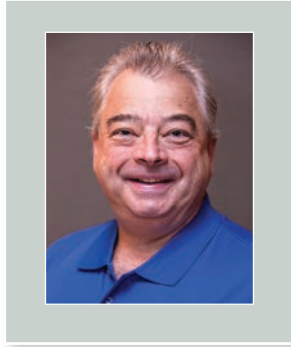


## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



D. Gary Brown,  
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## An Opportunity to Educate the Public, Policy Makers, and Other Professionals

**A**s I mentioned in a previous column, environmental health professionals were the founders of the American Public Health Association. Most people do not realize that environmental health professionals were key personnel at the start of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on July 1, 1946, helping to fulfill the primary mission of CDC to prevent malaria from spreading across the nation. Environmental health professionals helped start Earth Day. Every year on April 22, Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970, which arose out of pollution affecting our health. The Earth Day website states, “Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment threatens human health.”

The first Earth Day had 10% of the U.S. population participating from all political parties, walks of life, and communities throughout the land. People were participating to improve the health of people in the U.S. through a reduction in pollution. The early 1970s saw the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Occupational Safety and Health Act. In addition, numerous environmental laws were passed, including the National Environmental Education Act; Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; Endangered Species Act; and Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act.

Earth Day went global with the first World Environment Day on June 5, 1973, led by the United Nations Environment Program. This year marks the 50th anniversary of World

*We have the wonderful advantage that environmental health messages are meaningful and impactful.*

Environment Day, which has grown into a global platform for raising environmental awareness and spurring environmental action. Millions of people from 150 countries have taken part in World Environment Days, helping drive change along with motivating national and international environmental policy. Each World Environment Day is hosted by a different country and the official celebrations focus on a particular theme. The 2023 campaign is #BeatPlasticPollution, hosted by Côte d'Ivoire, and focuses on sustainable solutions to plastic pollution.

International days and weeks are a powerful advocacy tool that provides an occasion to educate the public, policy makers, and other professionals. As stated in my September column, I am asking you to assist by becoming like the Whos—shouting from the roof tops the words people must hear far and near—by talking to folks outside our sphere, especially the younger generations about this wonderful, magical career.

As environmental health professionals, we need to let our policy makers, fellow professionals, and the public know the impact pollution has on health. Air pollution causes approximately 7 million premature deaths every year. Single-use plastics make up 70% of marine litter. The CDC Waterborne Disease & Outbreak Surveillance Reporting website ([www.cdc.gov/healthywater/surveillance/burden/findings.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/surveillance/burden/findings.html)) estimates that 17 waterborne pathogens caused 7.15 million illnesses, 601,000 emergency department visits, 118,000 hospitalizations, and 6,630 deaths in 2014. Further, CDC estimates each year that 1 in 44 people gets sick from waterborne diseases in the U.S.

The Marketing Rule of 7 states a person needs to hear a message at least 7 times before they will take action. This rule was developed by the movie industry in the 1930s when studio executives discovered a certain amount of advertising was required to compel someone to see one of their movies. Regardless of a magic number of times for people to hear a message, everyone agrees messages are more effective when repeated.

As we all know, not all messages are created equally. We have the wonderful advantage that environmental health messages are meaningful and impactful since they affect health, something near and dear to everyone's heart. The varied stories of our profession can create an emotional connection. Unlike many professions, we touch all aspects of life having thousands of jobs performed by environmental health professionals. How many other professions can claim their members work in

national parks, cruise ships, amusement parks, laboratories, water and wastewater treatment, disaster management, education, and restaurants for the armed services, nonprofits, government agencies, and industry in the U.S. We are a storybook with never-ending stories that involve all genres including action, adventure, detective work, mystery, science, inspiration, hope, changing lives, and communities.

What environmental health professionals need to improve on is spreading the message. When I speak with environmental health professionals throughout the county, they all passionately talk about environmental health since they care about our profession, which is much more powerful than talking about

things we are ambivalent about. The more environmental health professionals we have spreading the word, the better because people listen more closely to people they care about or are in their community. The National Environmental Health Association is developing messages you can add to your tool kit to spread the word about this wonderful, wild world of environmental health.

We all know the more positive contact you have with your audience, the better your message will be not only received but also ingrained in people's heads. Think of the slogans for Nike (Just Do It) and Wheaties (Breakfast of Champions)—when you hear these slogan you know the brand. One of our

slogans could be “Environmental Health: The Profession Changing the World.”

As Aristotle said, “There can be no words without images.” Good storytellers make emotional connections. We have the stories, images, and storytellers to share this wonderful, wild world of environmental health. As Jimmy Cliff sang in *One More*, “I got one more story to tell; Mystery, my story; I got one more story to tell; True story, my glory; One more, one more, one more, one more.” Please help spread the environmental health word day and night by sharing your story with everyone in sight. ✨



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