

Gerd Clabaugh – IPHA President - 2008

Two-thousand and eight was a particularly challenging period for IPHA and public health generally. In the summer 2008 issue of *Public Health Matters*, I wrote about several challenges that provided opportunities for the Association: Advocacy opportunities, implementation of the Iowa Public Health Standards, and changes to IPHA's structure. A fourth— severe flooding in the summer 2008 - was one additional challenge we couldn't well predict.



Advocacy opportunities – IPHA worked hard to position public health to be a key policy advocate on some very important issues – health reform, anti-smoking efforts, and oral health to name a few. We also worked with the state public health department in sponsoring an oral health policy summit focused on identifying solutions to oral health access problems in the state. APHA recognized us for the effectiveness of our advocacy work. Finally, in response to the summer flooding, we successfully advocated for the appointment of an IPHA member to serve on the public health task force of the Governor's Rebuild Iowa Commission, appointed to guide the recovery effort.

Public health standards - IPHA has been a strong advocate of the public health standards initiative, as articulated in the draft Public Health Modernization Act. We've engaged members of the Public Health Alliance of Iowa in developing an advocacy toolkit to support legislative discussions on the Act.

IPHA structure - While a handful of IPHA sections requested de-certification, the Board considered the impact that reduced section presence would have on our governing structure. At our annual meeting in April 2009, the membership approved changes to our Board structure. The change created Board seats which are more representative of our geographic diversity. While we were disappointed to have fewer professional sections in the Association, we also increased our commitment to those remaining by allocating financial and other resources to their work.

2008 floods – During the summer 2008, many Iowans were devastated by the severe weather experienced in our state. With 85 counties designated as Presidential Disaster Areas, there was little question that the impact of the summer's events were wide-spread and felt by many Iowans. Public health agencies across the state swung into action to assist with evacuations, to work with local healthcare providers to ensure that their vital services continued to be available, to establish emergency shelters, among other supportive activities. In addition to the immediate response, public health began working to ensure the restoration of safe drinking water, to assist with the cleanup, and to counsel Iowans as they began to put their lives back together. IPHA published a special issue of *Public Health Matters* to recap the response of public health agencies on the ground, working side-by-side with Iowans, as the response and recovery process proceeded.

It was an active year both within the association as well as in the profession. Iowa's public health professionals continually demonstrated their resolve to ensure the health of Iowans was preserved and advanced.