

## A Note From the Executive Director

In May, ceremonies at The Hague marked the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan. Two other anniversaries have recently taken place that embrace and continue both the goals and methods of this historic plan that helped rebuild the financially struggling countries of Western Europe after World War II: the fifth anniversary of the AIHA partnership program and the 500th humanitarian assistance airlift of Operation Provide Hope.

AIHA's partnership program traces its heritage to the Marshall Plan's extensive exchange program, in which business leaders from Europe traveled to the US to observe first-hand changes in production processes. They then adapted these advances back home, helping generate economic recovery. Similarly, the Marshall Plan's mobilization of humanitarian assistance finds its counterpart in Operation Provide Hope, in which the US Departments of State and Defense have worked with the private sector to provide nearly \$2 billion in critically needed medical supplies and equipment to the NIS.

While the health care partnerships share many of the features of the earlier Marshall Plan programs, there are some innovations. In a partnership of partnerships, common challenges and cultural ties have enabled us to collaborate in workshops, conferences and other joint programs. This issue of CommonHealth highlights three of these conferences, which took place over a one-month period this spring.

In Kiev, Ukraine, nurse leaders from across the NIS gathered for a third annual conference in which they shared stories of success in creating reform in nursing education and practice. In Tashkent, Uzbekistan, deans and rectors of medical schools in the NIS and US met to begin a dialogue on how to shape workforce development to better meet the public's health care needs. And in Zagreb, Croatia, representatives from each of the 16 CEE partnerships and health care policymakers attended the second annual conference to explore their responses to a changing health care environment and present their achievements.

One of AIHA's most important goals is to facilitate these exchanges of experience, to help disseminate the information that is gleaned from confronting problems head-on and crafting pragmatic solutions. In upcoming months, we will continue to provide forums for partners to learn about new issues and share their achievements, including the Fifth Annual NIS Partnership Conference in October and a conference examining healthy communities in November.

I invite you to build on the momentum generated by these conferences, to examine how you might adapt accomplishments of other partners at your institutions and to share the outcomes of your own work with others. Half a century after the Marshall Plan was enacted, we now have new ways to support these exchanges, such as e-mail and teleconferencing. Although the methods of communication may have been transformed, the value of peer-to-peer interaction, across partnerships, across national boundaries and across oceans remains undiminished.