

APHA worker safety section lauds Beard's achievements

By Eddy Ball

NIEHS industrial hygienist Sharon Beard brought home a prestigious award last month from the American Public Health Association (APHA) annual meeting in Boston (see [story](#)).

Beard was honored with the APHA Lorin Kerr Award for her 19 years of leadership establishing high-impact safety and health training programs for low-income workers, particularly the NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program (WETP) Minority Worker Training Program (MWTP). Beard received the award Nov. 5 at an APHA Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) luncheon.

In its announcement of the award, OHS wrote, "Sharon has successfully navigated a complicated program development process, with multiple stakeholders and intractable training challenges, to create an innovative and highly regarded Minority Worker Training Program, [and] exhibited a tireless dedication to serving low-income workers in highly hazardous occupations."

Engagement of communities, stakeholders, and grantees

Beard was nominated for the award by WETP Director Chip Hughes, who described the leadership and accomplishments of his longtime colleague. "I think that what's so great about her, is that she has a tireless dedication to low-income workers, environmental justice communities, and people in high-hazard situations."

Linked Video

[Watch as Hughes describes Beard and as Beard reflects on her nearly two decade career with the MWTP in a video by Mark Catlin of the Service Employees International Union \(09:09\)](#)

In her acceptance speech, Beard reflected on her introduction to environmental justice and worker safety, as well as the need for community engagement, in the blighted streets of Boston, while completing her masters at Tufts University in civil and environmental engineering, with a focus on environmental science and occupation health. Beard received the prestigious Environmental Science and Management Fellowship from the National Urban Fellows Inc., that brought her to Tufts University for her graduate studies.

Once she took on the challenge of creating MWTP, Beard explained, she also became keenly aware of the importance of stakeholder participation. "We came up with a framework to make sure everybody was at the table, that everybody had a chance to contribute to the process," Beard said. "It [the program's continued success] couldn't have been done without the help and support of all of the grantees who have been doing it."

As Beard told the audience, since 1995, MWTP has trained more than 10,000 workers, nearly 70 percent of whom went on to full-time employment in their respective areas. The MWTP has served as a model for quality training of its kind throughout the U.S.

Through NIEHS and working on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Environmental Justice Working Group, she said, "We're pushing forward with occupational health and safety, with occupational health and disparities, and environmental justice." Beard closed by thanking the many people who helped her to do the work that earned her the Kerr Award.

(See Nov. 13 [Pump Handle blog](#)

(<http://scienceblogs.com/thepumphandle/2013/11/13/amid-minimum-wage-votes-and-walmart-strikes-apha-ohs-section-honors-workplace-safety-champions/>)

by freelance writer Elizabeth Grossman for commentary about Beard and the other OHS awards winners honored at this year's APHA meeting.)



Beard, center, received a standing ovation at the conclusion of her acceptance speech. Her wife, Willis Page, to the right of Beard, joined her in Boston to celebrate her achievement. (Photo courtesy of Dorothy Wigmore)



Beaming with pride with her award, Beard, right, joined Hughes, center, and Christina Morgan of the U.S. Chemical Safety Board. (Photo courtesy of Dorothy Wigmore)

Kudos from colleagues

Several attendees had praise for Beard's two decades of engagement in worker safety training.

- University of California, Los Angeles Professor Linda Delp, Ph.D., chair of the APHA OHS Section - "Sharon Beard is paving the way to integrate worker health and environmental justice. Her dedication to the NIEHS Minority Worker Training Program has laid the foundation for groundbreaking initiatives across the country, and the APHA OHS Section is proud to honor her leadership
- Lois Adams, branch chief of Grants, Tribes, Communities, and Municipal Assistance at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - "Sharon sets the bar for quality and service, so it is rewarding to see the sustained superior efforts of a truly deserving and dedicated environmental professional be recognized.
- Eastern Kentucky University Professor Sheila Pressley, Ph.D. - "Sharon Beard has dedicated her entire career to the health and protection of workers, and she is highly regarded and respected by all who know her. She is a consummate professional and there is no one more deserving of the Lorin Kerr Award."

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