



### Tough Times in Uganda

Eric Myers 2006

Sometimes it takes getting away from something to know how to truly appreciate it. Stepping outside of the United States can be a sobering thing. From late January through the first two weeks of February 2006, I was part of a nine person team assisting IMB missionaries and partnering with Ugandan translators in their ministry projects in Kampala, Uganda. Kampala is the capital city Uganda with an estimated population of 2.5 million, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people from troubled areas such as Sudan, Congo, Rwanda and Northern Uganda. Although the mission purpose was not environmentally related, I did try to keep some good mental notes and snap a few pictures when possible. The following challenges to public health and public well being were observed:

- inadequate and / or poorly designed sewage disposal
- lack of solid waste disposal
- suspect or unsafe water supplies
- mosquito habitat – natural and manmade
- lack of mosquito nets / screening in many residences
- very little public health infrastructure or access to adequate medical care

- malaria, polio, leprosy, tuberculosis, multiple parasitic diseases, AIDS are common diseases
- significant air pollution from unregulated garbage / plastics burning, industry and diesel truck exhaust
- local government corruption & lack of environmental law enforcement

On top of this list, Uganda is suffering from the effects of an extended drought and going through their first multiparty elections in 25 years. With 40 tribal groups who do not exactly trust each other, possible political problems on the horizon could make the above environmental conditions more pronounced. As the level of Lake Victoria has dropped, the hydroelectric plant on the Nile cannot meet the power demand, and electrical power is now only available every other day for limited periods.

Some people have compared developing Africa to Europe of several hundred years ago. My hope is that it won't take Africa that long to become stable. Although cell phones are now common there, communication on how to prevent malaria does not appear to be a topic of discussion. It was tough to see (UGANDA, 4)

### FALL WORKSHOP

Other speakers include:

- **Gary Hagy** of VDH Office of Environmental Health Services;
- **Tina Thompson**, VDH supervisor, and **Gary Whitley**, Virginia Tech soil scientist;
- **Shannon Jordre** of the Food and Drug Administration;
- **George Hughes** from Food and Drug Administration Office of Criminal Investigations;
- **Michael Kohnke**, Professional Engineer with Simon and Associates;

In addition, new officers for VEHA will be inducted.

More details on the speaker topics will be forth coming in the Fall workshop Agenda ([www.veha.org](http://www.veha.org))

This promises to be an excellent opportunity to hear about a wide variety of environmental health topics and network with other environmental and safety professionals.

Hope to see you there!

**REHS/RS and AOSE  
Continuing education credits  
will be offered at this event!**

**Register now for the FALL WORKSHOP and receive 10% off the normal \$25.00 cost!.**

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/ WORKSHOP REGISTRATION  
(Please print information below)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employer/School \_\_\_\_\_

REHS Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_      NEHA Member Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Remitted  
\$15 (regular members) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ 5 (full-time student) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ 22.50 (early registration) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to VEHA, and mail to:

VEHA Treasurer  
1118 Winston St  
Norfolk, VA 23518

TOTAL Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# Upcoming Training Opportunities

**October 11-12, 2006**

*Emergence Response “Preparing for Pandemic Influenza,”*

Sponsored by Homeland Defense Journal; Martin & Associates; Becton, Dickson and Company; and Triosyn Corporations; Washing, D.C. For information visit [www.homelanddefensejournal.com](http://www.homelanddefensejournal.com)

**October 19, 2006 –**

*Environmental Complaints Training*  
Training conducted by Bob Custard and Catherine Cummins in Charlottesville, VA. For more information contact [Catherine.cummings@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Catherine.cummings@vdh.virginia.gov)

**October 20, 2006**

*VEHA & CASA FALL WORKSHOP*  
Monticello Event and Conference Center in Charlottesville, VA registration form attached, or contact [david.fridley@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:david.fridley@vdh.virginia.gov)

**November 14-16, 2006**

*Learn the Latest about Asthma Triggers*  
NEHA and EPA special training opportunity, 30 people will be selected for all expense paid training in Washington DC. For more information contact [sjerles@neha.org](mailto:sjerles@neha.org) by before October 13, 2006

**December 7-9, 2006**

*7<sup>th</sup> Annual Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Symposium*

EPA is hosting this nationwide event at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington DC, for more information contact [sjerles@neha.org](mailto:sjerles@neha.org)

## NEHA *Continued from page 4*

Arlington is one of the three finalists for the 2009 conference. The next two NEHA Annual Education Conferences will be held in Atlantic City, N. J. (2007) and Tucson, A.Z. (2008).

San Antonio is a nice city with friendly people and some great food. Attending a NEHA conference is not exactly cheap, but it truly is a good value when you weigh the excellent continuing education presentations, networking and fun.

If you are not a NEHA member or not a R.E.H.S., consider joining this hard working organization and or becoming registered. For more information visit [www.neha.org](http://www.neha.org), or contact Bob Custard our Regional 8 representative.

## WHY YOU SHOULD GO TO AFRICA

*Eric Myers 2005*

If you were able to read “Tough Times in Uganda” you might be thinking, “Go to Africa? No way!” Well, before you write of the world’s second largest continent (11,707,000 square miles), consider the top 16 reasons for you to visit a place like Africa (some are humorous, some are not):

- you will meet some wonderful people, many who have hope for the future
- assist a ministry or a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) in a development project
- have the opportunity to visit a national game park see some amazing animals and beautiful landscapes
- come away with an “attitude adjustment” regarding your life here in the U.S.
- actually hear a giant cock roach walk (across a grass mat)
- learn more about public health issues within another region of the world
- come within 20 feet of an elephant, and live to tell about it.
- understand the global impact that displaced people can have on disease transmission
- learn about the “one step” Green Mamba snake before you encounter one !
- try some great local foods like goat, fried grasshoppers, and cooked bananas

of the developing world are ones with first hand experience

- be your own “ambassador” for the United States- many Africans like Americans
- better understand human nature and cultural differences
- understand that Cape Buffalo really do have “anger problem”
- gain a much better understanding why a 20 second hand wash is so important
- make a small difference in a region of the world that has many real needs

I’ve included a few digital pictures for your review. If you would like any further encouragement on why you should attempt a journey to Africa please don’t hesitate to contact me! Of course you’ll need multiple vaccinations, malarial prophylaxis and some insect repellent but trust me, it is all well worth the effort. It will be an experience that will change you and your perspective of the world.



**UGANDA** *Continued from page 2*

So many smiling intelligent children and wondering what their future will be like for them. Until corruption, ethnic warfare and greater civil rights are improved, environmental challenges will persist and continue to dominate the health of millions.

As an American, I returned to Charlottesville thinking how good an environment we have right here in Virginia. My appreciation for the United States Constitution, which allows all of us the good framework to make a better environment, is a lesson not lightly learned from this overseas trip. Of course improvements can always be made here (river water quality, Chesapeake Bay restoration, land use etc.) but I have resolved not to complain about things in the light of what I have seen and experienced.

**NEHA's 2006 Annual Education Conference in San Antonio, Texas**

By Eric Myers

The seventieth annual meeting of NEHA occurred in San Antonio, Texas from June 25-29, 2006. NEHA reported about 1500 attendees from around the US.

I was able to attend several excellent presentations, which discussed potential for pandemic bird flu and the tasks / roles local health departments may need to fulfill during any crisis.

Another excellent presentation I attended was public health officials from southern Florida and from New Orleans discussing disease outbreak prevention and the difficult work environments in the wake of a Rita and Katrina.

While I was there I learned that NEHA is becoming a recognized "expert" association by politicians in Washington, D.C. and was able to give input on over 14 separate projects or pending legislation in 2005 / 2006.

Other significant challenges are still ahead for our professionals including:

1. A 50% retirement eligibility for many seasoned environmental health workers nationwide within the next 5 years;
2. a shortfall of graduates trained in environmental health and
3. ramifications of Avian Flu, should a pandemic become a reality.

NEHA reiterated its' commitment to retaining the Registered Environmental Health Specialist (R.E.H.S.) certification as NEHA's premier credential.

Lastly, as president of VEHA I, gave a written "request for consideration" to the NEHA Board recommending Arlington, Virginia as the site for the 2009 Annual Education Conference since Arlington is one of the three finalists for the 2009 conference. (See NEHA, 6 )

**WEBSITE** *Continued from page 1*

the best education and information to our members, the maintenance of the site is of utmost importance.

This fall the board has decided to pay an outside company to totally revamp our current site, making it easier to use and maintain.

The revamped site will not only include updated information about who we are and what we do, but it will also include a posting board, where members can post environmental questions and receive comments and suggestions from their peers. Also, a new calendar of events will be created, that will be user friendly and easy to update.

The site will continue to include a copy of the by-laws, meeting minutes, the quarterly news letter, and links to other organizations for training opportunities around the state.

In the very near future, we want to publish all our forms in a downloadable Adobe format. Student members can download scholarship applications and active members can download award nomination forms.

To continue the process of website development, we need your input and assistance. We are asking any members who might have past minutes to please forward a copy to Amy Pemberton via snail mail or email. Check the site and see

which minutes we already have. If you have a copy that isn't listed, please send it.

Also, if you have past information regarding scholarship and award recipients, such as name, year, and any information about what they are currently doing, please forward that information to us as well. We would like to acknowledge our scholarship recipients and their achievements.

Lastly, if you have information regarding training events occurring around the state that would be of benefit to our members, please feel free to pass it along. All training events must be open to the general public.

Forward all website information to [Amy.pemberton@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Amy.pemberton@vdh.virginia.gov)

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