

## **Report of the President to the Governing Council**

Many thanks to each of you for the honor and opportunity to have served as APHA President this past year. I have spoken on-line or in-person at sixteen state public health associations (APHA affiliates), colleges, universities, and with community groups across the nation. It has been a true joy to share my call to action to “play, read, and vote for health.”

**Play:** I’ve asked folks to take time to “play for health” because I know how hard our public health workforce has worked, particularly over the past few years. With the research showing the importance of play on our physical, mental, and emotional health, I remind us to take a moment each day to “*play*,” to reflect, recharge, relax, and find moments of joy. And, better yet, with the social isolation from the COVID-19 pandemic, I recommend whenever possible, to play with others. It could just be taking a walk with a neighbor or joining in a pickleball game.

**Read:** With so much misinformation and dis-information, especially during the pandemic and now with the growing movement at censorship and book-banning, I want us to get back to more “*reading*” and critical thinking as I believe this is crucial to combat misinformation. This reading can be active where we can collaborate and partner with other organizations to share our ideas for healthier communities through op-eds and letters to the editors in local news outlets. Of course, please do not forget that local journalism is important and a vital to our communities. And reading can also be a form of “play for health,” when participating in a book club or listening to an audiobook on a walk in the woods. Don’t forget that you can borrow books, e-books, and audiobooks (and so much more!) for free from your local library. I’ve been thankful also to leverage my position as a Board Member on the United for Libraries Board (a division of the American Library Association) and to share my call to “read for health” at the American Library Association’s Annual Conference in Chicago. Surprisingly, my panel session on advocacy was also covered by AP News and more.

**Vote:** Then, of course, I call upon each of us to vote for health. I believe that to make true change for a healthier nation, we need all eligible voters to vote, and especially so in local and state elections. Everyday our local and state governments make important decisions, such as on transportation, education, zoning, and housing that affect our community health. There is research showing that the majority of our nation supports efforts to address climate change, the right to abortion, and stronger gun control, but that it’s not reflected in our elected leadership. So, in addition to voting, I also ask folks to support candidates who support public health or consider running for office themselves. I find great fulfillment, friendship, and fun from helping candidates run for election. I served as an elected Town Meeting Member (member of my town’s legislature) for over a dozen years and for two terms now, I ran, won, and continue to serve as an elected Library Trustee in my town so that I can be the change that I want to see.

In addition to sharing my call to “play, read, and vote for health,” I’ve been able to represent APHA, to continue to serve on the Executive Board, to appoint APHA members into leadership positions within our association, and to author monthly columns (“Perspectives of the APHA President”) in our “Nation’s Health” newspaper. Please also keep your eyes peeled for the December 2023 issue of the American Journal of Public Health where I’ve written an invited commentary too. And, of course, I’ve tried to share all these experiences, which I’ve lovingly called my “adventures in presidenting” on social media to reach as far and wide an audience as I can about our APHA priorities and how to be an engaged advocate for a healthier nation.

Throughout this year, I’ve been struck by how knowledgeable, passionate, and thoughtful our APHA members are in the work they are doing in their communities, regardless of whether the state is red, blue, or purple. I’ve seen the incredible promise of our young public health professionals and students. So, no matter what the media might say, I know that the future is healthier with our committed APHA members and affiliates working hard each day to make a healthier, kinder, and more inclusive world.

Though this year comes to a close, please know that my call to “play, read, and vote for health,” continues. Know that I’m always here for you, my APHA family, just as you are for me and each other and especially, those who have been historically marginalized.

With love and thanks,

Chris Chanyasulkit, PhD, MPH  
APHA President 2022-2023