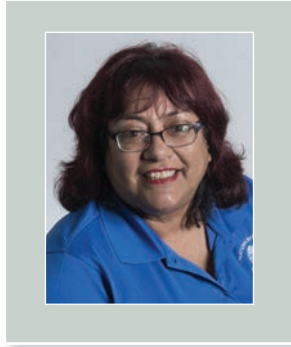


▶ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Sandra Long, REHS, RS

The Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Our Profession

I would like to start this column by acknowledging the members of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). Thank you for your continued membership. Throughout 2020, membership numbers remained strong at around 6,500, which is a testament to your dedication to the field of environmental health. In addition to the support of our members, we have been noticing a change in the membership that is significant.

Based on observations of the attendees at the NEHA Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition in 2019 (Nashville, Tennessee), 2018 (Anaheim, California), and 2017 (Grand Rapids, Michigan), we recognize that NEHA members come from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. We also recognize an increase in the number of women working in the environmental health profession. It is important that we celebrate our diversity, equity, and inclusiveness of the profession. As we look at some of the leaders and innovators of the profession, we acknowledge that the environmental health profession not only continues to evolve but also welcomes contributions from all disciplines of the profession without prejudice.

Many events in 2020 have reminded us that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are not just “nice” initiatives or boxes to be checked off on a “to-do list,” but rather, they are goals we should strive for. DEI is multifaceted and understanding how each element builds upon the other is important.

Diversity is the presence of differences, specifically differences in race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic class, just to name a

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few. Diversity allows for people from different backgrounds and varying experiences to provide new perspectives that contribute to developing and refining ideas and processes.

Equity is the act of ensuring impartiality, fairness, and equal possible outcomes for everyone. To ensure equal possible outcomes, equity requires that there be recognition of barriers and advantages. In this manner, these barriers and advantages can be addressed and overcome.

Inclusion ensures that people feel a sense of belonging, which means that everyone feels comfortable and supported when it comes to being authentically themselves. Inclusion is what maintains diversity. If a person does not feel included, they will leave.

DEI promotes diverse perspectives to be heard while valuing individual differences and promoting values that minimize bias. My hope is that all NEHA members feel heard and included, and are treated equitably.

More than ever right now, with significantly changing demographics, DEI should be practiced. As we look at our workplaces, coworkers, and communities, we should strive to eliminate bias, practice inclusiveness, support diversity, and exert leadership. DEI can be reflected in mission and vision statements and incorporated in strategic plans.

When it comes to DEI, it is important to practice basic courtesy and pay attention to how you embrace nondiscriminatory practices and policies. Everyone should feel safe to voice their concerns and opinions without criticism or discrimination, which are elements that divide and destroy. As leaders, we need to help create safe environments for ideas, opinions, and points of view to be heard, as well as foster collaboration. Differences allow for creative thought, new ideas, new strategies, and new processes to be developed.

NEHA is dedicated to DEI, which means we are dedicated to efforts to create a welcoming, equitable environment that allows people of different backgrounds to succeed. Organizations progress if DEI exists. NEHA's newest award, the Dr. Bailus Walker, Jr. Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Award, celebrates an individual or group who has made significant achievements in the development or enhancement of a diverse, inclusive, and competent environment. Dr. Walker was a long-time member and supporter of NEHA who wrote and spoke on public health, toxicology, and diversity in the field of environmental health.

Through my career I have experienced and witnessed the changes taking place in the environmental health profession. Without the diversity of creative minds, inclusion that

allows ideas to be expressed, and equity to be heard, so many of the processes and procedures we currently use—in food safety, emergency management, water, stormwater, public health, and other areas of environmental health—would not have progressed or changed.

Looking at DEI, I am proud and support all the women who have pursued environmental health as a career. Women are a growing part of all areas of the environmental health workforce, a workforce that has historically been mostly male.

As I close this column, I would like to put an “inclusion” thought in your mind. Please consider running for positions within the NEHA Board of Directors. Each August we begin the process of nominating members for open positions on the board. Members interested in participating on the board are encouraged to contact NEHA. My experience on the board has been a rewarding experience both professionally and personally. I have had the opportunity to represent members, participate in NEHA Hill Days in our

nation’s capital, and make contributions to the profession.

I leave you with the following quote from Pat Wadors, former head of human resources at LinkedIn: “When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become a wiser, more inclusive, and better organization.”


President@neha.org

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.

DELEGATE CLUB

(\$1–99)

Name in the Journal for 1 year.

Samuel M. Aboagye
Oyetunde Adukanle
Tunde M. Akinmoladun
Mary A. Allen
D.V. Asquith Reynolds
Steven K. Ault
Gary Baker
David Banaszynski
Gina Bare
Jeffrey Barosy
Edward Barragan
Marc E. Benchimol
Logan Blank
Sophia P. Boudinova
Danielle Bredehoeft
Freda W. Bredy
Deborah Carpenter
Kathy Cash
William D. Compton
Natasha Crawford
Lawrence Cyran
Daniel de la Rosa
Thomas P. Devlin
Concetta A. DiCenzo
Gery M. DuParc
Annette Eshelby
Wendy L. Fanassel
Anna Floyd
Debra Freeman
David P. Gilkey
Brittany Grace
Billy B. Green

Eric S. Hall
James Harber
Ken Hearst
Catherine Hefferin
Donna K. Heran
William Holland
Scott E. Holmes
Kjel Howard
Maria Huanosta
Anna-Marie Hyatt
Amiya Ivey
Katrina Keeling
Eric Klein
Adam Kramer
Maria G. Lara
Michael F. LaScuola
Philip Leger
Dion L. Lerman
Chanelle Lopez
James C. Mack
Patricia Mahoney
Jason W. Marion
Phillip Mathis
Ralph M. Matthews
Robert C. McIntire
Aruworay Memene
Patrick Moffett
Jose Montes
Derek Monthei
Shawnee Moore
Timothy J. Murphy
Nichole Nelson
Daniel B. Oether
Darvis W. Opp
Joe Otterbein

Kimberly Owens
Alexis Parale
Susan V. Parris
Michael A. Pascucilla
Munira Peermohamed
James E. Pierce
Michele Pineros
Laura A. Rabb
Raymond Ramdayal
Leejay Robles
Catherine Rockwell
Eldon C. Romney
Jonathan P. Rubingh
Joseph W. Russell
Ryan Schonewolf
Mario Seminara
Francis X. Sena
Zia Siddiqi
Dorothy A. Soranno
Elena K. Stephens
Martin J. Stephens
Dillion Streuber
M.L. Tanner
Tonia W. Taylor
Terry M. Trembly
Emilia A. Udofia
Ralph Utter
Kendra Vieira
Thomas A. Vyles
Phebe Wall
Marcel White
Dawn Whiting
Lisa Whitlock
Edward F. Wirtanen
Erika Woods

HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

(\$100–499)

Letter from the NEHA president and name in the Journal for 1 year.

Robert Bialas
Nora K. Birch
Eric Bradley
Corwin D. Brown
D. Gary Brown
Michele R.R. DiMaggio
Tamara Dunams
Darryl J. Flaspahler
Gwendolyn R. Johnson
T. Stephen Jones
Sharon L. Kline
Adam E. London
Sandra Long
John A. Marcello
Wendell A. Moore
Priscilla Oliver
Larry A. Ramdin
Matthew Reighter
Michèle Samarya-Timm
William Scott
Jill M. Shugart
Jacqueline Taylor
Anthony Tworek
Linda Van Houten
Sandra Whitehead

21st CENTURY CLUB (\$500–999)

Name submitted in drawing for a free 1-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.

Amer El-Ahraf
Ned Therien
Leon F. Vinci

SUSTAINING MEMBERS CLUB

(\$1,000–2,499)

Name submitted in drawing for a free 2-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for 1 year.

James J. Balsamo, Jr.
Brian K. Collins
Harry E. Grenawitzke
George A. Morris
Robert W. Powitz
Peter H. Sansone
Walter P. Saraniecki
Peter M. Schmitt
James M. Speckhart

AFFILIATES CLUB

(\$2,500–4,999)

Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration and name in the Journal for 1 year.

Robert W. Custard
David T. Dyjack

EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(>\$5,000)

Special invitation to the AEC President’s Reception and name in the Journal for 1 year.

Vincent J. Radke