

Fall Fest '16 Management Conference Another Blockbuster Event



NEFA HELD ITS 10TH ANNUAL FALL FEST PROGRAM ON NOVEM-BER 12 & 13 AT THE BILT-MORE RESORT HOTEL IN PROVIDENCE, RI.

"What a GREAT event," exclaimed John Dallas, NEFA President. "We had the best speakers we have ever had. I am so proud of this event -- and so proud of what we are able to bring to the association. We had a

good attendance, we had great allied trade participation, and all I can say is the members that missed it really missed an incredible opportunity."

"I want to recognize the contributions of AristoCraft Supply, Aldrich CleanTech, Rubin and Rudman, and Kreussler,' continued Dallas, "as they are the 4 companies who have been at each and every Fall Fest Program we have had since we started 10 years ago."

TOP INDUSTRY SPEAKERS

Thanks to the generous support of our Session Sponsors and Breakfast Sponsor (Aristo-Craft Supply, Kreussler, Aldrich CleanTech, and Fabricare Manager) we were able to bring in dynamic speakers from all over the country.

Trudy Adams, 21st Century Drycleaning, was the keynote speaker and delivered two fant-astic programs. The first program, on Saturday morning, focussed on the "Power of a Touchpoint". The program was aimed at owners and key managers, and really explored the culture of the business -- and how everything revolves around customer interaction. Her presentation highlighted the importance of reaching out to your customers, rewarding your customers, and working with your customers. These are the keys to increasing both volume and customer base.

She was also the featured breakfast speaker on Sunday. Her presentation "Creating a Super CSR" was aimed at CSRs, Managers, and owners alike. She was able to demonstrate the important role these positions play in the success of the business. She also delved into specific ways you can improve your Customer Service and used real life examples to illustrate those areas.

(Continued on page 3)

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message2
Fall Fest Sponsors Support YOUR Business4
Larry Fish Elected New NEFA President5
New Salary Exempt Rules Put on Hold6
CT DECD Now Accepting Pre-Applications to Fund8
New York Eyes Perc Ban and Alternative Solvent Regulations9
Plan Now for DLI/NCA 5-Star Management Conference10
Allied Trade Members11

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

It Has Been a GREAT Four Years!

THIS IS MY LAST OFFICIAL COLUMN FOR THE HEADLINES&MORE. I CAN'T SAY ENOUGH ABOUT THE BOARD OF DIR-ECTORS YOU HAVE WATCHING OUT FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION AND FOR YOUR INDUSTRY. IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS WE HAVE UNDERGONE QUITE A TRANS-FORMATION. AND I AM PROUD OF THE AS-SOCIATION WE HAVE TODAY.



John Dallas, NEFA President

Working together with the Board of Directors and other Officers, we have answered the challenges

facing NEFA and really the entire industry and have become stronger. We have embraced changes with our management team -- and have better programs and communications vehicles to show for it. We are reaching out to our members more often and in more ways than we have ever before.

Peter is able to get out into the field and meet the membership, and still play an integral role in helping shape the industry in the Northeast.

I really want to thank Peter Blake and DLI's Fran Johnson for all their work on our behalf. I want to thank the dedication of the Board and volunteers that keep us moving forward and keep us building strength.

I am proud to say we are in a much better place now than we have been in a very long time. Revenues have been up, but more importantly Membership is up. It has been a long time since we have been able to say that. Over the course of the past year NEFA membership has stabilized, and this is a major accomplishment!

Because we have had such financial success in recent years, we are now able to offer more educational programs and meetings. We have improved our website keeping it fresh and constantly updated and our NEFA Headlines&More Magazine which is now in color and published more consistently.

NEFA continues to grow and strengthen, not because of me, but because of the incredible voluntary leaders I have been fortunate to serve with. It never ceases to amaze me how dedicated these individuals are to NEFA, and how devoted they are to making sure NEFA offers the best programs and services possible to our members.

I am confident that Larry Fish will continue this fine tradition of leadership. There are great things ahead for NEFA, our members and the entire industry. I look forward to working with Larry and the full board, and doing all I can to support him.

I sincerely thank you all for the support you have shown me. Together we have done some great things, and together we will all accomplish even more in the years ahead.

John Dallas

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FALL FEST 2016 RECAP...

continued from page 1

Economist Chris Keuhl of Armada Corporate Intelligence was the second speaker -- and he stole the show. His topic, "Now that the Election is Over: Where Does the Economy Go Now?" was a highlight of the conference. He confessed to having researched and prepared for both scenarios -- but also having to rework much of his discussion points after the election upset. He used a blend of dry humor, keen observation, and a vast knowledge to explore a Trump economy and what may come next.

Of his many predictions, President Elect Trump's Cabinet is close to his thoughts. He also predicted eventual wild swings in the Dow Jones Industrial Average as there will be volatile reactions to much of what is said -- even before it is done, and he is sworn in.

"It was really interesting to hear a global perspective as it relates to small business," offered Larry Fish, "and it was one of my favorite programs we have ever held."

After a Brainstorming Lunch with the Experts, Mary Scalco of DLI was on hand to give her prognosis for the industry. She discussed changes in consumer trends, and attitudes as key challenges we can either surrender to or take advantage of. She stressed the need to realize what consumers are look-

ing for -- and take that information and capitalize on it. The industry has a bright future -- but we have to adapt and be prepared to change to meet those challenges.

The last program on Saturday was a unique panel of experts de-

signed to showcase ways you can protect your business. Attorney Robert Fasanella of Rubin and Rudman explored ways you can protect your business from environmental contamination issues. He showed ways you can protect yourself from liability. His key message is to research your insurance policies now -- before you have issues. Every drycleaner should be researching the historical coverage and keeping whatever documents they can find.

Denise Murphy, also of Rubin and Rudman, spoke on Employment Issues, and highlighted the most serious areas of concern. She was able to walk through the myriad of issues surrounding minimum wage, paid leave/sick time, and the ever changing Salary Exempt issues.

Don Desrosiers of Tailwind Systems was the third member of the panel and he discussed the need for Management Systems to be in place to protect your bottom line.

Rob Johnson of Starch up was the day's last speaker.









A full house at Fall Fest '16, Economist Chris Keuhl, Nancy and David Machesney winners of a David Ortiz signed Red Sox Jersey, Otis Butler of Pier Cleaners discussing Customer Service with Pier Cleaners staff.

He demonstrated ways their new program can help protect your business from the myriad of pick-up and delivery apps that are becoming available. Johnson showed how you can easily and economically enter that arena with their service.



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It is through their generosity that NEFA is able to accomplish all that we do for the industry. From regulatory advocacy and assistance to education and special programs, the allied that support NEFA enable us to help our members and the industry.

This year NEFA presented 4 companies with an award of recognition for their 10 years of support of NEFA's Fall Fest. Those companies were: AristoCraft Supply, Aldrich CleanTech, Rubin and Rudman, and Kreussler Chemical. When looking for products and services -- use the companies that help support you and your association. Fall Fest Sponsors Include:

Saturday Breakfast Sponsor: Fabricare Systems
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Larry Fish Elected New NEFA President



NEFA'S RE-2016 AN-CENT NUAL **MEETING** HELD AT FALL FEST, LARRY FISH OFFICIALLY TOOK OVER FOR JOHN DALLAS AS PRES-**IDENT OF THE AS-**SOCIATION.

In accepting the post, Larry congratulated

John on all his successes in office. He highlighted the changes in management structure, the fantastic conference he has helped build, and pointed to the fact that membership has been stabilized over the course of the last few years as significant accomplish-

"John can be very proud of the progress NEFA has made during his four years as President," congratulated Larry. "I also really want to express my gratitude for all the support I have gotten from the board and from the members over the course of my tenure on the NEFA Board. I look forward to continuing in the footsteps of some great leaders, and I am excited about NEFA's future. I always have an open door to new ideas, programs, and services and I think NEFA will only grow stronger as we move forward."

One of Larry's priorities will be to continue to foster membership growth and to strengthen the educational offerings of NEFA.

NEFA ELECTIONS

Also at the Annual Meeting, Alan Kushinsky of Champion Cleaners in Woburn, MA was named Vice president, and Jim Higgins of Champion Cleaners in Marlborough, MA was elected as Treasurer.

Louis D'Autorio of Lapels Cleaners in Needham, MA was elected as a Director-At-Large and Kathy Benzinger of Benzinger's Cleaners in Hamburg, NY was elected to represent New York.

"We still need more good people to help NEFA grow and excel," concluded Larry,"and we sincerely hope members will join us for upcoming meetings, and will look to get involved.

Anyone interested in joining the Board of Directors, or in learning more ways they can become involved in NEFA, is invited to con-tact the NEFA Offi ce: 800-442-6848



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New Salary Exempt Rules Put on Hold



OK, SO THE DEPART-MENT OF LABOR SAID THEY WERE RAISING THE SALARY LEVEL FOR EXEMPT EM-PLOYEES SOMETIME IN 2015.

Then they said they didn't

know when it was going to be. Then they said December 1, 2016. They said the new number was \$970 per week. Then they said it was \$927. Then they said it was another number and they didn't know what it was. Then they said it was \$913. Now, at just about midnight, a Texas judge issues a preliminary injunction that prevents the rule from becoming effective on December 1st. So all of the work, preparation, sweat and tears that management has put into getting ready for change is for naught, at least for the time being.

I talked with a manager the other day who was mad as a hornet. Listening to the Department of Labor, and attempting to be a good business leader, he had several months ago identified those employees who would be impacted by the new rule and had already implemented the changes of either increasing an exempt employee's salary to the new \$913 level or changing the employee to non-exempt, having the employee keep a time record and paying

him or her an hourly rate plus overtime. "What am I going to do now?", he asked, "Change them back or leave them as they are." Here are our thoughts

Exempt Salary Level - For the moment, the minimum salary an exempt employee must receive remains at \$455 per week. The proposed level of \$913 is not effective now. This means that your exempt employees will continue to be exempt.

Currently Exempt Employees - Some of your employees were going to be affected by the \$913 salary level and some were not going to be affected. If you have not made the changes to these affected employees then you do not have to make these changes yet.

Employees You Have Already Changed - If you have already made these changes, you have the right to change them back, but here are a few thoughts – if you increased the salary of an exempt employee up to \$913 because they were close to it anyway, it's probably best to leave that alone. On the other hand, if you re-classified an exempt employee to non-exempt and placed him or her on an hourly rate plus overtime, then reverting to the previous exempt classification may be a good idea. Here's why – most exempt managers did not want to be re-classified to non-exempt and most employers did not want to re-classify them to non-exempt.

More detailed information is on www.nefabricare.com!



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Whatever your legal needs are today or in the future, Rubin and Rudman LLP offers legal advice that's spot-on.

Contact NEFA Board Director-at-Large **Robert A. Fasanella** at Rubin and Rudman LLP. Call Bob at 617.330.7018 or email him at rfasanella@rubinrudman.com



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CT DECD Now Accepting Pre-Applications for Drycleaning Remediation Fund



THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT (DECD)
IS PLEASED
TO ANNOUNCE

THAT IT IS ACCEPTING A NEW ROUND OF PRE-APPLICATIONS UNDER THE DRY CLEANING REMEDIATION FUND.

The Dry Cleaning Fund continues to face a number of challenges, most importantly a lack of sufficient funding generated by the surcharge to meet the significant demand for cleanup funding across the state. Currently there are 32 applications that have been on a waiting list since 2014.

Despite these challenges, DECD is committed to administering the fund efficiently and with a high degree of customer service. Here are details of the latest round:

DECD will accept a new round of applications to the fund from October 17, 2016 until January 31, 2017.

Applicants will need to fill out a short application intake form. Completing this application form will allow applicants to secure a place in line to be considered for funding as it becomes available.

New applications will be added to the waiting list in the order in which they are received. However, due to limited funding, applicants should expect a significant waiting period – several years – prior to accessing funding.

Prior to receiving funding, qualified applicants will be asked to complete a more detailed application, but this step is not necessary to submit the intake form.

DECD maintains an updated Dry Cleaning Establishment Remediation Fund website. The site includes updated information on the Fund's status as well as details on funded applications and the current length of the waiting list to receive funding. DECD looks forward to continuing to work with the dry cleaning industry to administer the fund, and to making continuous improvements to the processes and procedures to allow the agency to address the significant challenges facing the fund.



New York Eyes Perc Ban and Alternative Solvent Regulations



NEFA EXEC-UTIVE VICE **PRESIDENT** PETER BLAKE ATTENDED NY DEC STAKE-HOLDER OUT-REACH PRO-**GRAMS** TO DISCUSS PO-TENTIAL NEW DRYCLEAN-

ING REGULATIONS ON PERC AND ALTERNATIVE SOLVENTS.

The purpose of the meeting was to inform all stakeholders of the intent to further regulate the drycleaning industry, and to gauge the reaction of affected parties. The most controversial subject was the potential for a complete ban on perc. Peter Blake and other industry representatives vehemently opposed any ban on perc, regardless of the time frame being discussed.

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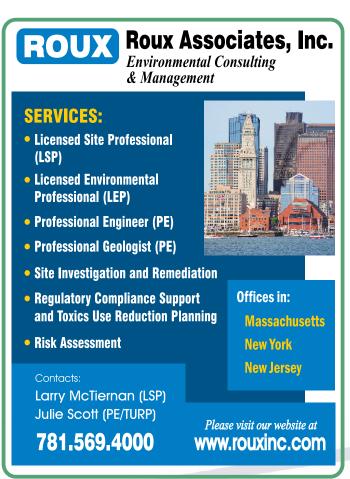
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"There is just no justification for it," observed Blake, "and we will not support regulation for the sake of regulation. Demonstrate there is an issue, and we can work together on a solution. There is no demonstrated issue here, in fact, all evidence and testing point to a fantastic history of pollution control and toxic use reduction."

There were segments of the proposed regulations that made sense, and there is a need to cleanup some of the language in the perc regulation pt. 232 since it was written over 15 years ago.

NEFA and DLI also noted that we couldn't in good conscience support regulations on alternative solvents until once again the department could demonstrate a problem -- or an issue -- that needed to be addressed. The associations firmly believe in tough, but fair regulation -- but only in cases where there is a cause for concern. The department has not demonstrated the need as of yet.

A full copy of the issues and NEFA's letter to the DEC and Governor's office can be found on www.nefabricare.com. New York drycleaners are urged to contact their legislators and regulators and voice their concern over potentially damaging regulations. Call NEFA for assistance: 800-442-6848.





10 Take-away Tips from a Previous DLI/NCA Conference

- **1.** Doing something unexpected for a customer on a personal level humanizes your business and makes you more of a friend than a service provider. Customers love feeling loved and they'll love you in return.
- **2.** Send your service over the top by anticipating customer needs.
- **3.** Claim responsibility for your online reputation. Sites like YELP! can be great business tools if well-managed.
- **4.** Monitor your online reviews and always respond positively to disgruntled customers.
- **5.** Even bad economic times present opportunities for business owners to be creative and forward-thinking entrepreneurs. Now's the time to evaluate your business strategies. How can you be more efficient?
- 6. What additional services can you provide?
- 7. How can your marketing efforts be improved?
- **8.** Recognize that you are in a personal relationship with your customers.
- **9.** Use your POS system to gather information about your customers to help build the relationship.
- **10.** Foster pride in your employee's work to improve quality and customer service.

"Renewing old friendships and forging new ones in such great surroundings is always a high spot for everyone attending."

- Nora Nealis, NCA Executive Director

"The audience was engaged—no one was looking at their laptops, phones, or reading the paper. At the end the audience wanted more and commented that they wished the sessions were longer."

— Mary Scalco, DLI CEO

"The 'biggest' thing I took away was the information I learned having dinner with one of the participants. Since that dinner, I created a list of 'change now' items that I am halfway through. It re-energized me in the business."

 Mark Scott, CEO of Bakker's Fine Drycleaning in Kirkland, Washington

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