

► **DirectTalk** MUSINGS FROM THE 10TH FLOOR

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Apricity

Expiring frequent flyer miles and adventurous family members represent a dodgy confluence of emotion and motivation, particularly around the holiday season. To harness the potential of the moment, we depleted what seemed like a working lifetime of accumulated airline miles and in December 2012, the Dyjack family departed for the historic capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul. Time and space do not permit me to gush about architecture, history, food, and of course, the coffee. While the eye candy was mesmerizing, what I remember most is the Bosphorus.

The Bosphorus is a 19-mile strait that passes through Istanbul from the Black Sea on its journey to the Sea of Marmara, forming part of the traditional boundary between Europe and Asia. It is historically considered where East meets West, and represents a major commercial artery connecting the residents of the shores of the Black Sea with the rest of the world. The waterway is a critically important fishery and supports an abundant tourism industry. It is literally the main artery of the region bringing resources and investment from around the planet. Its economic and cultural value to the region would be difficult to overestimate.

Memories of that once in a lifetime family holiday recently flooded the portion of my mind that drives self-reflection. Our association is slowly and methodically working through a strategic planning process, and we are now considering our values statements. These represent the core principles and philosophical ideals that will serve to guide our

We aim to build the same trust with you.

decisions and behaviors much as the Bosphorus serves as the aquatic network that binds a region together. As I completed the online poll with my recommendations for values statements, I recognized that mine are only one set out of a couple dozen that will be considered by the NEHA Board of Directors, which means they might not make the short list for final consideration. Having said that, as executive director, you might find it useful to understand the values I hold close as a member of our organization's leadership team.

Servant Leadership: I feel we should serve the common good of the profession, starting with our employees and members, and radiating outward to our affiliates and the profession writ large. You might have observed this leadership in 2020 when we made our entire inventory of online continuing professional education free during the early stages of the pandemic, irrespective of membership status. Thousands of people took tens of thousands of our courses. We subsequently offered the Digital Defense conference in August 2020, again at no cost, that provided up to 12 hours of continuing professional education to over 2,400 people throughout the world.

Thought Leadership: Our aim is to establish a richer and more meaningful relation-

ship with the profession through our intellectual products and contributions to science. We have submitted or published 11 scientific journal articles since 2019, which represents a dramatic increase over prior years. Much of that effort was focused on you, the environmental health workforce. We believe we possess a deep understanding of your needs and challenges, and are using that knowledge to advance advocacy for the profession.

Care: We care about the well-being and success of our employees. Their safety, health, and success have guided our decision making as we pivot into the future. In illustration, we have provided each employee a stipend to underwrite the cost of their home wireless system and they have also been provided a one-time financial allocation to purchase furnishings to make their home office suitable for their individual set of circumstances. Additionally, each employee receives an annual continuing professional education investment that is used at their discretion.

Innovation: We strive to connect new ideas to today's problems. In that spirit, we nimbly toggled from face-to-face training in 2019 to an entirely online format in 2020. Our formal catalog of Food and Drug Administration training went remote. We provided—and continue to provide—numerous online trainings and just-in-time programs, including a new program of web-based updates on government affairs. Our credentialing program is rapidly moving to a paperless application and management system. We no longer have land phone lines in our Denver office, which means

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dedicated to making a lasting, positive impact on the environmental health community. I hope to continue evolving with NEHA by discovering creative, impactful ways to expand our reach.

Having lived in several different cities—Charlotte, North Carolina; Youngstown and Columbus, Ohio; Austin, Texas; and now, Denver, Colorado—I have always felt the unshakable urge to explore and experience. Since moving here in October 2019,

Colorado has kept my adventurous spirit well-fed. I love just about anything outdoors (hiking, rollerblading, swimming, nature photography), and as a self-proclaimed “music consumer,” I have never turned down a concert or live music event. In fact, when COVID-19 is finally behind us, I’m fairly certain that is the first place you’ll find me. 🎧

Did You Know?

You can stay in the loop every day with NEHA’s social media. Find NEHA on

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/NEHA.org
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/nehaoorg>
- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/national-environmental-health-association

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you can connect with an employee to assist you whether they are in the office or not.

Execution: We strive to provide our members what they need when they need it. We were challenged by COVID-19 to produce training materials and remote learning in Spanish. It is what our Puerto Rican colleagues needed, and as I type these words, those products are almost ready for prime time. We have streamlined and modernized our accounting systems and share our audited financial statements so that membership can trust that the resources they and other sponsors entrust to us are professionally and ethically managed.

This train of thought now brings me full circle to Istanbul.

One sunny day we purchased a sightseeing boat tour that brought us from the Eminonu Pier in Kadıköy to Anadolu Kavağı, a small fishing village at the northern edge of the Bosphorus. We slowly and methodically hiked up the steep incline to ruins at the top of the hill that provided a panoramic view of the Baltic and surrounding area. I was mesmerized. History. Politics. Religion. Global commerce. The focal points of humanity seemed to amalgamate before my eyes, united by a simple waterway blessed by deep waters. The ties that bind.

The way our organization lives by its values bind us beyond a credentialing arrangement,



Homes along the Bosphorus. Photo courtesy of David Dyjack.

a membership benefit, or mission statement. What we do and how we conduct ourselves in honoring you and our profession reveal our true corporate self. The forces that would deliberately or incidentally serve to cleave us from our values are abundant and often seductively present themselves masquerading as opportunity, a new partnership, or access to influence.

The image of the many homes constructed along the Bosphorus directly on the shores of the strait reveal an inordinate amount of trust the occupants have in their instincts

and knowledge of the tides, storms, and other natural events that might otherwise undermine their foundations. That trust must have been built over centuries of experience and observation. We aim to build the same trust with you as you observe our values in action. We aim to be the professional warmth of the sun during the coldest of winter days. 🎧

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