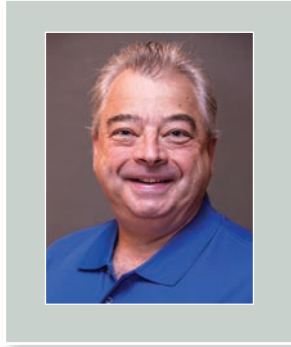


► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Join the Fliers Who Soar to Great Heights

The quote by Marty Rubin, “The deep roots never doubt spring will come,” is a reminder even in the season of renewal that the current season of bloom for the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) is from the environmental health trail blazers who sowed the initial seeds. In this column I want to highlight two groups—the American Academy of Sanitarians (AAS) and the NEHA History Project Task Force—that many associate with the foundation or roots of environmental health. Being around these amazing people reminds me of what Pelé said, “Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.” I cannot begin to express my gratitude for all the work done by these distinguished groups whose energy is infectious.

I have the pleasure and honor of being a member of both organizations where I have gained knowledge, fellowship, friendship, and joy. As Michelangelo said, “I am still learning.” Furthermore, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry stated, “The tree is more than first a seed, then a stem, then a living trunk, and then dead timber. The tree is a slow, enduring force straining to win the sky.” If our environmental health pioneers are the roots of the tree, mid-career professionals are the trunk and early career professionals are the leaves. A tree (e.g., NEHA) does not flourish unless all parts of the tree are working together. The bursting petals of the new NEHA logo represent a new era and excitement for what is possible for NEHA and our profession. NEHA shares the idea stated by Eleanor

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Roosevelt: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

AAS is an organization that elevates standards, improves the practice, advances professional proficiency, and promotes the highest levels of ethical conduct in every field of environmental health. Many environmental health professionals do not realize that AAS sponsors the Davis Calvin Wagner Sanitarian Award, which is conferred for exceptional leadership ability, professional commitment, outstanding resourcefulness, dedication, and accomplishments in advancing the sanitarian profession and public health programs. In addition, AAS is one of the many cosponsors of the Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award (<https://crumbineaward.com>). The Crumbine Award is a prestigious national award given annually to local environmental health jurisdictions that demonstrate excellence and continual improvement in a comprehensive food protection program. The purpose of the Crumbine Award is to en-

courage improvement and stimulate public interest in food service sanitation.

AAS has supported early career and student members since its inception. Through a partnership between NEHA and AAS, annual educational scholarships are awarded to exceptional undergraduate and graduate students pursuing a career in environmental health. AAS also helps to enhance student experiences at the NEHA Annual Educational Conference (AEC) & Exhibition.

Becoming a diplomate in AAS denotes a high standard of professionalism with marked distinction and a record of accomplishment in environmental health. It denotes professional status and gives prestige to the holders of the diplomate certification. AAS invites and encourages professionally credentialed environmental health practitioners with qualities of outstanding competence and leadership to become certified as diplomates.

Currently, there are thousands of registered environmental health specialist/registered sanitarian (REHS/RS) professionals, but since the inception of AAS in 1966, only 611 environmental health professionals have been awarded diplomate status. Becoming a diplomate helps you stand out from the crowd, enhancing your career while promoting the profession. Join the difference makers! As Jane Goodall stated, “What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

To become a member of this prestigious group you must hold an REHS or RS credential, have three reference letters, have at least one published paper, and demonstrate to the

satisfaction of the AAS board your good moral character and high ethical and professional standing. For further information, please visit the AAS website at <https://aaosi.wildapricot.org>.

In 2020, NEHA President Dr. Priscilla Oliver, the founder of the One NEHA theme, started the NEHA History Project Task Force, which is composed of a group of illustrious NEHA professionals who have made numerous contributions to our field. I have had the privilege and honor of being an ex-officio member of this task force.

The NEHA History Project Task Force accomplishments include launching a webpage in 2021, led by Kristen Ruby-Cisneros, managing editor of the *Journal of Environmental Health*, to showcase its work and NEHA's history (www.neha.org/history). The NEHA History Project webpage provides an overview of the project and a list of task force members and how to get involved. Other highlights from the NEHA History Project webpage include:

- An electronic version of the NEHA Green Book: *Environmental Health 1937–1987, Fifty Years of Professional Development With*

the National Association of Sanitarians/ National Environmental Health Association was published in 1987 by NEHA and provides a brief history of the first 50 years of the association. The task force, led by Dr. Hermen Koren, is developing a new and updated publication on the history of NEHA and the profession.

- NEHA Virtual Museum: We have posted images and descriptions of artifacts, instrumentation and tools, publications, and miscellaneous items related to environmental health and NEHA from the personal collection of Dr. Robert Powitz.
- A listing of past NEHA AECs: You can learn about where our past AECs have been held and peruse links to the reports published in the *Journal of Environmental Health* about each conference.

Dr. Leon Vinci has been a great chairperson keeping us on target. The task force has included distinguished individuals from academia such as Dr. Jack Hatlen and Dr. Herman Koren. Several NEHA past presidents have served on the task force, including Bob Custard, Diane Eastman, Dr. Amer El-Ahraf,

Harry Grenawitzke, Dr. Priscilla Oliver, Dick Pantages, Vince Radke, Dr. Welford Roberts, and Dr. Chris Wiant. Retired RADM Webb Young represents the uniformed services and Mrs. Robert Powitz and Leon Vinci represent the private sector. Rounding out the committee in an ex-officio capacity (along with me) are NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack and Kristen Ruby-Cisneros.

The NEHA History Project Task Force states it best: "All forms of input, ideas, and history are welcomed, and we invite you to share that with the task force. The task force also encourages individuals to reach out if interested in joining our work in preserving and presenting the history of NEHA and our profession."

Please become involved with NEHA on a local, state, or national level by spreading the word that environmental health is public health. In doing so, it can be as Dr. Seuss said, "You'll be on your way up! You'll be seeing great sights! You'll join the high fliers who soar to high heights." 🌸

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