AMY SAUPE

PRESIDENT'S

**ADDRESS** 

embracing the promise of this Spring Newsletter and looking forward to spring blooms and warmer days ahead. That's an especially comforting thought as we navigate the unpredictable ride that is 2025.

Volume 53, No.1

environmental public health, our budgets, and our work.

IN THIS EDITION:

My thoughts are with those facing hardships this year,

whatever your journey - from those particularly impacted by recent events, to all who are concerned about the future of It's a privilege to work alongside professionals committed to environmental health, whether you're ensuring water quality, inspecting restaurants and hotels, regulating tattoo parlors, addressing hoarding situations and more. Your passion for

CANDIDATE **BIOGRAPHIES** SUSTAINING MEMBERS MEHA MEMBER science and results is inspiring! **SPOTLIGHT** Many of you are dedicating your personal time and resources WINTER MEHA to MEHA activities, which reflects both the uncertainty of our

times and the deep value you find in this organization and its **RECAP** members. I sincerely appreciate your dedication—your efforts make conferences, memberships, awards, education, and

CONFERENCE PHOTO **UPCOMING EVENTS** newsletters possible! Thank you. ANNOUNCEMENTS

I would also like to extend a special and timely thank you to Kim Carlton, MEHA Past President and NEHA Region 4 Vice MEMBER & STAFFING President for the past eight years. Kim's leadership, humor, **UPDATES** wisdom—especially during my time President—have been invaluable. She entrusted me with the

wishes for your next adventure.

Science Fair awards in 2017, and her mentorship has left a lasting impact. Kim, as you step away from your NEHA role, we send you our deepest gratitude and best Speaking of adventure, I hope to see many of you at the MEHA Spring Conference in Duluth, May 7 – 9, 2025. With a nod to those who have organized trivia at Spring Conferences in support of our scholarships, here's a trivia question inspired by my foodborne work and botanical heart: Which country is the biggest exporter of coffee beans worldwide? (Answer below.)

MEHA's bylaws (Article II, Objective 7) include a commitment to fostering an

inclusive and equitable organization. As we move forward together, we stand with all of our members. I came across this quote from American writer Jeanne Marie Laskas that resonates with environmental health work in our diverse communities: "You can make your world so much larger simply by acknowledging everyone else's." Please take care of yourselves, your colleagues, and your loved ones. Yours in solidarity, Amy Saupe

MFHA President Answer: Brazil CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES

Candidate for Vice-President Amanda Buell

**Hennepin County** Amanda Buell has been in the Environmental Public Health

field and a member of MEHA for 19 years. She started as an intern with the City of Minnetonka and has worked for Hennepin County Public Health since then. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Bethel in St. Paul,

Minnesota and later graduated with her Master of Science in Chemistry from the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Amanda worked in the programs of food, pool, lodging, beach water sampling, plan review as an Environmentalist and has overseen septic, wells, beaches, interns, plan review, FDA standards, workforce strategy and planning as a Supervising She currently co-chairs the Minnesota Environmentalist.

EHCIB and represents Minnesota and Hennepin County on the NACCHO Food Safety Workgroup. Amanda generally has a side gig going to keep things interesting. She has taught chemistry at local universities and contracted with the International Food Protection Training Institute where she was a subject matter expert and curriculum writer for the inspection training course FDA 170. Recently, Amanda has become a certified professional coach and enjoys working with new leaders in healthcare and public health. In her spare time, Amanda can be found playing French horn with a local group or carrying a historical fiction book to watch her kids at a ski hill, hockey rink, baseball field or dog park. Candidate for Vice-President **Justo Garcia** 

City of Minneapolis

Justo Garcia is originally from Tumaco Nariño in southwestern Colombia. He studied Marine Biology at Jorge Tadeo Lozano University in Bogota and Food Science at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Some of Justo's work experience includes teaching science to middle and high school students, being an environmental consultant for

plays chess, scrabble, cribbage, reads and goes bowling.

and his Master of Science in Environmental Science from

Outside of work, Cody enjoys bird watching, board gaming,

I'm Caitlyn Laudenbach and have been with the City of St. Cloud as an Environmental Health Specialist since December 2020. I have my bachelor's degree in Biomedical Sciences from St. Cloud State University. Prior to working in the environmental health field, I worked at Microbiologics. This company manufactures biological quality control material for use in several fields, including pharmaceuticals and food safety. My roles working at Microbiologics included working in the quality control laboratory and in technical support where I assisted customers from around the globe on how to use the products and troubleshoot reported product deficiencies.

Washington State University – Vancouver.

also serve as the MEHA Board Director.

Environmental Consultant with

visiting the family cabin.

My name is Loreena Hilton and I am running for the Director position on the MEHA board. I currently work as an

Workforce Development Unit at MDH. Prior to joining the state two years ago, I was an Environmental Health Specialist with the City of Bloomington for 12 years. I am passionate about Environmental Health and enjoy making connections with everyone across our state within this field. I previously served on the conference planning committee for MEHA from 2017-2024, and now I am interested in becoming involved in a different capacity by serving on the board. MEHA has been such an amazing organization to be a part of, and I would love to continue to contribute to its mission of increasing awareness of environmental health

the

and spending time with his family.

Geo-Ambiental, Hennepin County Human Services, and the Public Health Department, and currently working for the Minneapolis Health Department as a Health Manager. Justo loves sharing his Spanish culture and is passionate about teaching youth and young adults. Justo is a Register Environmental Health Specialist in the state of Minnesota (REHS), a Certified HACCP trainer listed with the International HACCP Alliance, Lead Instructor 2.0 FSMC Preventive Control Qualified Individual (PCQI), Foreign Suppliers Verification Program (FSVP), manages GFSI schemes such as FQSI, Primus, FSSC 22000 and others. For more than 25 years Justo has trained youth and adults in several areas such as Nutrition, Food Safety, Career Planning, and others. Some of Justo's volunteer experience includes board of directors and treasurer at Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association (PPNA), Board of Directors of Twin Cities Career Gear, Board of Directors for Powderhorn Resident Group (PRG), Chef for HCMC Taking Steps Together and Math teacher at the Lehman Center. In his spare time, Justo

Candidate for Director **Cody Miller** Olmsted County Cody Miller is the Environmental Health Manager at Olmsted County Public Health Services. He worked as a Sanitarian and Environmental Health Specialist specializing in plan review with Olmsted County for 6 years and spent 2 years as a staff scientist with Pinnacle Engineering, an environmental consulting firm. Cody earned his Bachelor of Science in Wildlife and Conservation Biology from the University of Rhode Island

**Candidate for Director** 

Caitlyn Laudenbach

City of St. Cloud

My primary job duties at the City of St. Cloud are to conduct inspections and plan reviews; I have also been involved in many special projects including moving our paper records to digital files in Laserfiche, implementing a new licensing and inspection software system, and working on MDH and MDA program evaluations. My favorite part of my job is furthering my education and taking what I've learned to educate the operators in the field. I am a registered sanitarian (RS/REHS), certified professional in food safety (CP-FS), and a certified pool operator (CPO). From 2022-2023, I participated in the NEHA Leadership Academy where I gained many valuable lessons and even had the opportunity to take the 5-day FEMA Environmental Health Training in Emergency Response – Operations course at the Center for Domestic Preparedness.

I currently serve as the chair of the MEHA Scholarship Committee and would be honored to

**Candidate for Director** 

Loreena Hilton

Minnesota Department of Health—Partnership and Workforce Development Unit

Partnership

concerns within the state and promoting the important work that we do. In my personal life, I enjoy hanging out with my husband and two children, going to coffee shops, dancing, and

Candidate for Member at Large

Collin Kappenman

Minnesota Department of Agriculture—Retail Food Program

I grew up on a small farm in South Dakota specializing in the dairy

reviewer for 3 years, and, currently, the Plan Review Supervisor for

basketball, curling, snowboarding, hiking, and ice fishing.

Michelle HW Hill, CP-FS, IHA-HACCP Certified, CFPM,

Michelle's journey into food safety and allergen control began 20 years ago when her sons were diagnosed with allergies to eggs, dairy, wheat, and soy. In 2007, she launched AllergenFreeCooking.com and has since published two bestselling allergen-focused cookbooks, Food For All and Every

A dedicated advocate for allergen control in schools, restaurants, institutions, and packaged foods, Michelle is an

for the upcoming 2025 Biennial Meeting in Denver, CO.

My name is Josh Schaack, and I am an Environmental Health Specialist for the City of Bloomington. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to run for the open Member At Large position on the

and parks with my wife and our 2-year-old daughter.

to advance public health and support the communities we serve.

Hello, my name is Brittny Douglas and I am running for

Currently I am an Industrial Hygienist in the Lead (Pb) Risk Assessment Unit with MDH. I made this switch in

Environmental Specialist in Food, Pool, & Lodging with Washington County. I'm quite excited to stay within the realm of Environmental Health while learning a new skill. I started my career in EH with the City of Minneapolis as a seasonal employee in Environmental Services and was

I completed my education at the University of Wisconsin-Stout where I received a B.S. in Environmental Science &

are crucial to remaining connected within the EH world.

A little more about me - I studied public health UWEC because I believe everyone deserves to live a healthy life. I interned at the Minneapolis Health Department right after graduating and liked it in Minnesota so much I decided to stay. Since then I've been I've been an inspector for erosion

Thank you for your time and consideration for MEHA secretary.

testing practices.

ACIL

Environmental

Agricultural

Pictured: Seid Sheka, Hennepin

exams. These are some of them:

Quizlet Mobile app and website

NEHA Vector and Pest Webinar

NEHA Practice Exams and Study Guides

Salvato Environmental Engineering (1-3)

state who specialize in different areas of environmental regulations.

Reddit r/health inspector Community

Walter Saraniecki Course

throughout the great state of Minnesota.

Pictured Above: Sean O'Connor (MPCA) presenting on the Use of Drones in

> Pictured Right: MEHA Members taking a large

> > group photo.

Environmental Monitoring

physical health.

Pictured Right: **Ahmet Baysal** & Terese Bordeau of Ramsey County presenting on **Exploring Ramsey** County's Hazardous Waste Compliance

Program

County

December of 2022. Previously I worked

then hired full time in Food, Pools, Lodging.

MEHA Secretary.

them as well.

ServSafe Allergen SME, ServSafe Instructor/Proctor

the plan review and HACCP team.

Body Eats.

in food safety.

Hello!

and grain production. I graduated high school in 1999 and joined the North Dakota Army National Guard (NDARNG) 2 weeks later. After 21 years of service, I achieved the rank of Major and retired in 2020. I enrolled in college and majored in Athletic Training before graduating with a B.A. in Biology in 2008. Prior to working for the State of Minnesota, I was not working in food regulation. I held a variety of positions, such as a construction worker, salesman, security officer, EMT, nursing assistant, and logistics in North Dakota. I was working for the NDARNG before accepting a position with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in 2013. I worked as a sanitarian for MDH - FPLS for 2.5 years before my employment with MDA - Retail Food Program. I worked as a Retail Food Inspector for 3 years, plan

I currently hold a MBA and live in Grand Rapids, MN with my wife and 2 kids. We enjoy outdoor activities such as camping, biking, fishing, and hiking. Out winter interests include

Candidate for Member at Large

Michelle Hill

active member of NEHA, MEHA, and IAFP. She joined the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) as a Consumer in 2014 and served as Co-Chair of the 2021-23 CFP Allergen Committee, which developed the Major Food Allergen Framework—adopted into the FDA Model Food Code as part of the 2024 Supplemental Update. Currently, she is serving a sixyear term (2023-29) as an elected Executive Board Member of the CFP, representing the Consumer constituency. She has also been selected as a voting member of CFP's Council I

Michelle proudly serves on NEHA's Food Safety Committee and is the founder of 9allergens.com, an educational website established in 2021 to provide comprehensive, adfree information on major food allergens at no cost. A tireless advocate for improved allergen control in the retail food industry, she continues to drive awareness and policy improvements

Candidate for Member at Large

Josh Schaack

City of Bloomington

MEHA Board of Directors and to contribute my experience and passion to this organization. I began my career in Environmental Health in 2013 with the Minnesota Department of Health's Food, Pools, and Lodging team. Since then, I have spent most of my time as a housing and nuisance inspector with the City of Bloomington. About two years ago, I transitioned to the FPL team, where I have enjoyed expanding my knowledge and advancing in my career. Outside of my professional life, I am an avid outdoor enthusiast. When time permits, I enjoy biking, hiking, camping, and fishing. I make it a point to visit the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) multiple times each year, including winter trips for ice fishing. At home, I love cooking, playing games, and exploring local trails

I am excited about the chance to work with the other board members in our shared mission

**Candidate for Secretary** 

**Brittny Douglas** 

Minnesota Department of Health—Lead Risk Assessment Unit

Applied Science- Biotechnology. I also completed a P.S.M. in Conservation Biology with

Outside of work I enjoy spending time outdoors, traveling, and finding new coffee shops. Over the years I've attend many of MEHA's conferences and gained valuable information surrounding Environmental Health. I spent the last few years serving as MEHA Secretary and would love to continue to serve in this capacity. The connections and resources MEHA offers

Candidate for Secretary

**Greg Nelson** Minnesota Department of Health Hello MEHA! I'm happy to announce a bid to be your secretary and excited by the prospect of giving back to an organization that has done so much for me. Winter MEHA was the first conference I went to during college, I got my first job in public health off the MEHA job board, and I've made great friends through the organization. I've been on the tech committee since 2022 working to ensure the website and other digital products function as intended. I'd be grateful for the chance to continue that work as secretary.

control, lead and healthy homes, and finally Food at MDH for the past five years. In my free time I enjoy bird watching, camping, and enjoying all the great live music that comes through.

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**MEHA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT** What is your current position? My name is Seid Sheka, I am currently an Environmentalist at the Hennepin County Environmental Health Department. I am also a Registered Sanitarian in the state of Minnesota.

time on each topic every week. I also used many flashcards and online practice

How has your MEHA membership benefited you? I have been able to network and make connections with other environmental health specialists throughout the state of Minnesota. I have also been able to attain educational opportunities since our job requires continuous learning. As a MEHA member I was able to attend the MEHA conferences and use its online resources to enhance my skills and professional development. So far, I have attended two conferences, and I've had a chance to meet and learn from environmentalists across the

What drew you to the field of Environmental Health? I studied Biology, Society and Environment at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. There I was able to broaden my knowledge on how environments affect human life in a positive and negative way. On top of this, when I was in college I had an internship job with the City of Minneapolis Health Department as a seasonal health inspector for food, lodging and pools. During this time, I have inspected many establishments for food, lodging and pools. I also took some training courses and learned a lot in the field by working with registered environmental health specialists. Since my educational background and experience align with Environmental Health, I decided to pursue a career in environmental health to ensure the health and safety

How do you spend your time outside of work? I spend most of my time outside of work with my children; helping them with homework and giving them rides to and from school for after school activities. I also enjoy spending time in the gym for workouts that improve my

WINTER MEHA CONFERENCE PHOTO RECAP

Pictured Left: Kathy Raleigh (MDH) presenting on Wildfire Smoke Exposure and

Respiratory Outcomes: Emergency Room Data in Minnesota

Pictured Left & Above: MEHA Members having lunch with students at the Mentorship Program luncheon. Please reach out to a MEHA Board Member if you are interested in participating in the MEHA Mentorship

Scholarship

the

David

**Registration** is Open!

information

important

connecting individuals, helping organize

conferences, and more. She actively

supported NEHA's efforts to educate and inform national policy makers, professional associations, practitioners, students, and the general public of the critical functions that environmental health provides. Kim is cycling off the position this year after 7

years as our Region 4 VP and plans to

pursue other activities such as winning 1st

Pictured: Maria Wesserle, Four Seasons Foraging,

Boberg

Recipients.

Program in the future.

Hennepin County.

Tulane University Free Online Environmental Health course

What do you love about what you do? I enjoy meeting people from different cultural backgrounds daily. Educating food business owners and operators about the importance of food safety and other environmental hazards to ensure a safe

and healthy environment for the residents throughout

How did you study for the REHS/RS exam? I used different

materials including books and online resources, I have spent



Mark your Calendar!

The 2025 MEHA Spring Conference will

held on May 7-9 2025 at

tuned for registration information and

Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian - MN Dept. of Health (state.mn.us)

The MEHA Registration Committee is tasked with tracking any updates to the Registered Sanitarian/Environmental Health Specialist (RS/REHS) credential as well as promoting the EH profession. For information on Minnesota RS/REHS please visit Registered Environmental

The MEHA Registration Committee holds study sessions called the RS Academy every 1-2 months for students and staff preparing for the RS/REHS exam. For more robust sessions,

committee is fully competent, but also continuously looking for volunteers from all environmental health-related professions to help lead discussions, or subject matter experts to informally present on topics. This is a great opportunity to meet new faces in an academic

(Patrick.kuisle@state.mn.us)

CEUs have been offered for attendees with an existing professional credential.

(<u>David.boberg@state.mn.us</u>) to receive an invite, present a topic or for further information.

Radisson Harborview in Duluth.

MEHA Registration Committee & RS Academy

Kuisle

the conference agenda!

setting and stay mentally sharp!

Patrick

Healthy Environments. Protected Communities.

Agriculture (MDA)

few of the foraged treasures found.

**Empowered** Professionals.

Pictured: Kim Carlton, Minnesota Department of

Thank you for your service, Kim!

Contact

ANNOUNCEMENTS MEHA wishes to extend our sincere gratitude to MEHA member Kim Carlton for her years of excellent service as our NEHA Region 4 Vice President (VP)! Region 4 includes Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. During her tenure, served as a representative for Minnesota/ **Health Association** MEHA on the NEHA Board of Directors,

Lena Preugschas, Hennepin County, Eddie DeBroux, & Leah Larson, Hennepin County View Current Job Postings To view current job openings within Minnesota and NEHA Region 4 visit our website here. To post a job opening on the MEHA website, complete the submission form here. **Update Your MEHA Member Profile** Please update your MEHA Profile on Wild Apricot The membership committee has updated the new member form and the existing profile form. Please update your membership profile on Wild Apricot to indicate your interest in MEHA committees, the peer to peer network, and your demographic information.

The demographic information collected in this form allows MEHA to better understand who our members are and provide better representation for our membership. The information will be used internally to identify disparities, target quality improvement efforts and monitor progress. In addition, this information will help us tell the story of our membership to external partners about topics including: who is or is not represented within our membership, salary inequalities,

and other challenges faced by Environmental Health Professionals in Minnesota.

Follow MEHA on Facebook!

Expand your EH Network by Joining a MEHA Committee! Take advantage of the volunteer opportunities available on MEHA committees! By volunteering and participating in a committee, you will have the opportunity to grow your network in a way that you would not get through your normal work, and you will help maintain an association that supports environmental health professionals in Minnesota. There are no pre-requisites to be on a committee, just a willingness to help the organization. The committees each determine how often they meet and how they approach their job duties. If any of the committees are of interest to you, please reach out to the committee co-chair to

Jeff Johanson Holland N Perttula Colleen Fried MEMBER & STAFFING UPDATES Congratulations to Eric Solie on his retirement from the City of Bloomington! Congratulations to Leslie Foreman on her retirement from the City of Minneapolis! Congratulations to Lori Green on her retirement from Ramsey County!

Congratulations to Dan Devers (City of Bloomington) on his promotion to Environmental Health Program Coordinator! Congratulations to Armarie Willhite (City of Bloomington) on her wedding!

Thank you to the following members who contributed to this edition: David Boberg, Patrick Kuisle, Amy Saupe, Laura Suppes, Nicole Baysal, Seid Sheka, Leah Larson, and Jessica Jutz

Request from the Editor Please send member updates, births, weddings, retirements, honors, events, suggestions and more to:

The MEHA Outreach and Engagement Committee members organized a foraging class with Maria Wesserle of Four Seasons Foraging in October 2024. The foraging class took place at Lake Maria State Park near Monticello. Stay tuned for additional activities and volunteer opportunities through MEHA! Pictured: A

place at the MN State Fair in 2024 for her knitting and sewing skills. Prior to her time on the

NEHA board, Kim also served 9 years on MEHA's Board of Directors.

find out how to get involved. What is the benefit to you? People who get involved in MEHA are the people who have demonstrated a passion for environmental health and are the leaders and innovators in this field. Also, we have a lot of fun! Congratulations to the Newest Minnesota Registered Sanitarians! Erin Norling Alicia Lang Michael Moe Zachary E Kolsum

Angela.Dabu@hennepin.us or Rebecca.Thomes@browncountymn.gov

Deadline for the next issue is October 1, 2025

Follow and Like our Facebook page to stay up-todate with current MEHA news and other pertinent Environmental Health information and news!