



CEHA POINT SOURCE

WINTER 2009

Colorado Environmental Health Association

Myths Can Be Hazardous To Your Practice

A number of myths prevent environmental health and protection practitioners from fully and effectively embracing the field of practice

By Larry J. Gordon, M.S., M.P.H., D.H.L., D.E.A.A.S.
Former President, American Public Health Association

MYTH # 1: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ISN'T ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Among the more common is the myth that environmental health and environmental protection are separate fields of practice. This misperception first arose when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, state EPAs, and many local counterparts were developed in the early 1970s. Environmental health and protection practitioners and academic programs developed the myth that the field of practice was "different" if it was not in a health department, ignoring the reality that most of the programs transferred to EPA were previously assigned to the Consumer Protection and Environmental Health Service of the U.S. Public Health Service and were obviously environmental health. The same occurred as numerous state and local "EPAs" were created.

There are myriad examples of such myths in the fields of food protection, housing conservation and rehabilitation, air pollution control, water pollution control, hazardous waste management, noise pollution control, milk sanitation, meat inspection and industrial hygiene, among others. For example, air pollution control was assigned to the Los Angeles County Health Department prior to the creation of the Air Quality Control District. Subsequently, many environmental health and protection practitioners have regarded the Air Quality Control District's activities as something other than environmental health and protection.

The goals of all such programs are environmental health and protection, no matter where assigned. Objectives and regulatory requirements are based on environmental health and protection.

Prior to Earth Day, most environmental health and protection programs, as they then existed, were assigned to health departments. The clamor that arose regarding environmental deterioration and the perceived, if not actual, inactivity of the USPHS caused President Nixon to create EPA by Executive Order and the action was promptly approved by the Congress. Environmental health and protection responsibilities were transferred to EPA not only from the USPHS, but also from several other agencies including Agriculture, Atomic Energy, and Interior. Notwithstanding these changes, major environmental health and protection responsibilities remain in the federal departments of Agriculture, Interior, Defense, Labor, Housing and Energy. A similar trend continues to occur at the local level. In terms of expenditures and numbers of personnel, some 85 to 90 percent of state level environmental health and protection responsibilities are now assigned to agencies other than health departments. Local environmental health and protection programs are primarily in local health departments, but are increasingly found in a spectrum of other city, county and district settings.

The cover letter of the "Report of the Committee on the Future of Environmental Health" recommended:

- That the organizational title of NEHA be changed to National Environmental Health and Protection Association to recognize and adjust to changes that had already taken place in our nation, place the association in an improved position for leadership, and enhance membership marketing efforts beyond those who identify with environmental health only.
- That the title of the Journal of Environmental Health be changed accordingly.
- That the Journal banner be changed from "Dedicated to the Advancement of the Environmental Health Professional", to "Dedicated to Protecting Human Health and Environmental Quality."

MYTH # 2: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IS A PROFESSION

This myth appears to be attractive, but it is based on a fallacy. A partial listing of those professionals practicing environmental health and protection includes sanitarians, engineers, biologists, chemists, geologists, veterinarians, physicians, toxicologists, attorneys, public administrators, statisticians, epidemiologists, environmental health professionals, political scientists, educators, nurses, economists, planners, industrial hygienists, physicists, dentists, bacteriologists and ecologists, among others. Each is a vital component of the mosaic of professions and disciplines effectively applying their professional skills as environmental health and protection practitioners. Such practitioners range from sub-baccalaureate technicians through various doctoral level professionals. They are found in the public sector, the private sector, the voluntary sector, the educational sector and the research sector. Environmental health and protection is a profoundly complex, multifaceted, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary field of endeavor. Environmental health and protection is a field of practice in which to practice one's profession.

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Letter from the President



Greetings fellow CEHA family and friends! That's right! I said family and friends! As I reminisce about the fabulous 53rd Annual Education Conference & Exhibition that we had this fall, this is one of the messages that keeps ringing true...we are family and we are friends. We are family as each year brings us all together to share our experiences, strengthen our expertise, build relationships, and celebrate each

other and our profession. Each year also brings us new friends to incorporate into our family with welcome arms. As we move into an uncertain future with questions on infrastructure, legislation, funding, resources and partnerships, our ability to form relationships and work together is essential. In order to keep up with the ever changing future we need to build leadership, visibility and capacity. Having opportunities like those with CEHA, where one can form relationships, increase visibility, and build leadership and capacity, are invaluable.

During my time on the AEC Planning Committee and serving as Secretary, then President-Elect for the CEHA board, I have seen increased opportunities to be a part of movements working towards improving environmental and public health. I feel blessed each time I have an opportunity to heighten my own awareness about environmental health concerns from the expertise and support of those around me. To represent and lead such a prominent and successful environmental health entity such as CEHA is an honor and a welcome challenge that brings me great joy.

Over the past year, the CEHA Board assessed the desired future for our organization through action planning and reviewed our mission and goals. One goal coming out of this process is to develop an informational brochure about CEHA as the association represents at student associations, industry conferences and other environmental health educational opportunities where the need for increased marketing was identified. The potential use and distribution of the information goes beyond merely this scope into other areas of our operations and potentially other entities' operations as well. The brochure will help promote on-going marketing and promote a better understanding of the potential scope of environmental health. Another goal that was identified is the desire for Board members to increase their collaboration with partners and industry and open doors for better communications. The Board is focused on building on current relationships through The Public Health Alliance of Colorado (the Alliance), the Colorado School of Public Health (CSPH), and the Regional Institute for Health & Environmental Leadership (RIHEL), and all academic institutions where environmental health is offered.

Related to these is the goal to promote the identification of core competencies needed in CEHA trainings offered, make those available, and market those to current members, as well as other interested public health professionals. Through our partnership with the Alliance, we have an opportunity to share and collaborate with other stakeholders in events such as disaster, illness outbreaks and community planning. Through our feedback from our members and

environmental health partners, we evaluate what arenas of environmental health need additional education and networking opportunities. This also involves identifying areas of environmental health that are not currently represented in our membership and promote communication and build relationships in these areas. As part of this outreach, this year's AEC sponsored a hugely successful Air and Waste session. Additionally, the conference saw the welcomed return from last year's premier, the Sustainability and the Built Environment session.

Another goal that has been on-going as long as I have been involved with CEHA is the desire to increase membership benefits. CEHA has maintained membership fees significantly below other comparable entities for years. Additionally, extensive planning goes into each one-day training and the AEC to ensure the lowest cost possible is offered to membership. As expenses increase in every sector, providing low-cost education and networking opportunities to members is of high priority! In addition to the Milton M. Miller, Environmental Achievement Professional and the Environmental Achievement Industry awards, the board is compiling other means of member recognition such as a CEHA member of the month...stay tuned! Other benefits include the access to additional resources. Whether it is loaning one of the NEHA exam study guides, receiving training opportunities through other public health arenas, or getting assistance from your regional CEHA representative, these are all very valuable benefits. Future considerations include providing access to food safety training materials and holding educational Webcasts and/or Podcasts.

Additionally, CEHA would like to increase opportunities for interaction and membership feedback. This year's AEC evaluation is more encompassing than past versions. In fact each member and attendee received CEHA's Annual Survey which includes questions on the conference as well as other CEHA operations. The survey is meant to allow those who regrettably did not attend the AEC to skip this part of the survey. It also is meant to be respectful of busy schedules and should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Your feedback is crucial and your voice is your strongest membership benefit! CEHA appreciates your consideration in completing the survey. CEHA also appreciates your involvement in our networking events. This year's Professional Mixer sponsored by the Alliance, CSPH and RIHEL was a hit! Other future happenings for members to keep an eye out for include some networking opportunities in the form of lunch & learn.

I appreciate my family and friends having the faith to let me lead them into the future. But as all good leaders know, you cannot lead alone. Only with the input and help of others can we truly achieve greatness. As we go into this next year I hope you will embrace CEHA and use it as your forum to strengthen your world of environmental health. I look forward to our future endeavors!

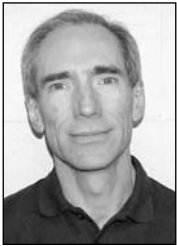
Thoughtfully,
Nicole Grisham
CEHA President



The Ivory Cellar

Professional Practice and Personal Passion: does passion drive your career or is it just a rationale to spew your interpretation of truth??

By Ken Blehm, PhD
Colorado State University



In a previous column I suggested that: “Gosh, if you wanted to do that, you could run for political office or become a lawyer in civil trials!! Careers to consider – especially if you wish to value your social stances and advocacy over your science.” My reference here is to espousing a personally held belief and allowing the fact that you are an environmental health

professional to argue for your conclusions since “she must be right – that is what she does for a living”.

However in light of the folks who were advising President Bush via the Council on Environmental Quality earlier in his presidency, the same ones who were artfully editing reports on global warming to conform to party position, I respond now as I did to the president’s science advisers (as a professor at a college of veterinary medicine and biomedical sciences) and say “HORSE PUCKEY”.

I have come to rue our science presentations as part of the national political discourse that is reduced to catchy sound bites. Ever hear a catchy jingle that had nothing to do with the truth? Ever hear some titillating gossip that had limited relations with fact? The same folks who run political campaigns have a primary driver and that driver is the candidate’s message. Whatever has to be done to, with or about facts to support that message is fair game. The reasoning behind this thinking is that “if our candidate does not win, then we cannot do the positive things of which we speak.” Ever hear of the doctrine that the “end justifies the means?”

As science professionals, during the course of our work day, we have to be guided by the facts and the preponderance of the evidence. Do I personally think that we are at an environmental tipping point and that the contributions of human activity may add sufficient greenhouse gas to the atmosphere to push us into rapid and negative climatologic change? Yes I believe we may be at that tipping point.

Can I prove that we are indeed at the tipping point and not at the end of some environmental cycle that has been repeated in the past; that the contributions of mankind are small in terms of the overall changes that may be impacting the climate? No, I cannot prove this.

Thus, from 8-5, I make decisions based on the science and the facts that I have. I cannot recommend to the city council or the

county government that we spend public dollars to reduce our carbon footprint to stave off the impending irreversible global climate change. I can recommend reasonable efforts within other initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas if that outcome is complementary to that other initiative. I have no factual standing regarding the current state of the facts about climate change to spend the public money to prevent global warming. I cannot conclude this using the preponderance of the evidence at this time.

I see too many of our colleagues engaging in conduct that shades the truth; that interprets the data in one way; that attempts to bring about outcomes based on conclusions that do not flow from our available data given appropriate peer review. We may be there at some time in the future, but I do not see how any one practicing at our levels in the State of Colorado can conclude otherwise on global climate change based on the available data – to continue the current example.

If one is to say that the observable data do not prove the global warming conclusion but that a course of action appears to be reasonable based on the existing argument, I can live with that. We are stating the limits of our confirmed knowledge and we are acknowledging that an environmental decision may be driven by political, economic, or social factors as well as the environmental science.

However, I see some of our colleagues who use their position, their titles, their visibility or their education to allow others to infer that our personally-held beliefs are really the result of good science and interpretation of the facts. As scientists, we must be the first to point out the shortcomings and the missing elements of our body of knowledge. We may still be forced to a decision in defined circumstances; however, we DO NOT justify the decision based on the science when we cannot.

I do not think that an EH professional needs to leave their beliefs at the door when coming to work. However, a professional should always be up-front in labeling what is opinion and what meets the burden of scientific proof. Without doing this, we give credence to the commonly-held belief that says “my opinion is just as valid as your fact.”

We are seeing too much of the opinion equals facts argument already.

As always, I welcome your comments or feedback at Ken.Blehm@colostate.edu.



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This multidisciplinary and multiprofessional nature of the environmental health and protection workforce is a distinct strength and should be emphasized.

MYTH # 3: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND PROTECTION IS A MINOR PORTION OF THE FIELD OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The incomplete and misleading annual public health expenditure reports developed under contract with CDC only include data from programs under the designated state health official, and have ignored the activities of other state and local agencies having major environmental health and protection responsibilities. Other studies indicate that at the state level, in terms of numbers of personnel and expenditures, some 90 to 95 percent of environmental health and protection is administered by agencies other than state health departments. Overall, environmental health and protection is the largest single component of the field of public health and comprises approximately 50 percent of total public health in terms of numbers of personnel and expenditures.

MYTH # 4: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS ARE “JUST REGULATORY”

All basic environmental health and protection programs, as differed from support services, have statutory bases and provide for various remedies including a spectrum of regulatory actions. Such programs include, but are not limited to: food, water, air, housing, wastes, safety, noise, and land use. Regulation is just one of many tools in the environmental health and protection toolkit.

MYTH # 5: PRACTITIONERS ARE “INSPECTORS”

The use of this term poses another barrier to those attempting to gain improved recognition of practitioners. There are plumbing, zoning, building and electrical inspectors, but the term should not be applied to environmental health and protection practitioners who are required to have significant academic training. They may be epidemiologists, planners, sanitarians, engineers, geologists, physicians, veterinarians, chemists, biologists, e.g., and should be identified accordingly if they are to be recognized as professionals rather than “inspectors.”

Many practitioners do “inspect,” but equally or more important functions include education, consultation, problem analysis, planning, impacting public policy, regulation, program design, program evaluation, problem prioritization, networking, surveillance, public information, marketing and epidemiology – among others.

MYTH # 6: PUBLIC HEALTH IS A COMPONENT OF HEALTH CARE

This is another myth that has been a significant disservice to environmental health and protection. Environmental health and protection may be considered a major component of the health services continuum, but has little programmatic relationship with health care.

Health care is the diagnosis, treatment, and/or rehabilitation of a patient under care and is practiced on a one-on-one basis.

Public health is the art and science of preventing disease and disability, prolonging life, promoting the health and efficiency of populations, and ensuring a healthful environment through organized

community effort. Public health is not health care and health care is not public health.

Environmental health and protection is the art and science of protecting against environmental factors that may adversely impact human health or the ecological balances essential to long-term human health and environmental quality. Such factors include, but are not limited to: air, food and water contaminant's; radiation; toxic chemicals; disease vectors; safety hazards; and habitat alterations. (Report of the Committee on the Future of Environmental Health)

Health Services Continuum			
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND PROTECTION	HEALTH PROMOTION	DISEASE PREVENTION	HEALTH CARE
Examples of Issues	Examples of Issues	Examples of Issues	Examples of Issues
Clean Air	Substance Abuse	Infectious Diseases	Diagnosis
Clean Water	Family Planning	Clinical Prevention	Primary Care
Toxic Chemicals	Nutrition	PKU Screening	Case Management
Safe Food	Health Education	Glaucoma	Outpatient Services
Radiation	Violence	Diabetes	Clinics
Solid Wastes	Obesity	Osteoporosis	Treatment
Occupational Health	Tobacco	Cancer	Surgery
Hazardous Wastes	Mental Health	Suicides	Long Term Care
Risk Assessment	Physical Activity and Fitness	Oral Health	Acute Care
Risk Communication	Access	Heart Disease and Stroke	Rehabilitation
Risk Management		Maternal and Child Health	Cost Containment
Global Degradation		Access	Health Insurance
Land Use			Mental Health and Treatment
Noise			Developmental Disabilities
Disease Vectors			Alcohol and Drug Treatment
Housing			Access
Ecological Dysfunction			
Unintentional Injuries			
Access			

LJ Gordon 1990, Chart 1

MYTH # 7: DISEASE PREVENTION IS THE ONLY BENEFIT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND PROTECTION

This is another example of the failure of environmental health and protection practitioners to understand and market the comprehensive benefits of environmental health and protection. Important benefits include:

- reduced disease and disability, yes, but also
- lower health care costs,
- enhanced community economic vitality,
- enhanced productivity,

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- enhanced community educational achievement,
- fewer social problems, and
- enhanced quality of life in a more livable environment.

MYTH # 8: PUBLIC POLICY MUST BE SOUGHT THROUGH GROUP ACTION

U.S. Senator Robert Stafford, Chair of the Senate Public Works and Environment Committee, advised that an elected official paid just as much attention to a well crafted letter from a constituent as an expensive formal document developed by a professional, industry, or voluntary group. Many groups engage in such ineffective actions as monitoring, supporting, endorsing, watching, following, etc., rather than defining problems and solutions, marketing, lobbying, testifying, developing legislation, and gaining policy enactment. Elected officials pay as much attention to one constituent's well documented request as they do to stacks of form letters or post cards.

MYTH # 9: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND PROTECTION IS AN INVISIBLE PROFESSION

This myth is based on two fallacies:

- Environmental health and protection is not a profession, and
- Environmental health and protection is far from invisible.

Environmental health and protection is a high priority in our society and is demanded by the public and elected officials. When it is "invisible," some introspective analysis is essential. Usually the fault lies with the messenger rather than the message; often the messenger does

not understand the comprehensive benefits of environmental health and protection; frequently there is an attitude of organizational secrecy; often environmental health is not considered a priority as part of a larger organization; and often there is an organizational misplacement of this vital group of programs. Scores of agencies do ensure that environmental health is quite visible.

Rather than focusing on promoting the visibility of practitioners, concentrate on marketing environmental health and protection problem solutions, vision, benefits, needs and services. The need for appropriately qualified practitioners will then be obvious.

MYTH # 10: POLITICS IS A DIRTY WORD

Many view politics with disdain. However, anyone who has attempted to impact policy at any level is a politician. Politics determines policy: who gets what, when and why. Such policies may include legislation, standards, regulations, organizational changes, budgets, facilities, equipment and appointment of various officials. Practicing politics is essential if one is to impact policy.

Environmental health and protection practitioners who divest themselves of the foregoing myths will find it much easier to achieve their goals, earn appropriate recognition, and obtain resources to support their efforts.

For other policy and leadership papers, visit:
<http://www.ncleha.org/larrygordon/default.asp>



A Thank You to CEHA for the 2008 Environmental Health Achievement Award

By Carmen Vandenbark
Northeast Colorado Health Dept.

Thank you CEHA membership for the 2008 Environmental Health Achievement Award, with special thanks to Susan Parachini and Heather Thomas for the nomination letters!! It is quite an honor to be recognized in this way and I am truly appreciative, however, there are other people out there who should be recognized as well. The temporary event and mobile unit workgroup participants really deserve as much credit for the productive outcome that these groups have delivered. They are David Baum, Heather Thomas, Dan Joseph, Nicole Grisham, Aaron Dousett, Nola Evans, Cindy Brusco, Gary Hague, Leslie Frank, Matt Shaddeau, Jim Devore, Joanne Guevara, and Laura Dixon. Most of these same people have been meeting almost every month for the past 18 months to develop these documents and work on revision suggestions for Chapters 9 and 10 of the Colorado Retail Food Establishment Rules and Regulations. The process has been painstakingly slow sometimes, but very worthwhile to work with these great individuals. Each one brings something to the table and as a group we have done great things! I also need to give credit to the great E.H. staff at the Northeast Colorado Health Department. They are very capable and self sufficient inspectors that can work effectively on their own, allowing me the time to devote to these projects. And finally thank you to my fellow E.H. colleagues across the state. I have received so much help from many of you, in one form or another that has allowed a smaller health department like mine to implement important aspects to our consumer protection programs that we otherwise wouldn't have been able to accomplish as quickly. The networking aspects that CEHA provides have been incredible! We really are part of one big team that together, everyone achieves more! I look forward to another great CEHA year!

Events in the City of Aspen Will Soon Be Green

By Ashley Cantrell, City of Aspen Environmental Health Dept.

The City of Aspen Environmental Health Department recently expanded their ZGreen Event program. In the past, the ZGreen program was a voluntary program that helped events be more environmentally friendly and then awarded ZGreen certification to those events that met the requirements of the ZGreen checklist.

The Aspen City Council recently approved an initiative that requires all events requesting a permit in the city of Aspen to meet the ZGreen event standards. Beginning in January of 2009 all events will be required to complete the ZGreen Events checklist and make a committed effort towards greening their operations. The ZGreen requirements pertain to all aspects of an event, including reducing energy and water use and trash generation, composting food waste, printing on recycled paper, and limiting giveaways to only those items that are made from recycled materials or can be reused or recycled. Events must also train their volunteers to assist in waste separation, and they must educate event attendees on how they can participate in the event's green efforts. While some actions are required, event organizers can also pick and choose from a list of other greening actions.

The ZGreen program strives to make greening a positive experience for events by providing assistance and resources whenever possible. Please see our website for more information.
www.aspenzgreen.com

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Thank You from 2008 Milton M. Miller Award Recipient

By Marilyn Swett, Tri-County Health Department

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the CEHA Board and those nominating me for the 2008 Milton M Miller Award! It was definitely a surprise to receive this award at the recent CEHA AEC – I was rendered totally speechless (as many of you observed)! I couldn't believe that the entire EH division at TCHD, plus my own husband were all in on the secret. If you knew how the rumor mill works in our agency, you would also be amazed that someone didn't spill the beans!

Looking at the names on the traveling plaque of those that had received this award in the past, I see people that have been and are currently leaders in Environmental Health in Colorado. Several of these were my personal mentors. I am truly honored to be considered a part of this prestigious group.

As I listened to my work history being read at the conference, I realized that my career has taken many twists and turns. Although I have remained at TCHD for over 30 years, my various responsibilities and job titles have changed. My goal was always to become a Field Supervisor, but I never climbed the stairs directly to achieve this position and was not promoted to this job until about 3 years ago. Many of you might exclaim – she took nearly 30 years to become a supervisor!? As one speaker at the AEC stated, many careers proceed as if you are a rock climber. You might move laterally or upwards, depending upon what handholds are presented to you. I found that when I was disappointed about not being selected for a position, another opportunity would often present itself to me – sometimes it was a chance to head up a committee within our agency or work on updating a program policy. My work with CEHA started in this manner. I had a supervisor that recommended that I become involved with CEHA in some capacity to gain leadership experience. Not knowing any better, I jumped in with both feet and volunteered to head up an AEC planning committee! Thanks to help from a great committee and the Board, the conference was a success, and I was off and running. I continued to help with planning many AEC's and one day training sessions. When an opportunity again presented itself (don't forget those lateral handholds) to join the Board and ultimately serve as President for 2 terms, I willingly agreed. My many years of work with CEHA have enhanced not only my professional, but my personal development as well. They improved my technical knowledge as well as allowed me to develop my skills in teamwork, problem solving, budget setting, organization, goal setting, communication and leadership. Plus I got to meet and become friends with peers across Colorado and the nation. I would never have had the opportunity to get to know these people had I stayed in my own little area at TCHD. I highly recommend that all CEHA members volunteer their time with CEHA. Every one of you has something to offer and you might just be surprised at where it could lead. Plus, it's a lot of fun!! I appreciated the support TCHD management gave me for allowing me time to become so involved with CEHA.

My nomination document also mentioned my many years of mentoring others. Whether it was through my work with CEHA or at TCHD, I have gained much personal satisfaction from helping educate and train environmental health professionals throughout Colorado. I am so proud of all of you and the achievements you have made!! The jobs that you do every day are such an important part of Public Health. You should pat yourselves on the back every day for a job well done. I am glad that NEHA is making the move toward improving the visibility of the Environmental Health profession and hope that some day the public will be able to recognize all that we do. During one of the Wednesday sessions on this topic, a speaker told us to ask ourselves whether or not our mothers could describe what we did for a living. Well, my parents frequently introduce as me as an employee of TCHD who "trains other people". They sure got that one right! It is one aspect of my job that I love. (I guess that's what happens when you are raised by a couple of teachers.)

Again, I would like to thank you for recognizing me with this award. It is something that made this conference a memorable one and is something that I will treasure as I move toward the next phase of my life. As I said as I received my award – keep on keeping on!! You all make Environmental Health what it truly is in Colorado.



CEHA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

2009

Classes of membership

Active: Any person who is employed in any environmental health field, any registered environmental health specialist or any individual with a general interest in the objectives of CEHA is eligible to become an active member **\$25**

Student: Any full time college or university student working toward a degree with an interest in the association and its objectives is eligible for student membership **\$10**

Life: Any person who is an active member for at least one year is eligible for life membership. A life member pays a prescribed membership fee which will entitle them to all the rights of membership for life without paying any further dues. A life member shall receive a certificate recognizing their life membership **\$250**

Retired: Any person who has been an active member of CEHA for five or more consecutive years, and who has retired is eligible for retired membership **\$15**

Sustaining: Any business, company, corporation or association of such firms with a general interest in CEHA and its objectives, and which has a desire to contribute to its success shall be eligible for sustaining membership. **\$225**

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Glendale, CO 80246

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