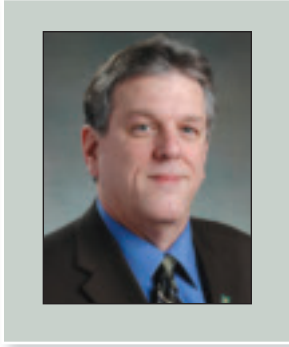


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Keith L. Krinn,
RS, MA, DAAS, CPHA

For my first “President’s Message” as I begin my term leading this outstanding organization, I thought it would be appropriate to introduce myself by sharing my background, what you might expect of my leadership, and NEHA’s course in the coming year. Reviewing the inaugural message from our last four presidents—I’m glad I keep all my old JEHs—I see that they all begin with an introduction that helps give an idea of their philosophy. I think it’s important for you as readers of this monthly column to get to know me. Some of my fellow board members have already taken to calling me the nickname “The” Keith, undoubtedly in reference to “The” university a few miles down the road from my office. I will certainly strive to get to know the members of our professional organization I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting and to take to heart all of your comments and suggestions for the advancement of NEHA.

I’m totally a Midwestern guy, born and raised in Marion, Indiana. My dad was a police officer, my mom a homemaker. My undergraduate degree in environmental health was conferred at Indiana State University in Terre Haute. I graduated the year before Larry Bird was a red-shirted freshman and, by the way, I’m a huge college basketball fan. My professor and mentor at ISU was Dr. Hank Koren, whom I am indebted to for the mentoring and personal attention I received—but more on mentoring in a later column. My presidential predecessor, Welford Roberts, covered that topic extensively in last April’s *JEH*. Speaking of Welford, I’d like to express my gratitude to him for leading NEHA for the preceding year, during the particularly gloomy Great Recession from which we are just

Introduction to “The” Keith 101



Downtown Columbus.

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emerging. The economy has been particularly devastating to public employees, a category to which the majority of our members belong, but again, that is a topic for another issue.

Back in the day, Dr. Koren required his students to complete two environmental health internships. Not a bad requirement, given the amount of hands-on experience we gained and the opportunity to apply what we had learned from our classes. I was extremely

fortunate in my internship experiences. I was assigned first to Environmental Health Services of the Oakland County Health Division in Pontiac, Michigan. My second experience was with the Chester County Health Department in West Chester, Pennsylvania. My boss there was none other than V. Harry Adrounie, who I later realized was an icon in the environmental health world. As a 22-year-old kid, I had no inkling of that, but was impressed by his kindness and interest in my career, and again, that word mentoring comes to mind. His recent passing was a great loss to the environmental health community.

Upon graduation, my desire was to return to Michigan. Oakland County was a very progressive, large department and I felt comfortable there—but alas, they had no openings. Timing is everything. My first full-time environmental health position as a sanitarian-in-training was with the Effingham County Health Department in Illinois. It was a great experience, especially since I was the only sanitarian for the entire county. It was definitely a trial by fire, but I value that experience greatly as it taught me to “man up” and take charge of my new work life. I was directed by the board of health to write a new countywide food code. I even discussed it live on Effingham’s single radio station’s talk show. It was pretty heady stuff for someone just out of college. Although I was only there seven months, I was strengthened by the experience of being on my own, totally reliant on my own devices. In April of 1975, Oakland County had a sanitarian position for me. I was excited to begin master’s level courses at the University of Michigan and to

move to the Detroit suburbs as I launched the next stage of my career. To make a long story short, I stayed at the Oakland County Health Division for 28 years! I was promoted through the ranks and eventually became chief of Environmental Health Field Activities under another former NEHA president, Ron Grimes, who was the EH director then. During my tenure, I was able to complete the first half of my master's degree at the U-M and finish at Central Michigan University in 1983. The lion's share of my EH experience and a vast array of personal and professional relationships stem from my time in Michigan. While in the Great Lakes State, I also had the honor of serving as president of the Michigan Environmental Health Association in 2001.

The latest chapter of my professional career began when I took an early retirement buy-out proposal from Oakland County that was being offered to senior employees, landing in Columbus, Ohio, as the new environmental health administrator of Columbus Public Health. Except for those awkward introductory issues that had a nexus in that Buckeye-Wolverine thing, it's been a good fit for me and I love my new community. Folks in my subdivision paint that big red "O" on their garage doors and fly the Buckeye flag in their front yards. My staff inspects all the food vendors at the 'Shoe, OSU's venerable football stadium. My eldest daughter is even a proud Buckeye as a senior in the College of Nursing. The environmental health division has embraced me and we work very well together—as a team. We were tremendously proud when Columbus Public Health was recognized as the 2009 recipient of the Samuel J. Crumbine Award. My staff is extremely professional and I must give them credit; much of my success in Columbus I owe to them. A great EH staff can only make their director look good! Finally, I'd like to share that I've been married for 23 years to my wife, Peggy. We first met at the Oakland County employee's Christmas party and I asked her to dance. She said no. I persevered and we were married a year later. We have two daughters, Cassie and Ashleigh. Did I mention the drama at my house? I love fly-fishing and I still have a cottage on northern Michigan's Au Sable River. The best fish I ever caught was a 33-inch steelhead, caught on an egg-sac fly in Michigan's Pere Marquette River.

I'm sure, gentle reader, you are beginning to feel like these are the lyrics from the Toby Keith hit, "I Want to Talk About Me," and in fact I feel your pain. So let's talk about you—you and NEHA. The near future will be an exciting period for NEHA. So much is happening! As of late, NEHA has been at the national table much more than in the past and has gained stature from the exposure. We have been entrusted with grant awards from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the tune of some \$5 million to develop and conduct a multitude of programs for the advancement of environmental health across the nation. A great example of that effort is the revitalized Epi-Ready training, which trained over 400 sanitarians, nurses, and epidemiologists at state and local health departments in 2009 and over 250 so far this year. We are also recipients of grant funds from a number of other federal agencies and private sector sources. Current First Vice President Brian Collins and RVP Bob Custard are representing NEHA in the new federal food safety reform initiative currently under way. Just look at the "NEHA in Action" section of our Web site to see over 10 different legislative initiatives and even more coalitions and positions. NEHA is a business, and business initiatives from our "Entrepreneurial Zone" hold the promise of offsetting fiscal downturns in the near and long-term future. It's an exciting time to be on board with NEHA, as we chart new territory, take positions on the environmental issues of our day, and promote our profession to the utmost.

As I write the first of 10 messages in this esteemed professional journal, a tragic environmental disaster is looming just off our southern coast. Some 1.6 million gallons of crude oil, at the rate of 210,000 gallons per day, is gushing into the Gulf of Mexico as a result of a ruptured undersea well leased by the giant oil company BP (formerly British Petroleum). Federal officials have closed a portion of the northern Gulf of Mexico to fishing, as the rapidly growing oil spill, now the size of Delaware, initially threatens four states. As you read this, you will know if the calamity was somewhat contained or if the mess hit the Gulf Stream and whipped around Florida to contaminate the beaches along our eastern seaboard with worldwide consequences. This event shows that we must be ever vigilant in our profession and the next environmental is-

sue is just a few days away. As this event plays out, I think it is only appropriate that NEHA take a stand on off-shore drilling. This one incident is but a portion, a Venn diagram if you will, of the much larger issue of sustainability. NEHA recognizes the importance of sustaining our earth's environment for future generations. NEHA stands for the belief that protecting our natural environment is critical to the health and prosperity of our communities, our country, and as we see, our world.

I often hear, usually in talking to affiliate members who are not NEHA members, "What can NEHA do for me? What is the benefit of membership?" I think it's important to spell out just what the benefits are of belonging and why it's important to have a strong and relevant national organization. Oh sure, we can cite the hard benefits—the *Journal* you are reading right now, the credentialing, the e-Learning program, reduced fees for the AEC & Exhibition, books, and other merchandise. You could say that NEHA provides its members with more training opportunities than any other national organization and you would be correct. But foremost, it is connecting with other environmental health practitioners across the nation that offers the most value. NEHA is THE relevant national organization that represents our profession.

I look forward to a great year. Your board of directors is the finest group of professionals I have ever had the pleasure to be associated with. They are your elected officers and regional representatives who actually govern our organization. Heck, the president can't even cast a vote at a board meeting unless there is a tie! Get to know your national officers and your own regional vice president. Give them feedback and make suggestions for improvement and never lose focus that the National Environmental Health Association is YOURS.

Also, please make plans—it's not that far off—to join me in my adoptive city of Columbus, June 15–18, 2011, for our Diamond 75th Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition. The planning is well underway and it promises to be a great educational experience. Besides, C-Bus is a beautiful city and I know you won't be disappointed! Oh, and don't forget to pack some scarlet and gray. . . .

