

AFFIDAVIT

FROM: Marcia Elston, P.O. Box 2483, Snohomish, WA 98291-2483
RE: NAHA (National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy)
SUBJECT: Punitive and Unfair Treatment of Members & Volunteers
DATE: January 27, 2004

My name is Marcia Elston.

I was an active member (1994) and volunteer of NAHA from 1995 until October 4, 1999, when I was summarily dismissed from all volunteer activities in a letter (copy attached) signed, "The Executive Committee" which contained no individual officer's signature. When I contacted members of the executive committee, they had no knowledge of my dismissal, nor was it a unanimous decision by the Executive Committee, as the letter purported. The events leading up to this abrupt removal are as follows:

At the time, I was Washington Chapter Director, Bylaws Chair, Ethics Committee Member and Co-Chair of the Bi-Annual Conference. I had run for the office of Treasurer on the West District slate. Barbara Lucks and I were two members from our team (opposing Jade Shutes team) who had attended the Annual Meeting in St. Louis in September, 1999. Our goal (even though there was much growing concern with regard to finances and operations) was to continue to offer support and volunteer services should we not win the election. Based on our requests for election verification and the organization's refusal for independent balloting (see B. Luck's affidavit), we were never assured that it was a fair process.

At the Annual Meeting, incoming President, Jade Shutes presented a new program for approval which would have NAHA implement an aromatherapy exam. Since there was another nonprofit organization with which NAHA had had reciprocal relations, and which was already developing an aromatherapy exam, members present questioned the reason for this new program. When asked why the existing reciprocal arrangements with the other organization were not satisfactory, both Presidents (Cheryl Hoard-outgoing and Jade Shutes-incoming) advised us that the other organization was uncooperative and it was "impossible to work with them". When asked whether the NAHA Education Committee had discussed and approved of this program, both Presidents said, "yes".

The program was only approved tentatively at the Annual Meeting with the addendum that it be presented to the entire membership for approval before it was implemented. This program was never initiated, to my knowledge.

After returning to Seattle, I continued work on the Bi-Annual conference under strained conditions with my co-chair, the incoming president, Jade Shutes. Two Education Committee members contacted me asking for information regarding the new NAHA Aromatherapy Exam program. I was surprised to find that they had no knowledge of this proposed program, nor were they in support of it, as stated by Jade Shutes and Cheryl

Hoard at the Annual Meeting. When I approached Jade Shutes with this inquiry and information, she replied, “It doesn’t matter, the Executive Committee can do what it pleases, anyway.”

I expressed that I was extremely disappointed by her misrepresentation of the exam program at the General Meeting and her autocratic operating style and expressed that I didn’t know if I could continue working with such drastic changes in established protocol.

Ms. Shutes immediately notified all Directors (on the mailing list established for Director communication) that I had resigned from the conference committee. I replied to all concerned that the incoming President’s post was premature; it was my job to tender my resignation, not hers.

The membership had approved the creation of a new conference coordinator position. I suggested to the group that since it had been a decision of reorganization to have new volunteer positions for conference management to free up the President to carry out her other duties, that it made more sense if Ms. Shutes would resign from the Conference Committee, in order to give her more time for presidential duties, and in keeping with the intention to expand the volunteer base.

It was then that I received the letter of dismissal from all of my volunteer duties. In addition, the Director’s Online Mailing List was shut down, breaking contact between all Directors in the field and myself. I contacted all Executive Board members, all District and Regional Directors and Committee Chairs, expressing that this dismissal was punitive and unfair, referencing the Colorado Nonprofit Corporation Act as the basis for a process of fair resolution. Two of the incoming members resigned from the Executive Committee, sending me a letter of sympathy and support, stating that they could not continue serving within such a punitive environment.

My and other members’ reluctance to fully support the proposed NAHA exam program was because it would not only compete with an existing allied organization in our small field, but many NAHA members (including Jade Shutes) were also members of that organization and privy to their work. It could be perceived that NAHA was attempting to use information gained from that association, which would be considered an appropriation of ideas developed by another.

In light of this relationship, this was not an ethical program to embark upon and not in NAHA’s best interests to alienate a sister organization. Ms. Shutes and Ms. Hoard misinformed voting members at the Annual Meeting regarding consensus from the important committee put in place to assure integrity in the area of aromatherapy education, which would include exams.

I feel I was acting in the interests of NAHA by expressing my concern regarding the manner in which this program was presented to the membership at the Annual Meeting.

