

Note from the Executive Director

Health is more than merely the absence of disease. It also encompasses well-being of the whole community.

AIHA's healthy community program moves partners outside hospital walls and immerses them into such diverse issues as drug abuse prevention, environmental protection and prevention of cardiovascular disease. It marks a new direction for partnerships because the program brings together all members of the community--from teachers to workers to clergy to government officials--to assess problems and come to consensus on solutions. In this way, the healthy community program empowers residents to take charge of their own health as well as the health of their city.

Last fall, AIHA began two healthy community programs in Slovakia. One pairs the Aid to Children at Risk Foundation and the Institute for Preventive and Clinical Medicine working in a densely populated area of Bratislava called Petralka with the Truman Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri. The other matches the mayor's office of Turianske Teplice, a small town in central Slovakia, with MetroHealth System in Cleveland, Ohio.

Because the healthy community concept is a universal one, the project represents a unique opportunity for all AIHA partners to learn and expand their role in community health assessment, planning and improvement. Cities in countries from Brazil to Russia have embarked on the process of making their communities healthier for all residents. The World Health Organization has designated 1996 the Year of the Healthy City, and throughout the month of April cities from around the world will be promoting wellness workshops, health fairs, city cleanup activities and a host of other projects.

This issue of *CommonHealth* takes an in-depth look at the building blocks of healthy communities and at local projects in both Slovakia and partner cities in the United States that involve citizens in improving the health of their communities.

Just as the healthy communities project broadens the borders of AIHA's traditional hospital partnerships, *CommonHealth* is working to expand the accessibility of the magazine to our diverse readership in more than 20 countries. With this issue, we are introducing a new, more reader-friendly design. We are enhancing artwork and photos to give readers a better picture of the multifaceted work of the partnerships. We are also reshaping articles to better portray the energy and commitment that go into each partnership. In doing this, we have shifted some of our more technically oriented articles to a livelier feature format.

This retooling is an evolutionary process, and I welcome your feedback about the changes that we are undertaking. Please address your comments, both about *CommonHealth's* new look and the articles, to me or to Editor Barbara Ruben.