

► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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## All Good Things Must Come to an End: A Heartfelt Reflection

As I write my final column, I find myself looking back on my year as your president with deep gratitude and humility. Leadership always brings quiet questions: Did I do enough? Did I make a difference? Is our organization stronger than when I began? Ultimately, those answers rest with you, our members. What I know for certain is that serving you has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life.

When I began this journey, my goal was simple yet ambitious: To elevate the visibility of environmental health and to help us see ourselves not just as regulators but as the scientists, educators, investigators, and protectors we truly are. We are far more than a checklist. Every day, we apply scientific principles to safeguard our communities, often without recognition, yet always with unwavering commitment.

During a recent presentation at the North Dakota Public Health Conference, I reflected on Dr. John Snow's groundbreaking work during the 1854 cholera outbreak. History remembers him as a founder of epidemiology, but it was the environmental health action of removing the Broad Street pump handle that ultimately stopped the outbreak. That often-overlooked moment reminds us of the profound impact our profession has always had.

Even today, our contributions can be hidden in plain sight. In 2023, it was an environmental health professional who uncovered the link that led to a nationwide recall of contaminated applesauce. Yet media reports referred to them only as an "inhome investigator," not an environmental health professional (Campisano, 2024). This example highlights the challenge

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we face: Even when we do the work, we are not always seen. And still, we persist. Still, we protect. Still, we serve.

Throughout my travels—from Massachusetts to Nebraska, Alabama to California, and North Dakota—I met environmental health professionals who share the same passion, the same frustrations, and the same hope. I was especially inspired by our early-career members. They were eager, engaged, and proud to see themselves not as inspectors but as scientists and guardians of public health. Their energy reminded me why this work matters and why our visibility is worth fighting for.

This year, NEHA achieved meaningful progress. We released the *Pillars of Governmental Environmental Health Practice: A Guide to Scalable Environmental Public Health Programs*, which defines 11 core functions that help the world understand what we do (Bare et al., 2025). We published *Modernizing Data Systems in Environmental Public Health: A Blueprint for Action*, which addresses the challenges of an evolving data landscape (Ong et al., 2025). We launched a new online study course for our Registered Environmental Health Specialist/Registered Sanitarian (REHS/RS) credential. We also introduced

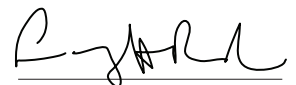
NEHA Thrive, a program dedicated to leadership development and professional resilience ([www.neha.org/Thrive](http://www.neha.org/Thrive)). Furthermore, our webinars have reached thousands of practitioners worldwide, offering timely, practical knowledge at no cost.

Our work extended far beyond national borders. We strengthened partnerships with our colleagues in Canada, Jamaica, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK, and Scotland. I was honored to congratulate our UK and Scottish partners on their 150th anniversaries—a testament to the enduring legacy of environmental health worldwide.

Of course, no year is without its challenges. We were unable to make the progress we hoped for in engaging mayors, city managers, and county leaders about the value of environmental health. But this opportunity remains for us, and I trust our association will continue to pursue it with determination.

As I close this chapter, my heart is full. To the Board of Directors, to our CEO Dr. David Dyjack, and to our dedicated staff—thank you for your support, your wisdom, and your partnership. And to you, our members, thank you for the trust you placed in me. I hope I made you proud. I hope I served you well. And I thank you for being part of this unforgettable journey.

All good things must come to an end, but the work, the mission, and the passion we share will continue. And I will forever be grateful to have walked this path with you. ✨



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## References

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