

## Lifetime Achievement Award

### Acceptance Remarks by Thomas Aschenbrener, October 9, 2012

My dear friends and fellow public health advocates. My sincere thanks to the Oregon Public Health Association for this honor you are giving me today. It touches me deeply and I regret I am unable to join you due to a previously planned trip. But be assured I am with you in spirit and stand with you in a continued shared commitment to public health especially our public health work in Oregon.

I got the public health 'bug' in 1972 when I started courses in the School of Public Health in Chapel Hill following completion of a graduate program at Duke. While I was not able to continue my education in public health, I discovered the guiding principles of working for a healthy community in the strategies and structures of the profession of public health and they became my passion.

Throughout my career, I have believed in the power of disease prevention, support for the most vulnerable and lesser privileged of our society and advocating for public policy to promote health.

This is a great country, and when we work to take care of each other and the common good, we show our greatness. Public Health is one of the hallmarks of leadership of progressive thinking in our society. It takes pride in our country and strong patriotism to work so hard to provide the benefits that make all of our people and our communities healthy.

Public Health **IS** about coming together and working hard for the common good, where everyone participates and where we all work to assist those of limited access to privilege to achieve well-being. It takes a lot of work... We all know it takes a lot of work from the people of public health to create "non-events" in our community, state, and nation.

Mark Hatfield said "you cannot build a strong nation on the backs of sick people." That is ever more poignant. And, it is this charge he leaves us to keep our nation healthy and to never neglect the public's health and work to reduce the barriers to a healthy society.

We all need to continue working to educate the public and political leadership about their role in advancing the public's health too. Our voices need to ring in unison about

public health, and the 10 essential services. Our voices need to remind the nation that a strong public health network is **key** to a cost efficient system of American Health Care.

Let our voices never fail to speak with the pride and conviction about our role.

Importantly, let us never fail to speak out when we notice our community's future is at risk.

While I am at a new juncture in my life, I will stand with each of you to my last breath to achieve healthy and equitable communities.

If what is past is my lifetime of achievement, I am content. If I am lucky, it is simply prologue to my advocacy for public health in the future.

Thanks so very much to the Board of the Oregon Public Health Association for your generosity in providing me this recognition of the OPHA 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award.