

CHE AT 20: CELEBRATION, REFLECTION & RENEWAL

Kristin Schafer

What an interesting moment it's been to step into leadership at the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE). This 20th anniversary year offers opportunities for celebration, reflection and renewal—all of which are well underway.

CHE has made significant contributions to the environmental health field over the years, from co-launching the first academic program in the country on reproductive health and the environment, to creating an award-winning ebook on environmental determinants of health, to building a Toxicant and Disease Database for researchers and the Because Health website for consumers. Details of each of these accomplishments are described in other articles in this compilation.

What's struck me as I've learned more about CHE's history is how often we've played the role of incubator or catalyst, sparking and nurturing efforts that have gone on to have incredible impact in the field of environmental health. This catalytic role is the result, I believe, of CHE's commitment to connecting across disciplines to create space for collaboration and meaningful partnerships. You never know what will emerge when you bring together committed, creative people from diverse backgrounds to tackle tough problems—but very often, it's something important and good.

We'll celebrate CHE's legacy and future this fall with a series of CHE Cafes, bringing back a past format of informal, online conversations with leading “thinkers and doers” working for environmental health and justice. On Saturday, November 12 we'll gather at Commonweal for a hybrid in-person/online event to share stories of CHE's work over the years and plan for what's ahead.

Reflection and Renewal

Addressing threats to health from environmental risks is more relevant and urgent than ever before. Science now suggests that the human health harms caused by chemical contamination is a global crisis commensurate with climate change and biodiversity loss. Addressing these interlinked crises urgently, effectively and equitably is the challenge before us.



This anniversary year has spurred us to reflect on how we can most usefully meet this critical moment, supporting environmental health and justice today and into the future. We've interviewed and surveyed thousands of members of the CHE community to find out what people appreciated most, and where we might change and grow.

While our signature webinars with partners will continue, we're exploring new strategies to help meet the urgent needs of today's world. We'll focus particularly at the intersection of chemicals, climate and health (including plastics and pesticides), with additional work promoting cancer prevention and children's environmental health. Within these areas, we'll collaborate with partners to host in-depth webinar series and workshops, develop and amplify existing 'science to policy' tools, and highlight solutions rooted in environmental justice. I look forward to working with this vibrant, dedicated community of environmental health scientists, advocates and policymakers as we move forward into CHE's next 20 years.-||



Kristin Schafer, CHE's new director, brings over three decades of experience in the field of environmental health and justice. After working at EPA and the World Resources Institute in Washington, DC, she moved back to Northern California where she held various roles — including Executive Director — over her 25-year tenure at Pesticide Action Network (PAN) North America. Kristin holds a Masters in Social Change and Development from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.