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## **NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK: AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE JOBS BEHIND PUBLIC HEALTH IN FLORIDA AND THE PEOPLE WHO DO THEM**

*Environmental Health: Keeping Communities Safe from the Ground Up*

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**Tallahassee, Fla.** – The air you breathe, the water you drink, the places you live and work—all of these things contribute to your overall health, and they are all monitored by the Bureau of Environmental Health at the Florida Department of Health. Environmental health professionals work in an extremely diverse field, sampling and testing a wide variety of facilities and conditions to ensure that Floridians are safe from environmental hazards.

Environmental health professionals are sometimes the unsung heroes of public health protection. Anthony Dennis, Environmental Health Director for the Florida Department of Health in Alachua County says, “We focus on many things that the average person doesn’t think about on a daily basis, like whether the water they drink or the pools they swim in are safe. We think about these things so you don’t have to.”

As a man with a passion for travel and the outdoors, Dennis studied Geology at the University of Florida in the hopes that he could pursue a career that would offer plenty of opportunities to be outside. He found that freedom in the Environmental Health field. Not afraid to get his hands dirty in the name of public health, Dennis began working at the DOH-Levy County, performing site and soil evaluations for the Onsite Septic System Program. For the last nine years, Dennis has served as Environmental Health Director in Alachua County, working with a great team of professionals dedicated to serving Florida’s public.

He describes Environmental Health as an exciting field “with services being performed in a wide range of program areas from regulatory inspections to well surveillance and rabies control to name a few.” Environmental health specialists provide services to many different facilities, including schools, tattoo shops, tanning facilities and public pools. They routinely sample private drinking wells to ensure that the water is safe to drink, and they have opportunities to provide education and outreach to the public about environmental safety.

“Environmental Health is rewarding because we get to be proactive in making sure that Floridians aren’t at risk for environmental hazards,” he says. And when emergencies do occur—which Dennis remarks will generally happen at the end of the day on a Friday—environmental health professionals “have the tools to address these issues whenever they occur.”

*Use #ThankAPublicHealthPro on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to recognize a public health professional in your area during National Public Health Week.*

To learn more about the important work environmental health professionals do at the Florida Department of Health, visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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