our organization move forward.

The Education Committee is tasked with devising and implementing ways of improving the professional standards of sanitarians through continuing education, which helps enable our members to better educate the public in all phases of environmental health.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Megan McNelly......Publications Committee

I’ve been employed by Pacific County since 2006, working as an Environmental Health Specialist. I started in the food safety program but branched out into the solid waste, pools, and school programs as well.

The variety of programs is one thing that I appreciate about the environmental health field and working in a small county. We’re able to meet a range of people, from the ‘shoppers’ at the household hazardous waste facility reuse program to the restaurant owners to the person testing their well water.

While being an EHS wasn’t what I had expected, it’s been a rewarding experience and I am looking forward to the new opportunities, including being involved with WSEHA. To echo Lauren above, volunteers are always welcome!

Want more information?

Our first 2014 AEC Committee Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 2, 2013 from 10:00 am to Noon by conference call. A meeting room will be available in Tumwater to serve as the conference call hub. Additional meeting rooms will be set up according to need. You will not need to travel to attend the call, but may wish to participate at one of the hubs in order to interact with other volunteers.

If you would like additional information, or would like to volunteer for the 2014 AEC, please contact the WSEHA Executive Secretary Kerri Wagner at (360) 738-8946 or kerri@wseha.org by Friday, September 27th. She will provide you with further information about our first AEC Committee Meeting.