



Daniel Wyckoff: Hunterdon County Health Department Registered Environmental Health Specialist

Wyckoff's experience in the hotel industry led him to an environmental health job.

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-Dan Wyckoff, REHS

Valuing Hospitality

Daniel Wyckoff became a Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS) in 2005, but working in the hospitality and travel industries for over twenty years means health and sanitation have always been a concern. Wyckoff received his bachelor's degree from the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration in 1980, and from there he worked in major hotels all over the country, from New York to Wyoming, specializing in Food and Beverage Operations until 1989. After a 15-year hiatus, during which he managed his family's travel agency, Wyckoff returned to the hotel business, but he found he was no longer excited by the industry. When the hotel where he was working was sold, Wyckoff realized he had an opportunity to reevaluate his skill set and consider a brand new career. A friend introduced him to the idea of public health inspection, and immediately Wyckoff knew it was something at which he could succeed.

New Career Opportunities

Wyckoff followed his friend's advice and researched the Environmental and Public Health course (EPH) run by the Rutgers NJAES Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE). The course involves seven weeks in the classroom, where veterans of the field teach septic systems, food borne illness, and more. It is followed by a 200-hour internship at a local health department, where students learn the ins and outs of health inspection from their future colleagues. Through classroom training and hands-on experience in the field, EPH students receive the REHS training they need to help prepare them for the NJ REHS exam and to find an REHS job once they have their license.



Being an REHS has brought Wyckoff back to his roots in food and beverage operations.

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Wyckoff continues to use his food safety knowledge to advance his new career as an REHS.

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Wyckoff came into EPH with some food safety training, but the public health and epidemiology training he received in the class were new to him. “I found the class very rewarding,” he says. “I was able to focus, and the instructors were interested in the topics they were teaching.” Though the course was demanding, the interactive and encouraging atmosphere proved very effective in preparing Wyckoff for the difficult NJ REHS licensing exam. “Sitting down to take the state exam is very challenging, period,” he explains, “but I don’t think there was anything on the exam that I hadn’t studied.” Wyckoff did pass the exam, and he received his public health license in 2005.

Returning to His Roots

Upon joining the Hunterdon County Health Department as an REHS in July of 2006, Wyckoff instantly became involved in the Retail Food Protection Program. Through this program, 4 inspectors monitor over 700 licensed retail food establishments in Hunterdon County. Wyckoff was naturally drawn to food safety, and he feels that his experience with Food and Beverage Operations makes him well-equipped to help restaurant owners become more compliant with health codes. “It’s rewarding in that you feel that you’ve made an improvement in an operation to protect the public,” he explains. “It was worth that change in my life.”

Today, Wyckoff continues to utilize his experience in food and hospitality to relate to the people whose businesses he inspects. By being empathetic to those subject to inspection, he encourages business owners to remedy violations rather than hide them. Wyckoff remains dedicated to improving restaurant safety, and he continues to receive training in order to improve his skills as an REHS. “There’s constant opportunity to grow and develop with environmental health from a public health standpoint. There’s always something you can learn and participate in, and the more you learn, the more you do,” he says. “I find it very rewarding, and I’m glad I made the decision.”

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