

Awards & Honors

2008 Walter S. Mangold Award Recipient



John M. Barry, Ph.D.

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is proud to present the 2008 Walter S. Mangold Award, its highest honor, to John M. Barry, Ph.D.

Environmental health professionals in his home state of North Carolina—and around the world—have looked to John as an instrumental leader of the field. His commitment to quality has been a core thread in his life, as

seen in his accomplishments as director of the Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection, as deputy director of the Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services Agency, as an active participant and advocate for communities, and as technical editor of the *Journal of Environmental Health*.

People who have been inspired by his leadership say that John has always had the ability to see the big picture. Throughout his career, he has used his knowledge to develop innovative strategies for reducing or eliminating the impact of insults to the environment. In the international arena, he has shared his knowledge of environmental health and protection through Sister Cities International-sponsored trips to Poland, China, and Peru. Mayor Bogdan Zdrojewski of Wroclaw, Poland, recognized him with an award for his work with the city on a plan for a sustainable future.

While serving as director of the Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection, where he spent the largest portion of his career, John restructured the department. In the 1980s, he was at the forefront of a movement to reduce the dependence of local agencies on tax revenue by implementing a revenue base of fee structures and grants. He also knew that the success of a county's environmental health programs is measured by their impact on the community. In an era before community assessments were common, John had the vision to create and present an annual report to the community. The report demonstrated the association between the health status of the community and Mecklenburg County's activities and programs. John's leadership went beyond geographic boundaries; he engaged in collaborative relationships with adjoining counties to address issues such as protecting the watershed, enforcing water quality standards, solid waste management and enforcing federal air quality standards.

In another collaboration with NEHA, John served as executive producer of a school science documentary called *Planet Earth—Save Me Now*. He has also published a number of professional papers that take an in-depth look at particular aspects of environmental health and was the author of a book on *Natural Vegetation of South Carolina*.

As a youngster growing up on a farm, John Barry developed a stewardship philosophy toward the environment. He originally aspired to become a veterinarian but changed his focus to field biology and received a bachelor of science degree at the University of South Carolina in 1966. A master of science degree from the University of South Carolina followed in 1968, and he earned a doctor of philosophy degree from the West Virginia University in 1971.

From 1972 through 1978, while teaching at the university level, he became interested and active in environmental research. He worked on projects with the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department, the National Park Service, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. His work included research on the natural vegetation areas in South Carolina, which led to a role as co-organizer of the South Carolina Conference on Endangered Species. He also sought out roles with the South Carolina Heritage Trust Program and the South Carolina Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

In 1978, John became environmental coordinator for the largest and most complex county environmental health program in North Carolina, the Mecklenburg County Department of Environmental Protection. By 1984, he was director, and he remained in that position until 2003, when he assumed the role of deputy director of the Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services Agency.

John Barry has a long history with NEHA. He was introduced to the organization during the 1980s through his work in his affiliate association. In 1987, association members elected him to be regional vice president, and he began serving on the NEHA Board of Directors. During his tenure on the board, his enthusiasm for the organization and for environmental health inspired many in his region and raised the visibility of NEHA. His commitment and deep knowledge base naturally led him to the position of association president in 1993–1994. Under his leadership, NEHA continued to develop into a much more effective organization, and he worked within the organization to re-define the relationship between NEHA and its affiliates. It was during this time that the focus of the *Journal of Environmental Health* was restructured to be more relevant to the membership.

Although he retired in 2005, John has continued to be active in various state organizations and in NEHA. For the past decade, he has served as the technical editor of the *Journal of Environmental Health (JEH)*. His dedicated leadership, focused on quality and on expanding the scope of peer-reviewed articles, has contributed significantly to making *JEH* the highly respected and widely acclaimed publication it is today.

Steve Tackitt, R.S., M.P.H., D.A.A.S., writes of John: "He has never shied away from complex problems; rather he seeks to develop new solutions by researching the issue as well as seeking out the thoughts and input of others. Yet it was John who would visualize a new direction, a new solution, or a better standard."

Robert Galvan, Dr.PH, M.P.H., M.S., D.A.A.S., writes: "Dr. John Barry is a highly dedicated, conscientious, and meticulous individual who has toiled to make a difference in this world."

Don Willard, current director of Air Quality for the Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services Agency, writes: "John's tenure with environmental health left a legacy of firsts, which still continue to grow and receive national recognition."

Thus, it is a privilege and an honor for NEHA to present this award to John M. Barry, a man who exemplifies the philosophy, ethic, and dedication expressed through the life of the late Walter S. Mangold.