President’s Message – August 2009

Dear SRA-NE Members:

Hello, and thank you for giving me the honor of serving as the President of SRA-NE for the 2009-2010 year. I think it will be an exciting year, with many creative initiatives. Thanks to Jon Levy for doing a great job over the past year, for organizing excellent seminars and a wonderful poster session, and in general, for providing opportunities for thought-provoking discussions at a great venue.

To introduce myself, I am Amy B. Rosenstein. I currently work on a contract basis for ICF International in Lexington, Massachusetts, and as an independent consultant. My general areas are human health and ecological risk assessment, as well as risk communication. I come from the consulting world, but plan on working closely with our past presidents, who come from academia, the public sector, and consulting, and with interested SRA members. Of note, this is the first year that SRA-NE has established and filled the position of President-Elect; Henry Roman of Industrial Economics, was elected. Hopefully this new process will provide seamless transitions from year to year for the group. Also, re-elected were the dedicated Arlene Levin as Treasurer and Karen Vetrano as Secretary.

Planned for this year are: at least four exciting seminars, the annual joint meeting with the LSPA, a poster session, a gathering at the national SRA meeting, and maybe even a “members only” mid-winter party. We will continue to hold the seminars at Harvard School of Public Health for now, with the generous assistance of Jon Levy - thanks, Jon!

After a few years of positive balances, we have had a few years where costs exceeded income. To remedy this situation, and to make sure that SRA-NE can continue as a professional meeting place for the New England risk community, we have to increase membership, and collect dues from more people already on our membership list. We are increasing dues for the first time in at least fifteen years! Students will be asked to pay $10, and everyone else $20. To this end, we will be collecting dues at the first seminar of the year, for your convenience. In addition, to help members remember to pay their dues annually, we are looking at instituting an automatic annual dues renewal program. Several ideas have been floated to increase SRA-NE membership; I am looking for individuals to join the membership committee to help with these initiatives. Finally, a goal for this year is to put our administrative procedures into place, to ensure that SRA-NE is viable and legal. Legally, SRA-NE needs to develop by-laws and must be registered as a non-profit entity with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and IRS. To simplify these steps (and after many discussions with the de facto governing board), we will probably become a chapter of SRA-National, and will work with SRA-National to streamline our administrative procedures.
In July, a small group of SRA-NE members, past presidents, the President-Elect, Henry Roman, and I came up with a short list of ideas for seminar topics. *I certainly hope to hear seminar ideas from you as well!* Our first seminar is planned for **Thursday, September 17**, at the Harvard School of Public Health, and will be entitled: *Risks and Rationality: Challenges to Sound Decisionmaking.* Three distinguished speakers will provide different perspectives on related issues. James K. Hammitt, Director of the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, will discuss “Positive and Normative Justifications for Benefit-Cost Analysis,” considering the role of economic analysis in decisionmaking. We also welcome Richard Zeckhauser, from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, who will discuss “The Five Neglects: Risks Gone Amiss,” assessing how our failure to think rationally can lead to poor decisions. We are also pleased that David Laibson, from Harvard's Department of Economics, will be joining us to present “How are Preferences Revealed?” discussing how the choices that we actually make diverge from the choices that we should make.

I hope to see you at the first seminar, and again, please feel free to contact me with future seminar or other ideas. Thanks.

Amy B. Rosenstein