

A NOTABLE FIRST

Maritime chapter has won the most President's Awards ever



▲ LEFT TO RIGHT: Maritime chapter members Helen Comeau, Andrew Bradley, Steve Smith, Gordon Jackson, Romuald Thibodeau, Kate Butler, Robert Barss and Jason Turner with Luis Rodrigues of award sponsor Trane (left of Barss) and CHES National president Craig Doerksen (far right).

Since the creation of the President's Award in 2014, three chapters have been bestowed the honour, each receiving it three times. This year, the Maritime chapter came out on top, marking its fourth victory — a momentous occasion for chair Robert Barss who accepted the award on behalf of the chapter executive just as he did in 2015, when CHES Maritime won for the first time.

"It brings a great sense of accomplishment," says Barss. "The award is noted for creating healthy competition between chapters to be the best within the CHES organization. Winning it makes me proud of the Maritime team and their commitment to CHES and its success."

Barss felt similar sentiments in 2019 and 2020, when the chapter also triumphed over others in back-to-back years under the

leadership of Helen Comeau. (He is now in his second non-consecutive term as chair.)

The President's Award is presented annually to the CHES chapter that demonstrates its commitment to education, administration and representation in the activities of the chapter and national board. Each chapter is scored on accounting practices, conference/education day, membership, chapter executive practices, committee work and additional offerings (from submitting articles to CHES's journal, *Canadian Healthcare Facilities*, to providing extra member benefits). Specifically, points are given for activities that benefit members and the work of CHES, such as number of meetings attended in the course of committee work and special education sessions. The recipient of the much-coveted award receives two CHES national

conference registrations and expenses paid up to a maximum of \$2,500 each, as well as a trophy engraved with the winning team's names.

Over the past year, CHES Maritime members have been diligent in attending and contributing to the work of the chapter and all CHES committees, including professional development, communications, governance, partnerships and advocacy, and membership. Members have also contributed through association with CSA Group and the development of standards the healthcare industry relies on.

On the education front, CHES Maritime has continued to offer learning opportunities to both members and non-members. Last November, more than 100 frontline hospital and long-term care staff and administrators gathered in-person for the

first time in more than two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the chapter's fall education day. Held in Truro, N.S., there were seven education sessions on topics related to facility maintenance, as well as ample networking opportunities. The chapter's most recent conference, April 30-May 2, in Moncton, N.B., was also highly attended by 88 member delegates, up approximately 20 per cent from its last face-to-face spring conference in 2019.

The return of in-person meetings has been a welcome relief to CHES Maritime, as it has been for all chapters and their members. Pandemic restrictions put a stop to in-person events from March 2020 to early summer 2022 — a major source of revenue generation and membership acquisition. (Maritime chapter membership declined by 20 per cent during this time.)

"We depend on the support of our corporate partners at our conferences and educational programs to provide services required by the membership," explains Barss. "With no ability to offer conference and trade shows for several years, we had to be vigilant of our spending."

Despite setbacks, the chapter executive persevered during those challenging years and continued to offer several financial incentives to members, including covering the cost of CHES webinars and Canadian Certified Healthcare Facility Manager exam fees, if passed, and giving money to students to pay for their education through bursaries like the Per Paasche grant.

Named in memory of Paasche who helped establish the Maritime chapter, the \$1,000 bursary was awarded to Willow Somerville this year. The granddaughter of CHES Maritime member Gordon Burrill, Somerville is a student at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, where she is pursuing a bachelor of arts in psychology. She aspires to work with children coping with mental disabilities.

As for chapter membership, it has begun to rebound from the pandemic low of 101 thanks to the executive's concerted efforts.

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CHES Maritime welcomed 24 new members into its fold over the past year, largely represented by those working in long-term care facilities.

"We will continue to include this sector of healthcare in future activities, which, in turn, we hope will further grow our membership," says Barss.

With eyes to the future, Barss and the rest of the chapter executive — Steve Smith (executive vice-chair), Ken Morrissey (Nova Scotia vice-chair), Kate Butler (New Brunswick vice-chair), Gordon Jackson (treasurer), Dave Bligh (secretary), Jason Turner (corporate associate) and Comeau (past chair) — have a busy year ahead. The Maritime chapter will host the 2024 CHES National Conference in Halifax, Sept. 8-10.

Planning for the conference began eight years, as it was supposed to be held in 2020, but cancelled due to the pandemic. With a return to 'normalcy,' the conference planning committee was resurrected last year and has been meeting regularly ever since. Much of the original program is intact; however, those who entered abstracts for the 2020 event have been asked to resubmit. New submissions are also being accepted. Approved speakers will be notified by February. Educational programming will be based on the theme, *Enriching Patient Experiences by Optimizing the Environment*.

The conference will open with a reception at Pier 21, home to the Canadian Museum of Immigration. Author and

performance coach Alan Mallory will deliver the keynote speech. With a degree in engineering from Queen's University and a masters in psychology from Adler University, he will provide an engaging visual and educational journey packed with tools, strategies and ideas that attendees can put into action to make positive changes.

The trade show will house 130 booths. The corporate associate group will offer 'beyond the booth,' 15 minute education offerings on products and technologies in a corner of the trade show floor — a first for a national conference.

Always a highlight is the President's reception and CHES awards presentation, which will be held in the Halifax Convention Centre's 30,000-square-foot ballroom, offering panoramic views of the city from floor-to-ceiling windows. Comedic hypnotist Ian Stewart will cap off the evening.

The social and companion program includes the Great CHES Golf Game at Glen Arbour in nearby Hammonds Plains; tours of the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic and Halifax city centre; and trips to Peggy's Cove and Lunenburg, where those with sea legs will set sail on the *Bluenose II*, an exact replica of the famed schooner *Bluenose*, which became a national icon.

"We are so excited to have the opportunity to bring to the membership a conference to remember and are looking forward to welcoming our friends and colleagues from across Canada and the U.S." ■