

NEHA NEWS

NEHA Staff Profiles

As part of tradition, NEHA features new staff members in the *Journal* around the time of their one-year anniversary. These profiles give you an opportunity to get to know the NEHA staff better and to learn more about the great programs and activities going on in your association. This month we are pleased to introduce you to four NEHA staff members. Contact information for all NEHA staff can be found on page 59.

**Ellen Cornelius**

I joined NEHA when I moved to Denver one year ago. Before that I worked as a project manager with the American Lung Association (ALA) of the Upper Midwest in Springfield, Illinois. I worked in the environmental health division and managed projects related to indoor and outdoor air quality. I also became certified in radon measurement and

mitigation. The most rewarding work I accomplished at ALA was answering questions from over 500 callers on our radon hotline. I provided information to mostly the public on radon science, health effects, interpreting their test results, and explaining how to mitigate their homes. This work illustrated to me the importance of community education and how environmental health saves lives.

I graduated from Illinois Wesleyan University with a degree in environmental studies. During my college years I enjoyed interning at various environmental agencies, including the Illinois Environmental Council where I worked with Illinois' chief environmental lobbyists to pass legislation related to waste management, farmers markets, and toxic chemicals. I also interned for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency coordinating household hazardous waste collection events.

I currently work in NEHA's Program and Partnership Development (PPD) department and coordinate several programs, including NEHA's National Environmental Public Health Internship Program and Epi-Ready Foodborne Illness Response workshops. I also work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on National Environmental Public Health Tracking programs like radon standardization.

One of the best parts about working at NEHA is collaborating with my amazing coworkers on projects and initiatives. I love how creativity is encouraged and how easy it is to bounce new ideas off each other. Some ideas I am passionate about are expanding NEHA's air quality program, strengthening our relationships with students and young professionals, and improving NEHA's Web site presence. If one of these initiatives speaks to you, feel free to contact me at ecornelius@neha.org or find me on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ellen-cornelius-59772284>).

**Bobby Medina**

I came on board at NEHA in October 2015. It has truly been a pleasure to work at such an amazing organization. Everyone is energetic, friendly, and passionate about improving environmental conditions around the world. It's nice to have a career at an organization that shares your values and goals.

As a credentialing customer service representative, I get to perform a number of different tasks. Just a few of my duties include invoicing credential renewals and applications, uploading continuing education hours, and answering member e-mails or phone calls on a variety of topics.

I love working in the customer service field and have always enjoyed providing answers and assistance to the public in whatever role I am in. The interactions with people and listening to their stories, or helping them with their problems, are a definite highlight of the job.

I'm a Colorado native, which is actually a rare breed these days. I graduated from Colorado State University-Pueblo with a communications degree and moved to Denver shortly after. I love the outdoors and frequently spend my free time hiking in the mountains, biking, or playing tennis. Colorado has so many wondrous spots to explore and I feel very lucky to live in such a great state. I can also be found tasting all of the delicious food Colorado has to offer.

I am extremely excited to be a part of NEHA's continuing efforts to make the planet a better place and hope to be with the organization for many more years to come.

**Solly Poprish**

I joined NEHA one year ago as part of a two-year fellowship dedicated to providing hands-on experience in the field of public health. Shortly after graduating from The Ohio State University with a bachelor of science in public health, I joined NEHA's PPD department as a project specialist. Prior to NEHA, I worked as a research assistant for

a policy-focused organization, and before that I interned with a consulting firm to assist in developing a vaccine auditing system.

At NEHA I research how data is collected in the environmental health realm and how this data can be better used to improve the health of communities. I spend most of my time creating partnerships and starting conversations around data use with professionals across the country. My mission is to build a bridge between the fields of data/technology and environmental health in order to inspire innovative solutions to environmental health concerns.

My favorite part of this work is the many partnerships and voices that have been brought to light around open data and informatics. Whether it is through our app challenge or meetings with local health department professionals, these experiences have inspired

NEHA NEWS

me to think outside of the traditional definition of environmental health. My ultimate goal at NEHA is to create a robust data program that will support and meet the needs of health departments of all sizes.

In addition, I have a passion for participating in local public health initiatives happening in my community. Whether it is through volunteering, shadowing boots-on-the-ground environmental health professionals, or meeting with local community members, these experiences show me the breadth of public health and remind me why I pursued the field. I look forward to seeing NEHA's data program grow and evolve, and appreciate being a part of a group of passionate professionals who genuinely care about the wellbeing of their communities.



Sharon Unkart

I joined NEHA in October 2015 as an instructional designer. I work mainly in NEHA's Entrepreneurial Zone, where we collaborate with subject matter experts to create educational materials and online courses for food safety trainings. I also manage our Food Safety Instructor Cadre, a group of veteran industry and regulatory professionals

dedicated to improving food safety by providing engaging, authentic continuing education for their colleagues in the field. I love the

folks here at NEHA and am thoroughly enjoying working with all the dedicated professionals who make up our team, leadership, board, and membership.

After earning my bachelor's degree in environmental science from Metropolitan State College, I began my professional career as an environmental scientist. First with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in air quality, then with a small, local environmental consulting firm. While I enjoyed the work, I felt I could be doing more to make a difference in my world. Thinking back on the work that had been most gratifying while working through my first degree, I decided to go back to school and complete a master of arts in curriculum and instruction. From there, I taught high school biology and earth science, then moved into informal science education with a large, local science museum. Eventually, I became their teacher programs manager and that is where my love affair with adult education was born. I went on to teach graduate school and eventually earn my doctoral degree.

I bring a unique perspective to the role of instructional designer here at NEHA. I feel that it marries my 20 years of experience in both formal and informal science education with a new set of content—food safety. It has also provided me the opportunity to learn new skills while incorporating the research and literature from my doctorate. I love working here at NEHA and look forward to a future where a committed group of professionals is working together to make the world a better place. 🌱

Did You Know?

NEHA offers different membership options to suit your professional needs. From students and those just starting the profession all the way up to those retiring, NEHA has a membership for everyone. And you can select multiple year options and how you want to receive the *Journal*. Visit www.neha.org/membership-communities/join.

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