

NEHA NEWS

**Staff Profile: Ginny Coyle**

I am new to both Denver and NEHA. My husband and I moved here from Minnesota about 18 months ago and couldn't be happier. I joined NEHA in June to support a new program, Epi-Ready for Response Teams, in cooperation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as part of the Food All-Hazards Rapid Response Team Training. Over the next two years, we

will be holding workshops across the country to train teams from FDA, state departments of agriculture, and affiliated partners in methods to respond to foodborne illness disease outbreaks. ERRT is based on our award-winning Epi-Ready program, with an emphasis on federal and state responsibilities in food protection.

My background is somewhat eclectic but with a strong focus on adult education. I hold a BS and MS in environmental horticulture from the University of Minnesota and taught community college classes in horticulture for about 10 years. I also taught environmental science at several private colleges in Minnesota and Denver.

As a trainer for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture several years ago, I coordinated workshops throughout Minnesota for the Integrated Pest Management in Schools program. With that experience, and with the help of my supervisors Larry Marcum and Tom Dickey and cohort Elizabeth Ostertag, I am looking forward to working with FDA and NEHA to help build the nation's capacity for a rapid, coordinated response to a foodborne disease outbreak.

**Staff Profile: Rance Baker**

My background has always revolved around food and I don't see a day when it won't. Most of my experience has been in the retail side of food, ranging from managing restaurants of all calibers to managing regions in the natural food market industry. Although for over 30 years I have been based out of Denver, my work has allowed me to live in such diverse places as Van-

couver, British Columbia; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Detroit, Michigan. In 2004, I opened a restaurant/specialty market in downtown St. Louis, and was honored with the city's Spirit of St. Louis award. I have had wonderful experiences designing new food concepts for large corporations, creating wine bars and specialty market concepts, and working as a design chef developing new products for the airline industry. I also had an incredible

opportunity to work in India, designing a food facility capable of feeding 5,000 people an hour.

In August 2009, I accepted a position with NEHA as program administrator for the Entrepreneurial Zone. What a wonderfully challenging and exciting role it has been! Because of my background, I bring a strong understanding of how the private sector interacts with regulatory concerns. My goal is to build strong partnerships that will increase the effectiveness of the hard work of the EH professional.

NEHA's Governmental Affairs Program in Action

On February 8, a member of the Wyoming House of Representatives introduced a bill to exempt homemade foods from all licensing, inspection, certification, and registration requirements. Foods sold anywhere from farmers' markets to roadside stands to street corners would be exempt from any oversight.

As Roy Kroeger, environmental health supervisor for Cheyenne/Laramie County notes, the proposed law was a "potential food safety catastrophe."

On February 11, Robert Harrington, director of the Casper-Natrona County Health Department, contacted the NEHA Governmental Affairs Program, asking for help. Within 24 hours, a letter from NEHA President Welford Roberts went out to the Wyoming governor, the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate. The letter pointed out that "the Wyoming Food Freedom Act" would have many unintended consequences:

We firmly believe that the statutory and regulatory changes envisioned in HB0054 will weaken the public health protection currently afforded the citizens of Wyoming. As you are no doubt no aware, food safety has become a major public health concern nationally over the past several years. From the spinach outbreak to the more recent peanut butter outbreak, life-threatening foodborne illness events have been on the rise. To safeguard the public from these kinds of threats to their health, we believe that local health department oversight and education are called for (as is the case across the nation today). The regulatory repeal called for under this legislation will, in our view, compromise our ability to protect the public's health and likely lead to the unintended consequence of larger numbers of foodborne illness outbreaks.

The clear trend in food safety today involves most food safety programs at both the state and local levels placing a greater emphasis on food service operator education than on more traditional regulatory approaches. The Wyoming programs are among the food safety programs utilizing this approach. It has proven to be an effective model in obtaining compliance with existing statutory requirements. It also results in creating beneficial partnerships between food ser-

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vice providers and their local health departments. And most importantly, it serves as a framework to meet their mutual goals of serving a safe product. We believe the approach in HB0054 will discourage and perhaps end the productive consultation that is now occurring between the provider and local public health.

I would also point out that beyond the significant threat to public health, allowing the unregulated sale of food products to the general public presents an enormous liability risk to the citizen/provider. The fact that the point of sale was a non-commercial event (e.g., church function or county fair, school event) will not change the liability for serving a contaminated food product. Perhaps the liability is even increased because the food was served absent any certification or inspection requirement.

We strongly urge you to reject what we believe to be this unnecessary and ill-conceived legislation. I thank you in advance for your consideration of our position.

After two days of emotional public hearings, the bill passed the Wyoming House of Representatives on February 19. Then, on February 25, the bill, at least as currently written, died in the Agriculture Committee of the Wyoming Senate for lack of a second motion.

"You weren't the only ones to join this particular fight," said Harrington, "but we sure benefited from your entry!"

For more on this story, see Harrington's letter to the editor below. 🐾

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

What a coincidence—the March issue of the JEH includes a column from President Roberts, detailing NEHA's political involvement, something I have often criticized. . . .

Well, we recently faced an absolutely STOOPIID situation out here on the wild prairie in Wyoming. . . . a rancher-legislator introduced a bill to EXEMPT from licensing, inspection, certification, and registration ALL HOMEMADE FOODS for sale at farmers' markets, roadside stands, street corners, barnyards—anywhere except in licensed restaurants and grocery stores.

NEHA responded to my call for help posthaste and sent a letter to the governor, the speaker of the house, and the president of the senate, gently pointing out that perhaps the sponsor of this

monstrosity may have spent too long listening to the wind whistle across the sagebrush. . . .

The bill skated through the house, but some of my contacts within the asylum known as the Wyoming state capitol tell me that the senate will give it a decent cowboy funeral.

I'd like to think that NEHA helped with the eventual outcome. . . . regardless of the result, NEHA's quick assistance sure made me feel a lot less lonely, and gratified that my association is, indeed, taking an active stance in political issues. THANK YOU.

Thank you to NEHA Region 3 Vice President Roy Kroeger.

Robert E. Harrington, MS, RS, DAAS
Casper-Natrona County Health Department
Casper, Wyoming 🐾

Managing Editor's Desk

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ship application can be found at the following Web site address: <http://www.ciphi.ca/pdf/apply-en.pdf>.

Whether or not you decide to join CIHPI, you should know that CIPHI has extended a very special opportunity to NEHA members in connection with the upcoming Vancouver meeting. As a NEHA member, you can register for this event at the CIPHI member rate.

In addition, CIPHI has applied to NEHA for CE credit for this event. As such, you

should be able to earn NEHA-recognized CE credit for attending the conference educational sessions.

Again, I hope that many NEHA members will find a way to take advantage of these financial savings and the CE credit that your NEHA membership and our special relationship with CIPHI have opened up for you. As the Olympic coverage has clearly shown us, Vancouver is a world-class, multicultural city situated between spectacular coastal mountains and the Pacific Ocean. It is also among the leading green cities of the

world. Not surprisingly, Vancouver is often ranked (along side Geneva) as one of the two most popular and attractive cities in the world.

You will find among your CIPHI colleagues both a warm welcome and many new friendships as the hosts of this meeting.

Please give this event and this opportunity your serious consideration. 🐾

