

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

David Dyjack, DrPH, CIH

We hired Sandra Whitehead, PhD, in January 2016 to provide vision, energy, and leadership to our association programs portfolio. Sandra brings extensive governmental and academic environmental health experience to our growing menu of grants and contracts, which in turn provides us the bandwidth to offer additional capacity building and continuing professional education to you. She is based in Washington, DC, and will develop partnerships with lawmakers, associations, and agencies located in the nation's capital.

In July 2013, the NEHA board adopted new definitions for environmental health and environmental health professional or specialist. Recently in this column, Dr. Dyjack has written on how our profession and *your association* are changing. The opening of a Washington, DC, office doesn't just represent a seat at the table legislatively, but also programmatically. What you have known as NEHA's Research and Development department has become Program and Partnership Development. The name change comes with a shift in focus. We are more member-centered, concentrating on developing and delivering quality technical assistance and capacity building as well as creating and cementing partnerships with funders and other national networks. My presence in Washington, DC, means you now have a program person who can nimbly respond to opportunities to lead as they arise.

Even though I am new to the NEHA staff, I am not new to NEHA. I have been a Technical

Environmental Health Is a Contact Sport

The mission is to build capacity among environmental health professionals.

Adviser and peer reviewer for the *Journal of Environmental Health* for several years. I also served on the Florida Environmental Health Association's executive committee. I bring these experiences to my new role as well as a background in capacity building for environmental health professionals. I have been developing, delivering, and evaluating efforts to support environmental health professionals for the past ten years, first at the Florida Department of Health's Division of Environmental Health and then at the National Association of County and City Health Officials. I have also worked in local government creating healthy housing programs and creating and implementing comprehensive plans and building codes. I ran a small city's drinking and wastewater treatment plants and was in charge of the animal control program for several years. The purpose of every program I led, worked on, or created was to protect and preserve the health of the residents.

The mission of the newly renamed Program and Partnership Development team is to

build capacity among environmental health professionals and to support you in the work you do every day. You have a team of subject matter experts on staff to assist you with any issue from climate change and sustainability to safe drinking water and integrated pest management. We've been working hard to develop useful resources for NEHA's Web site and to develop opportunities for you to be engaged in to inform this work. We will be working with members to gather data about your workforce development needs and how we can help meet them. Additionally, NEHA staff is developing resources to bring you ongoing technical assistance and toolkits that will assist you in your work.

My vision is for the Program and Partnership Development team to become your "go to" for a deeper dive on emerging environmental health issues, best practices, and success stories you can use. We will be reaching out to members about your needs and engaging you in these efforts. This is your association and our team is here to support you.

Environmental health is indeed a contact sport. We welcome Sandra to our growing presence in Washington, DC, with the aim of being in contact with decision makers who influence our profession. The sun never sets on our passion to unleash the right talent at the right time and place. 🐾

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