

## Member Spotlight

### Nilda Cox: A Passion for Quality — in Life and at the Lab

By Stephanie Drier, Minnesota Department of Health

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Nilda Cox has had a passion for science, quality, and education for the majority of her adult life. Growing up as a young girl in the Philippines she knew she had to follow her dreams of obtaining a degree in science to help herself and her siblings. She obtained a degree in Chemistry and began teaching at an all-girl's high school. Her goal was to inspire the younger generation of females to pursue Chemistry or other technical fields, because in the early 1970's there was a great deal of discrimination against females in her home country. Cox went on to state, *"I wanted to empower women with a technical degree rather than just being a housewife."* Over the course of her high school teaching career, she did inspire at least 10 young women to obtain degrees in Chemistry. Nilda continues to inspire others in different areas of chemistry, quality assurance, and with her involvement in TNI.



Nilda has worked very hard, has left her home country, and persevered through discrimination to further her love for chemistry, and continually shares her passion for quality assurance and data defensibility. Over the years, she has taught college courses, performed research with the International Rice Research Institute, worked in chemistry and microbiology laboratories, and currently is the Quality Manager of Eurofins Eaton Analytical – Monrovia (EEA-M) for over 20 years. *"It is a company that treats employees like family and I enjoy working with them,"* Nilda proudly states. The company also has a consulting department in which Nilda plays a major role: She assists and supports other smaller drinking water labs, helping them strengthen their Quality Systems, generate legally defensible data, promote public health and safety, and protect the environment.

This passion for life and for quality assurance in the laboratory led Nilda to be involved in The NELAC Institute (TNI). Since 1997, she has been commonly seen at the microphone voicing her concerns and passion for different parts of the NELAC/TNI standards. She currently is active on 2 TNI committees and serves on the Laboratory Accreditation Body Committee as the vice chair. She has attended over 20 national meetings and her favorite memory was in 1999, *"when I saw Washington DC for the very first time and when I received the Certificate of Award from the EPA for being a committee member on the Membership and Outreach Committee."*

She encourages all TNI members to participate in committees or other TNI communication forums, because there will be greater success if everyone is more involved in developing, reviewing, and approving the standards. At this time, we have still not been completely successful in minimizing the duplication of lab audits and have not reached the full cost savings value of the national accreditation requirements and scheme, as it is not fully implemented across the nation. However, the implementation of the standard requirements do promote accountability from all parties involved to consistently produce quality data.

# THE INSTITUTE REVIEW

November 2017

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She continues to mentor others in the quality assurance role, encourages new staff to find a mentor, and to ensure there is ongoing training on the regulatory and accreditation requirements, basic statistics, and method requirements. Reading the methods and regulations and obtaining bench experience is recommended to ensure the new quality assurance staff meets the challenges with the ever-changing technology, regulations, accreditation requirements, and client needs.

Nilda is thankful for the TNI Organization for many reasons, "As TNI is a forum that brings together all the intelligence and characters in the environmental industry. It is with great pride that I have the opportunity to be challenged and be heard by the group, who, over the years, have become professional and personal friends."