

► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Vince Radke, MPH, RS,
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Let's Go Far Together

Hello, my name is Vince Radke and I will be your National Environment Health Association (NEHA) president for the next year. Above all else, I want you to know that I will be a good steward of our association. I've been a member of NEHA since 1980 and I want NEHA to work for you as it has worked for me. It is my honor to work with the individuals of our noble environmental health profession where we have the chance to improve the health and safety of the people in our communities every day. And NEHA will be with you to help in these endeavors.

Most of you might not know me. As such, I thought it would be a good idea to devote most this first column to introduce myself and share a little about some of the issues I have in mind for future columns.

I was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. I graduated from Michigan State University in 1970 with a Bachelor of Science degree. I served as a volunteer in the U.S. Peace Corps in Ethiopia for three and a half years as part of the Smallpox Eradication Program. As a surveillance and assessment officer, my duties included looking for cases of smallpox and vaccinating people against smallpox. My training for this position was conducted at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (known back then as the Center for Disease Control) in Atlanta, Georgia. Later in the 1970s with the World Health Organization, I worked in Bangladesh and Kenya as part of the Smallpox Eradication Program. The last known indigenous case of smallpox was in Merka town, Somalia, in October 1977.

I wish to go far with you to improve the health and safety of our communities.

Between my time in Ethiopia and Kenya, I earned my master's degree in public health from the University of Pittsburgh. While at the University of Pittsburgh I met my future wife, Marilyn. We were married in August 1977 and look forward to celebrating our 41st wedding anniversary this year.

From 1979–1983 I served as director of environmental health for the City of Stamford, Connecticut. The department had the typical environmental health programs: food safety, onsite wastewater, well water, vector control, and solid waste. We also had programs for air pollution, bathing beaches, and recreational shellfishing. During my time in Stamford, we were able to pass a noise ordinance and began to monitor stationary sources of noise. In 1980, I took and passed the registered sanitarian (RS) exam.

In August 1983 we moved to Morgantown, West Virginia, so Marilyn could attend medical school. I took a job as a sanitarian with a county health department in Fairmont, West Virginia. After two years in that posi-

tion I was fortunate to get a job as a sanitarian in Morgantown, which was closer to home. To make ends meet, I took a second job as a night security guard at a local hospital.

After Marilyn graduated, we moved to the Washington, DC, area where Marilyn was doing her residency. I worked for a number of local health departments in the northern Virginia area for the next 12 years, mostly in the area of food safety. During this time, I became a member of the National Capital Area Environmental Health Association, as well as a member of the Virginia Environmental Health Association. Later I would become president of both associations at different times in the 1990s. In 1999, Marilyn took a job in Mankato, Minnesota, as an occupational medicine doctor. I got a job as a sanitarian with the Hennepin County Health Department near Minneapolis, which equated to a daily commute of 75 miles one way!

In 2000 I received e-mails from two colleagues, one from the Minnesota Department of Health and the other from CDC. Both said there was a job opening at CDC that would be ideal for me. I responded by thanking them both but said Marilyn and I were happy in Minnesota and planned to stay. The person from CDC e-mailed back and said, "You owe me." I had worked for 2 months in 1999 in the Washington, DC, area with this person on a large foodborne disease outbreak. Long story short, I got the job as a sanitarian at CDC in the National Center for Environmental Health. I started in December 2001 and have been at CDC ever since. My work has mostly revolved around food safety issues with the Environmental Health Specialists Network and the

National Environmental Assessment Reporting System. In addition, I have worked on topics such as water safety, vector control, and emergency preparedness. While it has been an amazing 17 years, I will be retiring from CDC around September/October 2018.

In addition to my involvement with NEHA and several of its affiliates, I am a member of the American Academy of Sanitarians and was chairman of its board of directors from 2014–2015. I also served in the early 2000s as a member of the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council. Presently, I am a member of the Georgia Envi-

ronmental Health Association. I served as a NEHA technical advisor for a number of years in the area of emergency preparedness and response. Besides my RS from NEHA, I have maintained my RS from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health since 1982. I became certified in public health (CPH) in 2008 and am a member of that charter class.

During the next year I plan dedicate my columns to professional relationships, data and data analysis, the impact of climate change on our profession and communities, food safety, vector control, antimicrobial resistance, and others. I'm looking forward to

using my columns in the *Journal* to communicate these topics of importance, as well as opening up a dialogue so that you can share what is important in your areas of work.

I'm excited to be your NEHA president and will work with you each day. I leave you with an old African proverb: "If you wish to go quickly, go alone. If you wish to go far, go together." I wish to go far with you to improve the health and safety of our communities. 🐘

All the best,

Vince _____
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Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for one year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at 303.756.9090. You can also donate online at www.neha.org/about-neha/donate.

Thank you.

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Vince Radke, MPH, RS, CP-FS, DAAS, CPH
Atlanta, GA