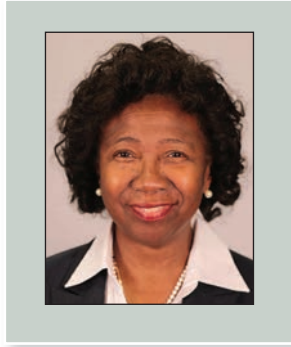


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Priscilla Oliver, PhD

Networking in Environmental Health

What is keeping you from enjoying the career success you richly deserve? Education, training, credentials, and experience clearly help to get some of what one wants, needs, and deserves. For some, these components may be all that is needed. If you are missing some ingredients and want to still progress, however, let me suggest networking to aid the progress toward the goal. There is a saying, "It is not what you know but who you know." Certainly, this statement has meaning to some. In most of life, people can open doors or help one to get more out of living. We learn frequently from others in many professions. Thus, the importance of apprenticeship, internships, and understudy is realized often. All of these are ideal settings and a form of networking.

Aside from formalized training, explore networking. Networking is the process of connecting with people in a chosen or related profession and sharing information in the profession, which in this case is environmental health. Networking is the sharing of skills, knowledge, abilities, talents, culture, the dos and don'ts, and enjoying the relationship of being connected. One may network with a group, organization, or individual. Networking may occur with champions, experts, professors, colleagues, supervisors, coworkers, students, family, and friends. Networking may occur with local, county, state, federal, corporate, business, private, and international officials. The extent of networking is endless.

The late Phillip Oliver, my brother, was most experienced at networking. He was a social worker and basketball player. It was

amazing to watch him in action. He loved people. He networked with folks from all walks of life, from the bottom to the top of society. I am known as Phil's sister, one of my prized titles. I dedicate this column to his memory. You can go far with people for they can make dreams come true, change hearts, and open doors. So, if you are not very smart with knowledge, education, skills, and talents, and have little experience, get busy with networking with good people. Be genuine. Be real and engaged. Be in the network to reap the benefits of our profession.

Let us focus on you and your career. If you do not have a résumé or curriculum vitae, get that done. All of us need business cards, too. Students need business cards with their name, major, e-mail, and expected graduation date. Find mentors and keep them for life. Remember, the recommendations of teachers and faculty are golden. They can and will speak about you all of their life. It touched me when I ran into my kindergarten teacher, Bessie Brady (she was 90 years old at the time.) Brady remembered me, calling out my whole name and repeatedly saying, "She never gave me a minute of trouble." Dr. Richard Barbe, retired Georgia State University professor and my dissertation committee chair, wrote in a great letter of recommenda-

*Ready, set,
go network!*

tion for me that I was loyal. I had not even recognized that trait about myself. Please get to know your professors for they are trained to know you and can even guide you in your career path.

Keep your résumé updated as you work. You need to have the résumé ready when it is requested. Even in retirement, network to keep active and alive. Networking and movement of your mind and body will keep you living that best life. Enlarge your network to include persons of all ages, diversity, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Dr. Charles Mouton, provost and dean of medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch, spoke about networking as community engagement. Networking connects us to the community.

Utilize acceptable social media to expand your networking activities. LinkedIn is a popular networking tool. Every day, professionals are connecting through the Internet. There are limitless possibilities in networking through the Internet and print media.

Now, I realize some of you are content with where you are and do not want to move up or on from where you are. That is okay. Networking should not end in retirement. Please consider networking to help others and to make an even more valuable contribution to the profession.

We need you as mentors for the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). You can help students, young professionals, and others. Networking is expanding in NEHA. Consider being a member and mentor for NEHA. We thank Brian Collins, past-president and former interim execu-

tive director of NEHA, for being our champion for the Student and Young Professional NEHA Mentoring Program. It will kick off this summer at the NEHA 2020 Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition in New York City (www.neha.org/aec). Please join us. There is professional and personal satisfaction in networking.

Lastly, consider networking to have fun. All work and no play make life dull and not what is needed in environmental health. Have some fun in the connectivity of the networking process. Many networking events are held at conferences or special meetings and are social in nature. Let us have fun with these events that might include music, food,

drink, laughter, and lively décor. Ready, set, go network! 🍷

Priscilla President@neha.org

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