

► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sandra Long, REHS, RS

2020 in the Rearview Mirror

How many times have you heard or said, “2020 has been a bad year,” “We should get a do-over for 2020,” or heard or said something similar but less appropriate for publication in a professional journal. To that point, 2020 has been a year of challenges, changes, loss, and reinvention. In any given year we would have our own personal challenges and losses, as well as go through a variety of changes. This year we did it as a community, a nation, and a world. The feeling was different and more profound because we went through this year together.

We lost several environmental health champions in 2020—professionals who dedicated their careers to promotion, development, and advocacy of environmental health. They were trailblazers, leaders, and mentors to many in the field:

- **Chris Kochtitzky** (May 2020): Kochtitzky was described as a “tenacious public health professional who pursued his work with vigor, charm, wisdom and intelligence.” He recognized the importance of the built environment in terms of enabling people and communities to lead healthy lives. He served as an expert on the development of evidence-based guidelines and recommendations to increase physical activity across the U.S.
- **Bailus Walker** (April 2020): Dr. Walker was a consummate public health practitioner and was a past president of the American Public Health Association. His research interests included lead toxicity and environmental carcinogenesis. Dr. Walker was a distinguished fellow of the Royal Society of Health and the American College of Epidemiology. He also served as

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a senior science advisor for environmental health to the National Library of Medicine. His service included leading various state and federal government working groups, committees, and task forces.

- **Sheila Davidson Pressley** (January 2020): Dr. Pressley joined the staff at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) in 2004 and was named dean of the College of Health Sciences in 2017. She had a profound impact on the students she taught and mentored. She became the first African American to chair the EKU Faculty Senate from 2012–2014. In 2017, the University of Kentucky honored her with the Lyman T. Johnson Torch of Excellence Award. She was an active member of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and the American Academy of Sanitarians. In 2015, NEHA honored her with the Past Presidents Award for her leadership in the organization.

- **Carolyn Hester Harvey** (October 2020): Dr. Harvey was the recipient of the 2020 Walter S. Mangold Award, the highest honor given to an individual by NEHA. She had an accomplished career in environmental health, was a pioneer for women in industrial hygiene, and was a mentor to many. Dr. Harvey was the president of NEHA from 2014–2015. She also served on the board of directors for the Association of Environmental Health Academic Programs and was cochair of the National Committee for Diversity in Environmental Health. Dr. Harvey was a professor and chair emerita of the Department of Environmental Health Science at EKU.

Please reach out to your mentors and colleagues—individuals who are significant to you on a professional and personal level—and connect, continue to learn, and share.

Rather than talking about how the pandemic has changed what we do and moved us away from routine functions, let us think about how the pandemic has provided an opportunity to grow, learn, teach, and evolve.

Thinking about the things we have learned in the past year, we realize growth. Our computer skills have improved. Our ability to use electronic meeting formats and the different types of formats has increased. Our ability to use these formats for learning, as well as communicating, is far beyond where it was a year ago. We have had to become fearless in the face of technology. Many of us were familiar with these types of meetings but largely used them when we could not travel to a meeting or just as a convenience. Electronic meetings have now become part of our daily lives. Webinars

and electronic conferences have shown us how to facilitate learning through virtual platforms, as well as how to connect with colleagues. Many now have had the opportunity to participate as trainers, speakers, and hosts—a skill we likely did not possess one year ago.

Workspaces have changed to home offices for some, presenting us with the unique challenges and advantages of teleworking. We have learned to perform in a different environment, recognizing the equipment needed and the information to maintain, realizing the need for connectivity with coworkers, implementing methods to maintain that contact,

and learning the new balance between work and home life. We have learned to adapt and become efficient and productive.

Written and verbal communication skills have improved through our work in providing the public with quickly changing information, using virtual inspections, and working on contact tracing. Proper communication is a key element in each of these functions. Speaking with people concerning contact with COVID-19-positive individuals, obtaining and providing information for clarity, and expediency are skills we have added to our repertoire.

Through all of our experiences this past year, we have all had the opportunity to change, grow, learn, teach, and evolve. We need to acknowledge our newfound skills and continue to build upon them. With that in mind, we can look at 2020 in a more positive perspective.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year. 🐻



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Did You Know?

NEHA supports your continuing education (CE) needs by providing educational opportunities to complement your credentials and life-long learning. We have improved and expanded our virtual CE offerings, which are available in a variety of formats and free to members. Learn more at www.neha.org/earn-ce-credit.

SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

The NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

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 1 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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(\$1–\$99)

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Vincent J. Radke