

## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Roy Kroeger, REHS

## Together We Can Do Much

I am humbled to serve as your president of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) for the coming year. I was introduced to NEHA at the 1995 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition held in Denver, Colorado. During that conference, I met environmental health professionals who have guided my career and served as mentors in the nearly three decades since. I have attended 16 different AECs since 1995, meeting many new friends along the way. I look forward to more AECs and meeting more friends.

My name is Roy Kroeger and I am currently the environmental health director for the Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Our county has a population of approximately 100,000 people and is located in southeast Wyoming, 100 miles north of Denver. Cheyenne has been our family home for nearly 28 years. Yes, I have worked for the same employer the whole time.

I graduated high school in Sterling, Colorado, and joined the U.S. Army right after. The military provided me the opportunity to attend college, see more of the world, and most of all, diversify who I am. After serving as a construction engineer in the U.S. Army, I enrolled at Colorado State University (CSU). Upon enrollment, I chose environmental chemistry as a major but quickly switched to environmental health after learning what it was all about. Dr. Ken Blehm was influential in my love for this profession as he has been for many environmental health students at CSU.

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picking up steam.*

While at CSU, I started my journey participating in professional organizations. During my senior year, I joined professional societies to enhance my résumé. The Environmental Health Student Association and the Colorado Environmental Health Association (CEHA) were just the beginning. I joined NEHA a few months later while completing my internship at a local health department. Currently, I am working on my Master of Public Health at American Public University.

From the start of my career, professional associations have been a big part of my life and an opportunity to give back to the field of environmental health. Since college, I have remained a member of CEHA and joined the Wyoming Environmental Health Association (WEHA) within days of being hired by the Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department. I have continued participation in both associations, including serving as the president of WEHA in 2001.

Active involvement with WEHA opened doors to do more with NEHA. I was appointed to the NEHA Board of Directors in 2007 to fill the vacated position of vice-president of Region 3. As the vice-president of Region

3, I represented Colorado, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. Serving the region was both rewarding and challenging. The region has the fewest number of NEHA members, which allowed me the opportunity to build close relationships. The area in the region, however, is vast with limited air transportation. In Region 3, most travel was done by driving to meetings. Occasionally, I made a round trip on the same day to attend a different conference in the same week.

Being involved with NEHA has not been all give. This association has blessed me to become a part of so many different projects. Building a vast network in NEHA has provided me the opportunity to be part of the Environmental Health Accreditation Council. I have visited environmental health academic programs across the country and have met so many students who are our future. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Partnership for Food Protection has allowed me to be part of its governing council representing local food safety programs. NEHA asked me to serve on the Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response, an organization funded mainly by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The FDA National Curriculum Standards Retail Framework Workgroup has been another place I have given back to the profession while meeting incredible food safety professionals from across the country. One last opportunity I want to mention is being part of the U.S. Virgin Islands training and mentorship project funded by CDC. This project allowed me to work with peers to

help the U.S. Virgin Islands rebuild its environmental health programs following Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

I mention these opportunities not to say I have done much, but to say there is much to do! We need every one of our members to do what they can to make this association better. Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." NEHA always has opportunities for professionals who want to be involved, and there is much more to do.

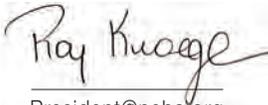
In a sense, NEHA is leaving the station and picking up steam. The new Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) exam will be released this fall. Increased efforts are being made to market the profession. NEHA continues to build bipartisan relationships with our national leadership in Washington, DC. The Environmental Health Workforce Act has been reintroduced in Congress. In May, NEHA received its most significant grant award ever to work with FDA to improve participation in the Voluntary National

Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards and reduce foodborne illness. A considerable effort is also planned with rebranding and marketing this coming year. NEHA has an incredible staff, but they cannot get all this work done themselves. I have reached out to many members to solicit their help on our team, but we always need more.

Over the next year I hope to build on the work started by recent presidents who led NEHA to our highest number of members ever. Dr. Adam London is a great storyteller. NEHA needs to continue telling our story to our communities and policy makers to increase our profession's increased exposure. Vince Radke is a great communicator and scientist. NEHA needs to continue building relationships with our partners and stakeholders. Dr. Pricilla Oliver stressed the importance of an inclusive membership and profession. NEHA should strive to find the best people to fill every role in our organization and those who represent us. Lastly, Sandra Long has been a strong proponent of students. NEHA needs more

student involvement in our committees, work groups, and other areas where a young perspective can benefit the environmental health profession.

While retaining these essential strategies, I will be working with NEHA staff and board members to improve our marketing efforts to promote both NEHA and the profession. Completing a strategic plan for the organization is another goal for the year ahead. I also hope to reach out to other environmental health fields such as sustainability, the built environment, climate change, and emergency preparedness to increase opportunities for these environmental health professionals through NEHA and to provide them with an organization they want to be part of. Through everyone working together, we can "take NEHA to the environmental health summit." 🐼

  
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