

## ***A National PHLI Story: Jody Hershey, M.D., M.P.H.***

### **Director of the New River Health District/Virginia Department of Health**



*When I entered Year 6 of PHLI in 1996 - 1997, I was a 'retread' coming back into local public health after a stint in the private corporate healthcare sector. I had a solid understanding of basic public health principles and a small cadre of public health colleagues in Virginia--but rare interaction with other colleagues from a national perspective.*

*PHLI was one of the best decisions that I have made in my professional career!*

*Throughout my year as a public health scholar, I developed an incredible and permanent personal and professional connection to other scholars across the nation, as well as internationally. And I focused on developing, broadening, and expanding my leadership skills--and in particular, gaining confidence in myself, and my knowledge/skills/abilities as a leader. In fact, I became passionate about my role as a leader.*

*The year after completing PHLI, I became actively involved in NACCHO--partly on the encouragement of one of my learning group members (an organization that I really didn't even know anything about and that wasn't on my radar screen when I began year 6 of PHLI). And the rest is history! In 2003, I became president of NACCHO. If it wasn't for PHLI, I may never have realized my potential as a national leader. I may still have been a very isolated and narrowly focused local public health director.*

*I still continue to be involved in the national public health arena and always will. My involvement in the national public health arena has tremendously benefited my effectiveness as a local public health director, and it has benefited my community in so many ways. I now have a tremendous interest in policy, leadership development, systems, visioning, partnering, and mentoring that I never had before entering PHLI. And I feel that I am leaving behind my own public health legacy!*

Dr. Hershey's leadership has been widely recognized. He received the 2000 NACCHO Award for Excellence in Environmental Health and the 2001 NACCHO Award for Excellence in Creating Healthy Communities recognizing his local health agency's outstanding, significant, and innovative activities and programs in the area of environmental health and in creating and building healthy communities, respectively. In 2001, he received the Virginia Department of Health's Public Service Career Achievement Award. Dr. Hershey also received the 2002 J. Howard Beard Award from NACCHO that nationally recognized his local public health agency for its outstanding, significant, and exemplary programs and activities. His health district was selected and served as one of 41 *Turning Point* community partners, a national public health reform effort jointly sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations.