



# THE Reclaimer

## Florida Workshops Draw Rave Reviews



SEFA STARTED OFF THE YEAR ON A HIGH WITH TWO GREAT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. SEFA HELD A CUSTOMER SERVICE WORKSHOP IN FT. MYERS AND THEN A ROUTE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN TAMPA, FL.

“These were terrific programs,” offered SEFA Executive Director Peter Blake, “and more successful than we could have hoped. We had a dozen people turn out for Jim Groshans Program on a Tuesday evening, and it was standing room only with over 30 people for James

Peuster’s Route Development workshop on a Wednesday. This is a great start to 2019 and we are committed to keeping this momentum throughout the year.”

### QUIT SPINNING YOUR WHEELS AND DRIVING IN CIRCLES

The mid-week, full-day program drew attendees from as far away as Tennessee and Georgia. Workshop Leader, Route Pro James Peuster guided attendees through proven methods of increasing route sales, as well as recruiting new customers. He shared his own experiences in building routes and his observations from years of working directly with route developers.

“It seems every business is jumping into pick-up and delivery,” cautioned Peuster, “and obviously I know it is a key component of a successful business in today’s industry. But I also know, that if you don’t do it right, and you do not have a strong strategic plan, it can also be a growth killer. We work on proven strategies in making your drivers and developers more successful.”

Based on the success of this program, SEFA is already developing a second program for later this summer.

### THE TEAM APPROACH TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

FabriCoach, Jim Groshans, explored the relationship of Customer Service Personnel and the technical staff working in the back of the house. Teamwork and coaching are the key components to building a Customer Service Team. He stressed how you can’t look at

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

# Start the New year Off Right

AS THE NEW YEAR HAS COME UPON US, I'M FINALLY CATCHING MY BREATH FROM A WHIRLWIND 4TH QUARTER AND QUICK START TO THE 1ST QUARTER OF 2019.

In November of 2018 I had two new presses installed in my drycleaning department and in January I added a single-buck shirt unit to my laundry department. I already had a double-buck shirt unit in laundry but we were really pushing it three days a week and the scales always tipped in favor of my pressers in laundry getting more hours than the pressers in drycleaning.

I have charged my General Manager to get payroll in line now that we have basically all new presses in our building, or at least all of our presses have less than 5 years on them.

Speaking of January, my wife and I attended the DLI-NCA Brainstorming Conference in St. Maarten. Most of you may not know but that island was run over in 2017 by Hurricane Irma. There are two sides to this island – one side controlled by the Dutch and one side controlled by the French. The hotel/conference was on the Dutch side and so that is all that my wife and I ventured to see. It is slowly coming back and the people, who have nothing but tourism, are trying their best to get things moving along. We did not venture to the French side but by all accounts, is far worse than the Dutch side.

If you've never been to these DLI-NCA Brainstorming conferences, I encourage you to look into them. I was able to reacquaint myself with cleaners that I have met over the years at Clean shows, software user conferences, and the occasional plant visit to witness first hand different equipment. There is no need to think that you would be out of place at this conference. Cleaners of all sizes attend and let's be honest, it's a great chance to get away from the plant and let your accountant and the IRS figure out the details.

Going forward, I encourage everyone to start thinking about what they want to accomplish in 2019. We had some great speakers at the Brainstorming conference and one of them was from Chick-fil-A. He spoke of their program where they hire new employees at a higher rate of pay and then if the new employee can handle the duties prescribed to them, they can stay at the payrate. If not, they drop down incrementally.

It's an interesting concept to say the least and one that I'm going to try an implement in 2019. We are always looking for new and innovative ideas to change the way we work, and improve our operations. Have you been making any changes? Do you have any ideas you are thinking of implementing? Let me know. Together we can probably think through the issues and we may all learn from it.



Don Holecek,  
SEFA President

*Don Holecek*

*Crown Cleaners*

*(865) 584-7464 / Don@crowncleaners.com*

## Scenes from the Field

Continued from page 1

them as individual staff positions, but everyone needs to understand the relationship they have to the overall success of the plant.

With over a dozen attendees, some traveling over 2 hours to attend, this was a great program. This is the first time SEFA has held a program in the Ft. Myers area in the past 5 years, and SEFA is continuing its commitment to bring more programs to more areas of the southeast.

“This is a terrific program” stated Peter Blake, SEFA Executive Director, “Jim does a great job of demonstrating the need to understand the process in order to deliver a consistent service promise. I am really proud to be able to bring programs like this to the membership.”

### SEFA IN THE FIELD

When SEFA has Educational programming in an area, it also takes the opportunity to visit members, former members, and prospective members whenever possible. SEFA Executive Director was able to spend a couple days visiting members in the Tampa, Sarasota, Naples, and Ft. Myers area in January.

“In the 3 days,” commented Blake, “I was able to visit 25 businesses and discuss what is happening on the industry. I was able to discuss the changes both SEFA and DLI have undertaken, as well as highlight some of the programs we have to offer. Through these visits, I welcomed back 3 members, and upgraded one membership.”

Some of the key programs people wanted to learn more about included:

- SEFA In-Plant Training & Scholarships
- Effortless Social Media
- Education Classes & Workshops
- Ways to increase sales & marketing



*(Scenes from Florida, From top left, clockwise) FabriCoach shares his insights, SEFA Board members shake off the cold for a little business on the links, James Peuster helping attendees learn, and SEFA Board dinner after recent Board meeting in Destin!*



“Visiting plants in different areas of the country is one of the best parts of my job,” continued Blake. “It gives me a chance to learn what programs are having the best impact on our members, as well as what programs aren’t being used and why. It also gives me the opportunity to tell people they are not alone in their struggles. When our members are struggling, they sometimes feel it is just them, but it is not. There are companies struggling throughout the country -- but I can draw from experiences and find ways to help and answer some of those challenges.”

If you would like to schedule a visit when I am in your area, contact the SEFA Office and I will do my best to get out to see you. I would love to hear from our members as to their specific challenges and opportunities you would like to discuss. Email us at [peter@sefa.org](mailto:peter@sefa.org).

## The Next South Eastern Fabricare Association Board Meeting

### SEFA Annual Member Meeting & Spring Board Meeting

*Saturday, April 6, 2019*

*Jekyll Island Club Resort, GA*

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# How Clean is Clean Enough? Pt. 1

Written By Jeff Carnahan, LPG President, EnviroForensics



**MANY YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS A YOUNGER MAN JUST WAITING FOR LIFE TO TEACH ME THE LESSONS I'D NEED, I HAD A BROWN, FOUR-DOOR 1976 FORD MAVERICK.**

This thing wasn't pretty, and it certainly wasn't cool, but it got me to school and to work,

and occasionally it would deliver a brave girl and I to the movies on a Saturday night. I spent the time needed to change the oil and replace the filters, but for the most part I took for granted how important it was to me. One day on my way to somewhere, I heard an awful clunk and it just died. The first thought through my head was, "Oh no! How much is this going to cost me?" After a \$50 tow to the shop and following several hours of waiting, the mechanic asked me this question, "Well son, do you want it to run, or do you want it fixed?"

I'm sure you can figure out the rest of the story. Since I was counting pennies at the time, I chose to have the minimum amount of work done to get my car running and back on the road immediately for the cheapest amount possible, rather than investing the time and money into getting it fixed correctly. I won't bore you with the details but be assured that when that old Maverick died for good soon after, I was left high and dry with no transportation and wishing I'd have made a different decision a few months prior. That was an important lesson for me, and one that I keep with me.

**Tip: Fix things right, and the investment will more than pay for itself.**

I'd love to say that it only took that one incident for me to learn this lesson. It's funny how life keeps giving you opportunities to learn.

Most of us have an example of how we've experienced this situation in the past, but when these types of decisions must be made in business it's even trickier. In your experience, was it during a dry cleaning machine repair job or when fixing a leaky roof, or even as you tried to put yet another quick fix on that temperamental boiler? Environmental cleanups probably don't come to mind for most folks, but the exact same thing applies for them. There are three components to dealing with an environmental contamination problem:

1. Immediately halting any human exposure to chemicals that may be occurring;
2. Cleaning up the contamination on-site and off-site; and
3. Getting a Closure, or No Further Action, Letter from the state regulatory agency.

Once the necessary work has been conducted to stop human exposure, the question then becomes, "Now, do you want it clean, or do you just want a regulatory closure?" This may be putting the cart before the horse a little bit, but let's leave the discussion about why immediately halting human exposure is top priority and non-negotiable for a later edition, and let's focus on the interplay between cleaning up and getting regulatory closure.

## WHAT DOES "CLEAN" MEAN IN AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP?

When performing an environmental cleanup, there is very little basis to involve the word clean. True clean never really occurs. There are only various levels of not quite clean, and at some point, it's clean enough. In the world of environmental contamination there are numerous people setting the standard for when a property can be called clean enough. Most regulators worry mainly about two things beyond the current human exposure component; (1) ensuring that the contamination problem is getting better rather than worse and (2) ensuring that there is no threat of future human or ecological exposure. Believe it or not, your property doesn't have to be very clean at all for these boxes to be checked. Other parties who will be deciding if your property is clean enough are future purchasers and their financial lenders. They will not only be looking at whether you have a regulatory closure, but they will also be using the general environmental health of the property to help determine its practical value. This is a component that often gets overlooked when deciding how clean is clean enough. If the money isn't spent during the first crack at environmental remedy, it could cost a significant amount of money later in the form of a lower property value when its time to sell, or a requirement for additional environmental work to be performed to even attract qualified purchasers.

**Tip: The trick is to strike just the right balance between spending money on active environmental cleanup, and the future costs that could arise. This will be a little different for most everyone facing these decisions, but the fundamental thought process remains the same.**

In part 2 in the next issue, we will focus on "What Regulatory Closure Means for Drycleaners".

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Carnahan is a Licensed Professional Geologist (LPG) with over 20 years of environmental consulting and remediation experience and is currently serving EnviroForensics® and our clients as President. Jeff has contributed to the success and growth of EnviroForensics through strategic market analysis and corporate risk management, as well as encouraging and upholding the superior level of technical expertise found at EnviroForensics. Jeff focuses on controlling risk and costs to all of our clients.

# Are All Cleaners Essentially the Same? Does Price Alone Indicate Quality?

Written by Peter Blake, SEFA Executive Director



**THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE OVER THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF OUR PROFESSION LATELY.**

At the heart of the discussion were recent reports that aired on television news stations about recent "investigative reporting" efforts on different cleaners in the Houston, TX area. There have been numer-

ous similar reports throughout the country that seem to show there is little difference between cleaners, and yet a great deal of pricing discrepancies. The consumer is left with an impression that there is no difference in levels of services. The reports were based largely on surveys of customers. While the methodology is distinctly flawed, as an industry, we can take some lessons from the reports.

Drycleaners, like all small businesses, are faced with the basic pricing question: What level of service and quality will I deliver, and how much will that level of service cost.

Think about Starbucks who charges up to \$6.00 for a latte, and contrast that with the local corner donut store who charges \$2.00. Is there a difference? If you are a coffee drinker, and a frequent customer of Starbucks-- you bet there is. But if you don't go out for coffee much, or are used to the corner donut store, I bet you would not see the value in going to Starbucks.

There is a direct correlation to our industry. What market share are you trying to attract? Who are your primary customers? They probably understand the differences. But to the one and done customers, or the very infrequent drycleaning customer they probably fail to understand the difference between concepts. Packaging, pressing, inspection, level of finishing, are all factors that can affect the price of the garment. Some cleaners will prioritize speed over quality. In order to keep the costs down to a one-price structure, or low-cost/high volume plant, you need to make decisions on what level of service you can produce, and your customers expect.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Reports like this one can be very damaging to the industry. When they base conclusions on surveys and feedback, you will not get the typical consumer of a high end drycleaners. You will be much more likely to get feedback from consumers who tend to chase price and don't use a specific drycleaner.

What we as an industry need to do is to continue to educate our consumers. We need to keep promoting the industry and the quality we deliver. There should be a difference between drycleaners and the products we deliver. If you are a higher priced drycleaner,

you need to be able to demonstrate the difference. You need to educate your customers, and potential future customers, what "Quality Drycleaners" are, and what they deliver.

We need to look at the dramatic change that has taken place over the past 10 to 15 years. Many consumers really don't know the difference in quality. In many cases they have not been educated, nor have they experienced true high-quality cleaning and service. They may accept a lesser product because that is what they have come to expect from their limited experience. It is up to the industry to modify and adapt -- and engage new consumers. We also need to help these consumers see the value we bring.

There are a number of discount cleaners that do a great job, and there is room in the industry for all pricing strategies. We as an industry can embrace them all, but we can also make sure the public and consumer knows what quality drycleaning is and what to look for. SEFA is looking to develop more tools and information for our members to use to help educate the public and to understand the benefits of professional drycleaning. Please contact Peter Blake at [peter@sefa.org](mailto:peter@sefa.org) and let us know your thoughts!

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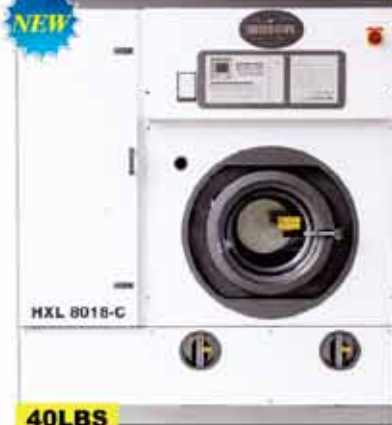
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## Minimum Wage Increases Take Effect

THIS TIME OF YEAR MANY OF YOU RECEIVE NOTIFICATIONS FROM LABOR POSTER VENDORS REGARDING CHANGES IN POSTING REQUIREMENTS DUE TO MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES AND OTHER REGULATION CHANGES.

In 2019, we have various state and local municipalities implementing hourly minimum wage increases effective January 1st and throughout the year. Some of these hourly rates are double the federal minimum wage rate.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, the current federal minimum hourly wage is \$7.25. If there is a state or local municipal regulation offering a higher minimum wage, the employer is required to pay the higher rate.

As of January 1, 2019, the hourly minimum wage for federal contract workers will increase to the rate of \$10.60 per hour. Tipped employees performing work on or in connection with covered contracts must be paid a cash wage at least \$7.40 per hour.

In conjunction with the rate increases there are requirements to display an updated minimum wage poster. In some cases the state or municipality will update the poster for the new year, even if there is no rate increase.

Posters are important not only because they are required by employment regulations, but also because they provide evidence and documentation of your good faith intent to comply with the government's regulations.

### OTHER POSTING REQUIREMENT UPDATES

Many states have revised their discrimination posters to include expanded coverage of the state regulation to apply to additional protected categories.

Several state and local municipalities have implemented paid sick leave, family leave and school/parental leave regulations. Employers should ensure this is reflected in current written policies and display corresponding notices as required.

### MORE INFORMATION

A printable PDF list of the current state and local minimum wage increases is available through the SEFA office upon request.

Additionally, If you would like assistance in receiving an update of an applicable minimum wage poster, please email us at peter@sefa.org. If you have a question regarding the many important areas of HR compliance, please contact Seay Management Consultants. Initial inquiries are a member benefit of SEFA/DLI.



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# SEFA Education Report: Wet Cleaning Demo



SEFA IS HELPING TO SUPPORT A PROFESSIONAL WETCLEANING DEMONSTRATION BEING HELD AT UNIPRESS IN TAMPA, FL ON MARCH 2, 2019.

“We are proud to be working with the program sponsors: Seitz, Unipress, Laundry Pros, Poseidon Wetcleaning, and FabriClean,” stated Rhonda Eysel, SEFA’s Education Committee Chair.

“Anytime we can help promote valuable educational opportunities to our members, we are helping our industry improve. I think this will be a great program and I am really looking forward to attending.”

“Wetcleaning is becoming an increasingly important component of the industry”, observed Peter Blake, SEFA Executive Director, “and members need to embrace the changes and learn about the

technology improvements and the changes in wetcleaning chemistry. With the changes in the fashion world, and the increase in garments that lend themselves to wetcleaning, this is an opportunity for the industry to learn and understand what lies ahead.”

The program is free for all, but you need to pre-register at uniprescorp.com. For more information, see page 5 of this magazine.

## WHAT LIES AHEAD

SEFA is looking at hosting a multitude of classes over the next 12 months. Already in the planning stages are Drycleaning and Shirt Pressing classes in Atlanta, GA. Professional Stain Removal in Columbia, SC, and Marketing Programs in TN.

“This will be a great year for SEFA Education”, concluded Eysel. “We are committed to bringing the best speakers we can to all areas of SEFA. If you don’t see something in your area, or if you want to request a program to be held in your area -- contact the SEFA Office now. We are planning the full schedule and we can take your requests and suggestions into consideration.



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