

▶ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Stepping Back

During the last year, I have written a lot about the future of environmental health and the environmental health profession. In this column, I want to reverse direction and talk about the accomplishments of NEHA's officers, regional vice-presidents (RVPs), staff, and membership. To set the stage for the discussion that follows, let me elaborate on my term as NEHA president over the last year.

When I became NEHA president, I did it to give back to a profession I have practiced in my entire adult life and an association in which I have the greatest pride. It was my idea to give back to my colleagues the lessons and experiences I have gained in practicing environmental health for almost four and a half decades. To my surprise and satisfaction, I quickly found that I learned much from my fellow officers and NEHA's membership and staff. It has been my pleasure to interact with our state affiliates, partner organizations, and individual members. In every case, I learned something new and significant about the art and science of the environmental health practice. In other words, although my original intent was to give back, I was the actual recipient.

Now that I have set the stage for looking back over the last year, let me share with you the state of NEHA today and the accomplishments we have made together.

A great preponderance of our association's accomplishments fall into the area of strengthening relationships between NEHA and its state affiliates and members. Strong affiliates and an active, involved membership are the life blood of our association. NEHA's

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board of directors, executive director, and staff have implemented many initiatives to foster these relationships.

The development and implementation of a new customer relationship management and data system are underway. When in full operation, this system will enable members to explore the status of their membership, credentials, continuing education, and professional development through a single-entry point. In addition, registering for our Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition and other special events will be easier and faster.

During the last year, our RVPs have expanded their presence and roles in state affiliates. The national officers have attended state affiliate, partner, and stakeholder events and meetings.

The 2017 AEC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, will offer a special 1-day training for state affiliate presidents. It is the goal of this training to give these leaders the tools to promote their affiliates through improved management, outreach, and organization. To my knowledge, this type of training has not been offered before and is now an integral part of the AEC.

NEHA has undertaken a review of policy statements and position papers by RVPs, national officers, and staff. The results are that these documents are currently being categorized as needing revision or, at the other end of the scale, needing "sun setting." A new policy statement was developed this year that deals with climate change. You can review this statement on NEHA's Web site at www.neha.org/publications/position-papers.

Over the next few years, the necessity for NEHA and its membership to raise environmental health awareness is clear. Also, as environmental health professionals, we must speak out locally and nationally. To this end, NEHA has expanded the breadth and depth of its presence in Washington, DC. In February 2017, our national officers attended a day on Capitol Hill to visit Senate and House offices to discuss environmental health goals and positions. Our staff members based in Washington, DC, are a daily presence that provides support for environmental health and the environmental health profession.

During the last year, NEHA has begun to pivot toward the younger membership. As we see the graying of the baby boomer generation, our profession and association will see a shift in human capital that is unequaled in history. NEHA has started the process to make our association more useful to younger members, and to offer a greater return on investment. Generation X and millennials seek great experiences and a chance to identify with a greater cause. The 2017 AEC has been restructured to offer an even better experience for attendees.

NEHA has moved forward in becoming the premier environmental health organization in the nation. It has also started the change to become a paperless association. The structure and organization of the AEC has been streamlined and made more interactive to provide a better return on invest-

ment. We have begun the process of making our data, membership, and record keeping more reliable and easier to use for members and staff.

I owe a great debt to NEHA's staff, executive director, and board of directors for a successful year and the achievements we have accom-

plished. If this year is the beginning of a new NEHA, we are all in for a great ride! 🐬

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Did You Know?

This column marks the last President's Message written by NEHA President David Riggs. Riggs will step down as NEHA president in July at the 2017 Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The *Journal* would like to thank Riggs for contributing columns during his year as president and for providing our readers with insights into the association and profession. You can view all past NEHA president columns from 2014 to the present at www.neha.org/publications/journal-environmental-health/presidents-columns. The July/August issue will mark the first column written by Adam London, current NEHA president-elect, who will assume the position of president when Riggs steps down at the 2017 AEC.

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