

When Dawn Gentsch became the President of the Iowa Public Health Association in 2009 she wanted to do something to celebrate IPHA's first 85 years. She appointed a committee with Kay Leeper and Ron Eckoff as co-chairs. Kay provided overall leadership of the celebration and Ron focused on gathering information about IPHA's history. The celebration culminated in a gala evening on April 13, 2010 at Reiman Gardens in Ames in conjunction with the Spring Public Health Conference.



Historical stories were presented in newsletter articles and a poster session at the conference. Those are provided here along with additional materials. We introduce this IPHA History with a one page summary which was distributed at the conference.

IPHA's 85 Years of Rich History

In April of 1891, in Waterloo, the first Iowa Public Health Association is organized. Most of the original members were physicians who were also local health officers. This group remained intact for five years. At the organization's first meeting, Dr. I.S. Bigelow, Jr. of Dubuque commented:

"The necessity of such an organization, for ...helping along the good work of sanitary reform and bringing together representatives from the various fields of sanitary science cannot be questioned." And again in 1892 he emphasized "It is the province of this organization to be a teacher of the masses."

In May 1926, the new Iowa Public Health Association begins. Thirty years after the first attempt at organization, the State Commissioner of Public Health issued a call to the health officers of the 18 largest cities in Iowa to attend a conference on January 13, 1926 at the State House. At the second meeting in May "The new organization chose to 'take the name of the Iowa Public Health Association. The purpose of this being that the new organization might include all health workers in the state [with the purpose of the association] to safeguard and promote the personal and public health of the residents of Iowa.'"

Education and leadership development have been a major role of the Association since its inception. The Iowa Public Health Association has held an annual meeting in conjunction with a conference every year, except 1945. From the 1940s to the present, a frequent topic has been variations on the theme of the Future of Public Health.

85 years as the voice of public health

For 85 years, IPHA has educated, advocated, and collaborated to provide a voice for Public Health across the state, including:

- *Holding annual conferences* inviting nationally recognized researchers, advocates and policymakers for educating the statewide Public Health Workforce. Topics over the decades included:
 - 1930 – What Preventable Disease is Costing Iowa
 - 1940 – National Defense and Lessons from the Warzone
 - 1943 – Daycare for Children of Working Mothers

1950 – Polio
1964 & 1986 – smoking and health
1986 – HIV/AIDS
1989 – Legal & Social Issues Associated with Domestic Violence

- *Advocating* for policies and legislation to support public health initiatives such as:
 - Federal and state health care reform
 - Reducing exposure to secondhand smoke
 - Protecting essential public health functions during economic downturns
 - Improving access to medical and dental health care
- *Providing a strong base* that brings a local public health voice to statewide committees such as Governor Branstad's Iowa health Reform Transition Team and Health Iowans 2000-2020
- *Providing safety net activities* when a shortage or crisis occurs such as the Vaccine Consortium with the Illinois Public Health Association in 1999
- *Providing a ready network* of public health professionals and an outlet for debriefing and lessons learned during times of economic crisis, terrorism and disaster. IPHA was there for:
 - Economic crises in 1929, 1981, 2001, and 2009
 - Significantly decreased public health workforce during wartime 1943
 - Floods in 1993, 2008
 - Anthrax Attacks 2001
 - Tornados in 2008