

► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Priscilla Oliver, PhD

Introducing NEHA's New President

Greetings from my Audubon Forest neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta is the home of the “dream” for a better humanity and is known as the International City! Living here since 1978 has had a powerful impact on my work and values.

I am so honored, privileged, and thankful to serve as president of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). Having joined NEHA at my first Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition in Orlando in 1993, I did not envision becoming its president. I have entertained so many leaders in the past telling me of their plans to become president. I listened and encouraged so many to follow that dream and many have succeeded. At my first AEC in 1993, Art Bloom told me he wanted to be president and recruited me to help him. I passed out Bloom pencils and he became president of NEHA. Retired Colonel Anthony Aiken, retired Colonel Dr. Welford Roberts, and Roy Kroeger expressed interest to me of becoming president. They each ran and won. It appeared to be my role to help obtain good leadership for NEHA. With my leadership training, I gladly accepted that role for years. Over the years, however, I realized it was my time to serve.

Having grown up in Opelika, a small town in Alabama, my grandmother, grandfather, mother, and father put me on the path of becoming an environmentalist. We were outdoors people—gardening, fishing, and taking care of people, animals, the yard, the home, and the surrounding lands. I fell in love with biology under Ms. Price, one of my high school teachers, and decided on biology as an undergraduate major at the University

*One NEHA: Blue,
Green, and Gold.*

of Alabama. During the 1970s there was limited education in environmental health in Alabama. Not much there has changed even today and there is still much need for change in many states.

Thinking back on my undergraduate years, my 2-hour course on ecology was intriguing. I still have visions of our teacher, Dr. Rogers, and the classroom lectures. Later in my career I had the privilege of taking a group of students on a field trip to the University of Georgia's Institute of Ecology to interview Dr. Eugene Odum, the father of modern ecology and coauthor of *Fundamentals of Ecology*, which was the text for my ecology class. Dr. Odum was close to 90 years old at the time and it was so exciting for us to meet and talk with him.

As scientific knowledge of the connection between environment and health expanded, so has my interest been enhanced. I've learned so much during my almost 46 years of service with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Congress, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Morehouse School of Medicine. Having attended graduate school for two degrees (a Master of Public Administration and a doctorate) at Georgia State University, I learned

more about education, health, public administration, nonprofit management, and medicine.

Volunteering to serve has also been a part of my training. Since 2001, I have volunteered time supporting the following NEHA technical sections: emerging diseases/vector control/zoonotic diseases, environmental health in schools, hazardous materials and toxic substances, and institutional environmental health. I was a member of the *Journal of Environmental Health's* Technical Editorial Advisory Board for more than 12 years and a peer reviewer for more than 15 years. I helped to create the National Council on Diversity in Environmental Health with Professor Joe Beck, Dr. Carolyn Harvey, and other Eastern Kentucky University officials, as well as representatives from various federal, state, local, and industrial organizations. In 1995, the Physician and Undergraduate Student Educational Partnerships Foundation, Inc. was founded to mentor students and increase the number of minority and diverse physicians and dentists.

These experiences have shaped me into the person I am. I am a retired federal employee (life scientist) and an adjunct faculty member with the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine at the Morehouse School of Medicine. Thus, I have come up through the NEHA ranks, taught, conducted research, conducted inspections, implemented policy, witnessed the making of the laws, and administered programs in environmental health.

I am known as a caring, loyal, and dedicated scholar, professor, scientist, and administrator. I am devoted to family, church,

community, education, sorority, and NEHA. It has been a privilege to serve on NEHA's board of directors and to now serve as its president. Since joining NEHA, I have grown and remained active in the organization. It is my goal to keep growing, help individuals expand, and support NEHA in becoming greater. I want to utilize my skills, talents, education, and abilities to serve the profession and environmental health professionals of today and the future. It is important for each of us plan and leave footprints for others to follow.

I support and want to further the concept of One NEHA—an organization in which we all work together to connect, to recruit new and diverse members and partners, and to share

our ideas across the country and beyond. Your help is solicited in fostering One NEHA and making the organization a better association for the advancement of the professional and the profession. Please help me to be a great president and to make NEHA greater. The lines of communication should be enhanced. NEHA is our association. Please join us. Let us hear from you and see you in action.

I have been consistent and faithful in my environmental health commitments and work ethic for over 45 years. I want us to bring to NEHA a variety of meaningful and relevant leadership experiences, qualifications, and skills. I'm proposing a simple platform for NEHA's future—a more visible NEHA that is **Blue, Green, and Gold**: Limitless as the sky,

sustainable with going green, and resourceful in people and additional funding.

The focus is on advancing all people and NEHA, as well as resources and funding. Stronger partnership connections among professionals—older and younger, students and retirees, urban and rural, industry and government, nonprofit and academia—are needed and will be the future emphasis for success for the environmental health profession. We need to communicate, collaborate, and connect to make us one. Technology and social media outlets are here to help facilitate our continuing connections and progress. Remember, this organization is ours: One NEHA. 🐼

Priscilla President@neha.org

Did You Know?

NEHA's 83rd Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition is this month, July 9–12! We look forward to seeing everyone in Nashville for an event that will be packed with educational, networking, and professional growth opportunities. Want to attend but haven't registered? Visit www.neha.org/aec.

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.

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

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

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

EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(\$5,000–\$100,000)

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

Vince Radke