

# NEFA's Fall Fest '15 Conference an Overwhelming Success



NEFA HELD ITS 9TH ANNUAL FALL FEST PROGRAM ON NOVEMBER 14 & 15 AT THE BILTMORE RESORT HOTEL IN PROVIDENCE, RI.

"By all accounts this was the best conference NEFA has had yet," offered John Dallas, NEFA President. "We had a record number of attendees, an increase in exhibitors, and the most plants represented then ever before. When you look at

the numbers, we had almost 25% of the members represented here. That is an amazing number."

#### **TOP INDUSTRY SPEAKERS**

Thanks to the generous support of our Session Sponsors (AristoCraft Supply, Kreussler, and Aldrich CleanTech) we were able to bring in dynamic speakers from all over the country.

James Peuster, founder of 21st Century Drycleaning started off the Conference with a 5-hour management program on Friday afternoon. The program was an informative exploration of management techniques and responsibilities. Attendees learned how to effectively motivate, while still holding employees accountable. The program had almost 20 attendees, and people were still registering at the door.

The first official Fall Fest Speaker was Coach Jerry Salmon. Salmon is a business coach that has helped small businesses around the country, including one NEFA Member, to increase sales and profitability.

"One of the best takeaways I got from the day", offered Larry Fish of Pier Cleaners, "was learning the platinum rule. We all know the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The light bulb went off for me when I realized we should be following the platinum rule: do unto others as they would have you do unto them. Do what the customer wants -- and expects!"

#### **NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015**

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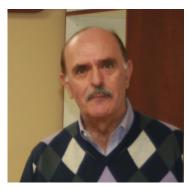
#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

### **Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!**

ON BEHALF OF THE NEFA OFFICERS, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND STAFF, I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND OUR SINCEREST WISHES FOR A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON.

We appreciate your support, and your membership. I know we all get busy in the day to day operations of our businesses, but I wanted to take a moment to really express my gratitude for all those individuals and companies that help us to operate.

It has been a great year for NEFA. Membership is on the rise. We have had positive membership growth since March and we are nearing an



John Dallas, NEFA President

18-month high. We have increased our education opportunities, and reached out to areas like Buffalo that we have been absent in for far too long. Our Clean Classic Golf Tournament was very successful, and Fall Fest was our best attended ever.

NEFA continues to be the leading watchdog for our industry. Working on issues in CT, RI, and MA. We continue to be your advocate. We have helped individual members as they faced regulatory pressures. I am proud of NEFA and of our ability to help you -- our member. This can't be done alone, however, and we are only successful through the support of our members and of our allied trade partners. We often ask for assistance, and I am really grateful for all they do for me, the industry, and NEFA.

I want to specifically thank this year's Fall Fest Sponsors and Exhibitors. Their support of the Conference helped make it the tremendous success it was. I suggest you all read the list of supporters and express your gratitude to them as well:

Saturday Breakfast Sponsor: *Roux Associates*Saturday Session & Luncheon Sponsor: *Kreussler/Solvon K-4*Sunday Buffet Breakfast Sponsor: *AristoCraft Supply*Sunday Session Sponsor: *Aldrich CleanTech/Realstar/Unipress* 

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## John Dallas

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#### FALL FEST 2013 RECAP...

continued from page 1

Catherine McCann of America's Best Cleaners was the day's second speaker. She focussed on one of the biggest problems facing owners and managers today. Far too often they are spending the time and effort working IN their business rather than ON their business.

People typically can get lost in the day to day operations and pressures and are not able to invest the time and energy critical to increasing business and profitability. We need to take care of the everyday workloads, but we also have to step aside and look to the future and see where we want our business to grow.

"This was one of the best programs I have attended", offered Jim Desjardins of Daisy Cleaners, "and I am fortunate to be able to attend and learn. I always take away a few tangible ideas and bring them back to implement in my plant."

# BRAINSTORMING WITH THE EXPERTS

The afternoon program started off with a roundtable luncheon that had experts from the conference visiting each table to discuss the pressures of the industry, answer questions, and discuss the pressures that face all drycleaners.

The experts then participated in a NEFA Panel Discussion answering the basic question: "What is the One, Most Important Thing I Can Do to Improve My Business?" Each of the experts attacked the premise from different directions. Approaches varied from diversification of services, to increasing knowledge and awareness.

Each exert felt that the industry is heading in a great direction and the future is bright, but also cautioned that in order to capitalize on the trends you have to be open to change.

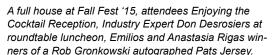
John Sennett of JDS Consulting was the day's final speaker. He discussed the challenges of consistency throughout operations. He used his background with franchises like Tide and Dryclean USA to expand on the need for systems driven management, and that successful leadership can be achieved by defining job performance and expectation.

# NEFA COCKTAIL RECEPTION AND SILENT AUCTION

One of the highlights of Fall Fest consistently is the Silent Auction, and this year was no different. Aided by the generosity of Don Desrosiers of Tailwind Systems who bought everyone their first drink, people enjoyed music, a few laughs and the opportunity to get great deals on everything from sports memorabilia to business consulting services. NEFA was also raffling off a jersey signed by Rob Gronkowski, which clearly received the most attention.











"The silent auction gives everyone the opportunity to relax a little and socialize and really get to know everyone", offered Mike Ross of AristoCraft Supply, "as an allied trade, these opportunities don't come along too often, and one of the best values for us is the time to really get to talk to people, learn what they need and ways we can assist them."

# TIPS, TRICKS, AND TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY

DLI's own Brian Johnson was the keynote speaker for Sunday. One of the key components that people look for from Fall Fest, is the ability to take information, absorb it, and implement it. The most popular programs are often these types of programs where you learn effective ways to change processes and make your plant more efficient and with better quality. It is amazing how sometimes even the seemingly smallest, obvious change can make such a big impact.

Brian's second presentation was a journey through the DLI Analysis Lab and a showcase of all the latest fibers, fabrics, and fashions to look out for. This is historically one of the most requested and popular programs for NEFA Members.

#### **PLANNING AHEAD**

Backed by the tremendous success of this years conference, plans are already underway to return to Providence in November of 2016. Watch for updates-- you won't want to miss it!

# Why Is It So Hard to Hire and Fire Route Drivers?

Written by James Peuster, The Route Pro & NEFA Board Member



AGAIN, I WILL PREFACE MY ARTICLE WITH THE FACT THAT I AM PROTECTIVE OF ROUTE DRIVERS WHEN IT COMES TO DETERMINING THE ROLE, THE DUTIES, THE REQUIREMENTS AND THE CRITICAL STRATEGIES TO GET MORE FROM YOUR CURRENT ROUTE DELIVERY PERSONNEL.

The struggles many of you are shared from cleaner to cleaner and I completely understand the reasoning behind the complacency or the difficulties in hiring the right individual to build the one aspect of the business you can control the growth of.

Remember, every time you lose a route customer, someone has to go out and get another one. So, let's look at a partial list of all the reasons I see in the difficulties in finding or replacing route drivers.

# 1) YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH THEIR COMFORT LEVEL.

This is the biggest enemy we face when our Route Pros visit you on our on-site projects. We are asked to fire up your staff when in turn, the current driver is doing the minimum required to maintain the routes. The time is now to face the music and ask yourself one questions: "Would I have this driver run, manage and operate a store all by themselves?" Usually the answer is no. Before you fire them, ask the driver if they are willing to add customers to the route to ensure growth. At least give them a chance.

# 2) YOUR PAY STRUCTURE LIMITS POTENTIAL PROFESSIONALS TO COME ONBOARD

You will get what you pay for and it shows most of the time. Sometimes there is a superstar in waiting, but the motivation to perform is nowhere to be found when the pay structure doesn't provide them the opportunity to grow financially with the route. Take a serious look at the income potential you have provided and restructure when necessary.

#### 3) YOU BELIEVE THAT NO ONE IS OUT THERE.

This myth has been busted by various dry cleaners in almost every market. It may take some time at first, but you must believe in that a new hire has the potential to grow your routes. There are plenty of career-minded individuals out there and your job is to invest time, effort, research and money in locating Mr or Mrs Right.

# 4) THE CUSTOMERS LOVE THEM AND THEY NEVER MISS A DAY OF WORK.

That is part of the requirements of any position and yes, I appreciate the loyalty. However, if you are in a position in which the drivers solely know the route, the customers ONLY talk to the driver and you truly feel that you would lose customers if you lose the driver--well then, you are in trouble.

# 5) YOU WOULD RATHER HIRE PEOPLE TO SAVE YOU MONEY THAN MAKE YOU MONEY.

Cost groups and consultants often battle with me on this one. Look at it this way; you have about a 75% attrition rate on the route. There are uncontrollable reasons why a customer leaves the routes. If you do not have someone in place to replace the lost, then your routes will decrease 25% a year. You must look at the top line as well as the bottom line.

These are just 5 of the many reasons you get in a rut with your route delivery personnel and you get paralysed in moving forward. Take a look at your current situation and make the decision to move forward, your future may depend on it.

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## Where Can I Find Reputable Companies?

Written By Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President



ONE OF THE KEY, BUT HIDDEN, BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IS AN ENTIRE PEER-TO-PEER NETWORK.

I recently had a call from a member that was looking for information on a company he had some distressing dealings with. In short, he felt he was taken advantage of, and ripped off.

While I was glad he called, I only wished he had called BEFORE having the work done and before the purchases. In the course of the conversation, he asked me where he could find a list of reputable companies that deal with the drycleaners in his area. While my answer was so obvious to me, and I thought to our members -- the NEFA Allied Trades List is the perfect starting point.

#### FIRST CHOICE SHOULD BE ALLIED MEMBERS

There is a complete list of Allied Members on our website, www.

nefabricare.com, and there is a list in every issue of <u>Headlines & More</u>. The companies that join NEFA are most likely to have the best interests of the membership at heart. These are the companies that continually invest in your future, and provide value beyond just the product or service you are purchasing. We strongly urge all our members to look to these companies first when deciding who to patronize.

#### **STEP TWO**

The next step is to contact the NEFA office to vette any company you are unsure of, and who you have any questions on. If we don't know about a company in a certain area -- the chances are very good that we will have a Board member or other contact in the area that we can call and get information for you, or put you in contact with them directly.

This is a very powerful membership benefit. We can literally put you in touch with people that have used the serve, product or company before. You can then verify the value and make informed decisions. Too often, members rely on word of mouth from one source, and either don't have the time, or take the time to gather more information. The best advice I can give you is to use your membership. Call me at the NEFA office and we can discuss your concerns.



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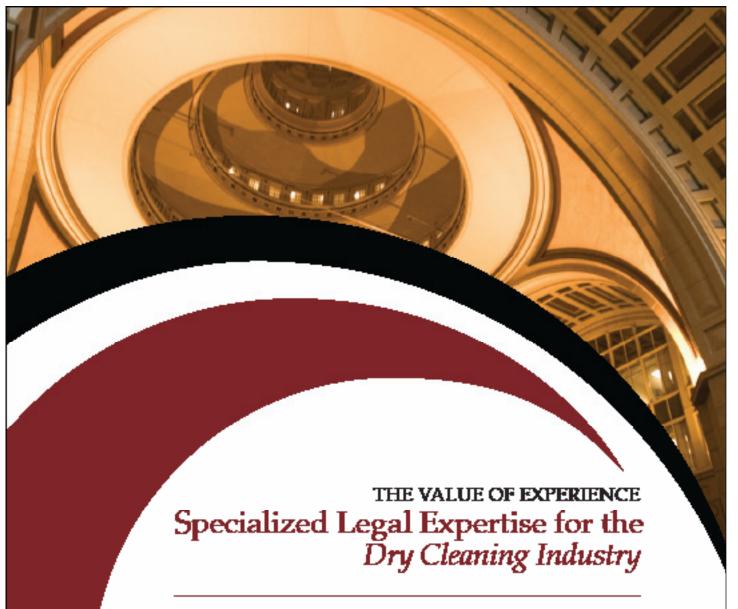
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## "On the Road" School of Drycleaning a Big Hit



Hands-On Instruction

DLI DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, BRIAN IOHN-TOOK SON, THE ONE WEEK DRYCLEANING COURSE ON THE ROAD FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER IN THE NORTH-EAST.

The class was attended by eight students from as far away as Bangor, ME. The week-long program, which featured both classroom and hands on training, was held at Dependable Cleaners in Quincy, MA. Topics covered included general drycleaning, finishing, and spotting. Brian used a combination of classroom study as well as supervised individual hands on training to explore the complex chemistry necessary for proper stain removal.

"The advantage of small classes," observed Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice president, "is the ability to teach a varying level of experience. The students I talked to ranged from very new to years of experience -- and they all expressed their enthusiasm for the course. It was obvious to me that Brian is an amazing teacher, and we were lucky to bring him out to this region."

The class was DLI's most successful "On the Road" program to date, and Brian was enthused by the students desire to learn and commitment to the classroom.

#### **PLANNING AHEAD**

Based on the success of this program, NEFA is already planning on bringing the program back next fall.

"We definitely want to bring Brian back out to the region, expressed Blake, "and we are really pleased it was such a positive experience for all involved. Since this was the first time we have tried it, we were not sure what to expect."

DLI and NEFA are considering format changes which would allow members to send people to components of the program, or to the whole class. This way you could send one employee to the stain removal portion, but a different one to the pressing portion. This should increase the opportunities for plants to participate.



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# CT Clean-Up Fund Status Report Meeting Set for January 5th



AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED, THE CONNECTICUT DECD WILL HOST INFORMATION

MEETINGS TWICE PER YEAR TO

PROVIDE UPDATES TO THE INDUSTRY ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DRY CLEANING FUND AS WELL AS TO GATHER INPUT AND FEEDBACK FROM THE INDUSTRY.

The next of these meetings will be held Tuesday, January 5, 2016, from 4 to 5:30 pm. at DECD's offices at 505 Hudson Street, Hartford (Room 466). Please register for this meeting by emailing drycleaning@ct.gov.

Representatives of DECD, the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) will participate in this meeting to provide updates and answer questions.

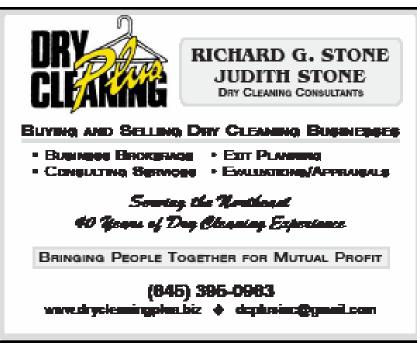
This meeting should be of particular interest to the 33 dry cleaning establishments that completed pre-application intake forms, as DECD will be providing information on next steps and the full application process.

Peter Blake of NEFA and members of the Hartford County Laundry and Drycleaning Association (HCLDA) will be participating and all drycleaners are encouraged to attend and learn first hand how the fund is progressing.

After years of dormancy, this program has been rejuvenated and there is steady activity. There have been new applications submitted and the Department will be annually taking more applications. There has also been some new actions taken for people that had submitted applications back in 2009 and even earlier.

"It is great to finally see some progress," commented Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President, "and to see that the industry's voice is being heard. Tim Sullivan promised to make it a priority, to revitalize the program, and to have an open dialog with drycleaners -- and he is fulfilling that promise. It is great to know that the hard work is paying off and we can potentially make the Clean-up fund

a viable resource again. This is a great step forward in our continued effort to fix and adapt the program to make it meaningful again for the industry. It is also a great opportunity to learn how the DRS is progressing in the effort of identifying potential plants that should have been participating, but aren't."





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