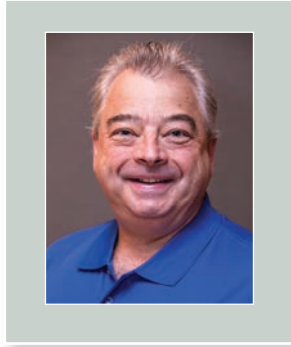


▶ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



D. Gary Brown,
DrPH, CIH, RS, DAAS

With You Till the End of the Line

Thank you for the honor and privilege of allowing me to represent my fellow environmental health professionals as president of National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) for this trip around the sun. As Happy from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs sang, “You’re never too old to be young.” This past year has invigorated me regarding the bright future of environmental health. It is hard to believe my term as president is ending, but NEHA is in great hands with outstanding board members, staff, volunteers, and members who will keep the NEHA ship steered not only in the right direction but also help our organization to gain steam.

Time flies when you are having fun. I have enjoyed working with our staff, board members, and NEHA affiliate leaders while meeting members from coast to coast. Although my term is ending, Captain America’s saying, “I’m with you till the end of the line,” rings true.

U.S. President John F. Kennedy said, “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” I ask my fellow colleagues, what can you do to help NEHA improve our profession, which in turn will improve the whole wide world? Margaret Mead, an American cultural anthropologist, is attributed for saying, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” The environmental health profession is the second largest sector of the governmental public health workforce—we can move mountains.

*I will continue to
spread the word that
environmental health
is a hidden treasure.*

Huey Lewis and the News sang, “They say the heart of rock and roll is still beating.” Environmental health is the heart of public health. Environmental health professionals, the Swiss Army knives of scientists, are strategically positioned to identify and intervene to prevent public health issues from affecting local populations. As we do our jobs, please remember another quote from John F. Kennedy: “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

Healthy People 2030 focuses on reducing people’s exposure to harmful pollutants in air, water, soil, food, and materials in homes and workplaces. The environmental health workforce will be at the forefront of this initiative, reducing and preventing illness to individuals, families, and communities caused by physical, chemical, and biological agents found in our environment. Environmental health professionals are scientifically trained and certified to not only identify but also, and more importantly, mitigate environmental dangers and promote alternatives. We are on the front lines of public

health, handling threats such as environmental inequities (e.g., lead exposure), climate change (e.g., drought), food safety (e.g., baby food), safe drinking water (e.g., perfluorooctanesulfonic acid [PFOS]), and clean air (e.g., ozone). As you do your job protecting the public, please remember what Rosa Parks said (and also attributed to Marie Curie): “You must never be fearful of what you are doing when it is right.”

NEHA Past President Dr. Priscilla Oliver coined the phrase “One NEHA” during her presidency. I would like to highlight the One Health concept. From the One Health High-Level Expert Panel et al. (2022), One Health is defined as an “integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines, and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate changes, and contributing to sustainable development.” Globally, environmental health is recognized as a critical component for assessing and protecting human, animal, and ecological health.

I hope you will be able to join me for the second One Health | One Global Environment Conference in Montego Bay, Jamaica, from October 2–6, 2023 (www.onehealth)

conference.com). The conference is hosted by the Jamaica Association of Public Health Inspectors in collaboration with NEHA, the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors, and the Americas Regional Group of the International Federation of Environmental Health. The first conference was attended by more than 400 health practitioners and academics spanning six continents. Environmental health provides a critical link to protecting human health from human-to-human, vectorborne, and zoonotic diseases. Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, aptly stated, “The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe around us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”

I will continue to spread the word that environmental health is a hidden treasure, providing a world of opportunity that touches all aspects of daily life. As broadcast journalist Tom Brokaw said, “It’s easy to make a

buck. It’s a lot tougher to make a difference.” We are lucky to be in a profession where you can make a good living while making a difference. Please become involved with NEHA on a local, state, or national level and spread the word that environmental health is public health. Please emulate Bishop Desmond Tutu, who said, “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

I am proud of the work NEHA has accomplished over the past year. NEHA and my fellow environmental health professionals make a difference in the lives of people. I know NEHA will continue to do remarkable things in the years to come. We should heed the words of Mother Teresa: “Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.”

I leave you with one last quote from *Peter Pan* written by J.M. Barrie: “Never say goodbye because goodbye means going away and

going away means forgetting” Edward Cox, a friend of mine and World War II veteran, used to say that it is not goodbye but later. Until we meet next time, remember that I am easy to recognize in a crowd due to my fashion sense and quiet voice. ✨



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