

from the  
**Executive Director**



James T. (Jim)  
Currie, Ph.D.,  
Colonel, USA Ret.

## A Typical Executive Director Day

“Jim, I know all of you at COA are busy representing us, but I’d really like to know what you do in a typical day.” One of our members said this to me during the recent Symposium in Dallas, and I thought it would be an appropriate topic for my June-July *Frontline* column. So, here’s what one of my days looks like.

I’m usually up by 0630, do all the usual items of dressing and having breakfast, then generally sign onto my COA email account on my home computer by 0730. With just over 5600 active members scattered across six U.S. time zones, I receive emails at all hours of the day and night. I respond immediately to those that do not require me to do any research.

I then leave for work. It is a twenty-five mile drive around the Capital Beltway, and depending upon whether someone has had a

see **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** on page 16

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## Memorial Day 2018

Photos by Jun Shen

On an overcast Memorial Day, celebrated on 28 May 2018, ADM (Dr.) Brett Giroir, highest ranking officer in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, presented a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. With ADM Giroir were Mrs. Jill Giroir; RADM Kelly Taylor, the EHO CPO; and Col. (ret.) Jim Currie, COA’s Executive Director. The wreath, featuring blue and gold flowers, bore a ribbon emblazoned “U.S. Public Health Service.” The PHS contingent was allowed to participate in the ceremony because of COA’s membership on the Veterans Day National Committee.

This solemn occasion at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was preceded by the official Memorial Day remembrance at the Arlington National Cemetery amphitheater, which included presentations from the Chairman of the joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and the President. The official “Parade of Colors” included the PHS flag and the American flag, the former carried by carried by LT Casmir Ogbonna. This was the second consecutive Memorial Day on which the PHS flag was carried into the amphitheater by a uniformed PHS officer. At the conclusion of the Presidential address and musical finale, the PHS group proceeded to the wreath-laying area at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Nineteen Commissioned Corps officers gave up their holiday to participate in the events at Arlington National Cemetery. CAPT Josef Rivero, a former COA board member currently assigned to the National Institutes of Health, took the lead in organizing the Memorial Day participation. COA arranged for the wreath.

COA members participating in the 2018 Memorial Day events at Arlington National Cemetery included ADM Brett Giroir, RADM Kelly Taylor, CAPT Jenean Willis-Marsh, CAPT Josef Rivero, CAPT Soju Chang, CAPT Suzan Gordon, CDR Indira Harris, CDR Kun Shen, CDR Julie Erb-Alvarez, LCDR Michael Muni, LCDR Kimberly Calvery, LCDR Carla Chase, LCDR Gail Tarlton, LCDR Alesha Harris, LCDR Iman Martin, LT Casmir Ogbonna, and LT Heather Light.



# COA Member Benefits

## Capitol Hill Representation

Efforts on Capitol Hill continually support all Commissioned Corps officers – active duty and retired

## Local Representation

COA Local Branches provide venues for meeting fellow officers and a forum for the discussion of issues within the Commissioned Corps

Newsletter reports on monthly activities and items of interest about the Corps & COA

## Insurance Programs

Low-cost insurance programs that may continue as long as your membership in COA remains current

## \$7,500 for Online Degrees

\$7,500 scholarships to earn online degrees, which include:

MPH@GW  
MHA@GW  
HealthInformatics@GW  
MBA@UNC  
MBA@Simmons  
HealthcareMBA@Simmons  
IRonline (American)  
MBA@American

## NYMC Online MPH

50 percent discount for the online MPH and certificate programs

## Scholarship Program

College scholarships for children and spouses of COA members

## Ribbon

Authorized to be worn on the PHS uniform by members in good standing when attending COA functions



## Legislative Update COA and Coalition Politics

by Judy Rensberger

Everyone who works in the public policy arena, whether as a paid professional or volunteer activist, knows that Coalition Politics is the name of the game. Advocating side-by-side with other groups and organizations who share your positions and believe in your cause is the best way to create momentum and persuade policy makers to support your public policy goals.

This is especially true if one wishes to maintain a non-partisan stance and steer clear of political action committees, candidate fund-raisers, and partisan campaigns.

COA qualifies on all counts. We are strictly non-partisan. In the 13 years I have been with COA, our campaign contributions have totaled exactly zero dollars. We have not endorsed anyone for elected office anywhere.

However, COA is an active, longtime participant in several broad-based coalitions that share a vision of improved public health, an expanded and well-trained public health workforce, realistic agency appropriations, and more easily accessible care for those who live in rural or economically distressed areas, and for those who serve our country at home and abroad in the uniformed services.

Examples are "Friends of HRSA" and the "CDC Coalition," both organized and run by the American Public Health Association (APHA), and "Tricare for Kids," supported primarily by the Children's Hospital Association. By far the largest coalition in which COA participates is The Military Coalition (profiled on our home page). It consists

of nearly three dozen organizations representing five million veterans, retirees, and active-duty service members and their families.

In all these coalitions, COA staff (and sometimes Board members) join representatives from other coalition partners to visit Capitol Hill, sign on to letters and news releases, participate in press conferences and congressional briefings, and meet in small groups with members of Congress and their key staff.

COA has recently joined a new coalition, "American Indian/Alaska Native Health Partners." It advocates for the Indian Health Service and its personnel, including both health care professionals and support staff. Since nearly 1,900 PHS officers work for the Indian Health Service on reservations across the country, this coalition is a perfect fit for COA. It is led by Judy Sherman, a former House Appropriations Committee staffer, who also started "Friends of Indian Health" in 1997. The new coalition, called "AI/AN Partners" for short, focuses primarily on appropriations issues. The Partners were pleased to learn recently that the House Appropriations Committee in its FY 19 Interior bill had increased funding for IHS loan repayment and scholarships to \$70,765,000, an increase of \$21,402,000 over current funding.

Also on the AI/AN Partners' wish list are additional direct funding for Indian Country to address the opioid crisis, mandatory funding for the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI), and restoration of funding for the Community Health Representatives (CHR) program.

# Canine Training at the Atlanta Airport

by LT Colleen Scott and CDR Elissa Meites

Hundreds of dogs have been trained to detect explosives and to help protect the nation's transportation systems. PHS officers in Atlanta were offered the opportunity to participate in a unique interagency collaboration with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to support the training of these impressive canines.

Our volunteer experience started at the center of the Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International airport, waiting to be met by a TSA Canine Handler we had spoken to by phone. We received a safety briefing, signed a release form, and confirmed that we were not at all afraid of dogs. Then, we were each issued a "suspicious package" to carry through the different areas of the airport, where TSA Canine (K9) teams would search us out.

The goal was the same each time: The K9 team had to identify the person carrying the package, despite its hidden location. When the K9 teams were ready, we strolled casually into the security line headed toward the domestic terminal of the airport. For the next few hours, we tried to outwit and sometimes outrun the nose of the very persistent dogs. It was sometimes difficult to keep a straight face when the dogs inevitably found us and alerted on the

packages we were carrying, catching nearby unwitting passengers off guard as TSA Officers surrounded us and calmly asked us to step out of the secure area.

The purpose of the training exercise was to make sure the K9 team were detecting explosives on strangers in the busy airport environment, rather than recognizing their own TSA Officers. TSA appreciates federal employees who can volunteer as "decoys" because they give canine trainers/handlers the opportunity to test the dog's skills during practical training exercises, and during regular screening.

TSA ATL Supervisory Transportation Security Specialists-Canine, Deborah Scandrett and Michelle Ramos, ensure that all operations and requirements are carried out effectively and efficiently on a daily basis.

The dogs we worked with were quite skilled at tracking the hazardous scents, but some dogs who start the program don't end up becoming professional bomb-sniffers, and they can be adopted by families. You can learn more about how to adopt a "TSA dropout" dog here: <https://www.tsa.gov/canine-adoption-program>.

If you are interested in volunteering to be a decoy, email Program Assistant Brandi Sanguenza at [Brandi.Sanguenza@tsa.dhs.gov](mailto:Brandi.Sanguenza@tsa.dhs.gov).



A K9 team in action screening passengers at the airport



Airport sign indicating TSA K9 teams at work



Package carried by CDR Meites, correctly identified as suspicious by a TSA K9



TSA K9 with LT Scott after successfully detecting the suspicious package strapped to her right ankle



# PHS COMMISSIONED OFFICERS FOUNDATION *for the* Advancement Of Public Health

## COF President's Corner

by Mike Milner, DHSc, PA-C

*Rear Admiral, United States Public Health Service (ret.)  
President, PHS Commissioned Officers  
Foundation for the Advancement of Public  
Health*

Greetings to my fellow USPHS Officers,  
both active and retired.

It's hard to believe, but Dallas is already two weeks in the rear-view mirror. What an exciting and jammed packed meeting! Seeing so many of my friends in one place was very special; it was particularly special to Patty, who had missed the past couple meetings due to her work commitments. We both had an action-packed week and were able to recharge our batteries.

How about the numbers-- over 1300 participants!!! That makes our 2018 USPHS COF symposium the largest ever according to folks who have been doing this longer than I. We are so thankful to everyone who participated, especially to all the junior officers who made the trek to Dallas. Our planning committee, headed by RADM Pam Schweitzer and CDR Deborah Dee, did a stellar job; the plenary sessions were amazing, and the break-outs were just as good. There were so many excellent presentations at the same time, it was hard to decide which ones to attend. And how about Dr. Jennifer Fogarty, the NASA Scientist who was our keynote at the Anchor and Caduceus dinner? Her presentation was just "out of this world" (oh, no, did I really say that, HAHA). Dealing with patient care here on earth is one thing, but learning about the added burdens of care in spaceflight is a "whole 'nother world"! Ok, enough with the space jokes.

Having our Assistant Secretary for Health, Admiral Brett Giroir, in attendance

for the entire week was just amazing. The synergy that I saw between him and VADM Jerome Adams, our US Surgeon General was so amazing. There were times when, during their "tag team" presentation on opening day, that it seemed they could finish each other's sentences. The only other time I have seen that phenomenon was with my twin daughters as they were growing up; they literally often did finish one another's thoughts. But seeing it reflected in the way forward for the USPHS Commissioned Corps in such a striking way was truly special. Prior to my retirement, I served nearly ten years in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, and I don't recall anytime where the symbiosis was this tight. I congratulate both leaders for their vision, their passion, and their commitment to the nation by navigating the new administration's "Reinventing Initiative." I firmly believe that the Corps will be much better on the other side of this process. And it wouldn't be complete without thanking our Deputy US Surgeon General, RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams, for her extraordinary devotion to the Corps and for her leadership during the recent transitions. She made the rounds to all the exhibitors to thank them for their participation on behalf of the OSG and ASH, and especially on behalf of our officers in attendance.

Special thanks to CAPT (ret.) Jim Minor and to John DiMaggio for their outstanding efforts to completely sell out our exhibit hall this year. This was, again, another first. The exhibitors were very informative, engaging, and deeply committed to our foundation as well as our service. Thanks to all of them who came and shared their knowledge with all of us. A special Shout out goes to Meriterese Rancanelli from Goya Foods.

GOYA exhibited last year in Chattanooga, but Meriterese lost her grandmother just a day or so before last year's meeting and was unable to present. She came this year and gave a special nutritional talk at our VIP Exhibitor reception on Wednesday night. It was a home run! I can't tell you how many exhibitors said to me just how informational her fifteen-minute update was. It provided ways to blend foods to reduce insulin surges, lower sodium and improve overall health. This was the first time we have ever had a CE-type lecture in one of our receptions with exhibitors, but judging from the success, we might consider this again in the future. At the end of the symposium they donated leftover food samples to a local food bank. Now that's commitment to service. Thank you, Meriterese for helping make our exhibitor showcase program such a success!

We can't have a COF Symposium without a RAM event. Just like we have done the past few years, over 100 USPHS officers donated their clinical skills to provide badly-needed medical, dental, optical, laboratory and mental health services to several hundred of our neediest citizens in Durant, OK, in the southeast corner of the state. Thanks to all the officers who made this another huge success, including RADM Meeks, CAPT Brandon Taylor, our partners at RAM, and all the support folks who made this idea a reality. I wasn't able to attend this year, but everyone said it was a very special event, and those who were helped were grateful beyond words. Way to serve, PHS!!

We'll know if a few weeks how we did financially with our meeting in Dallas; we are expecting some concessions from the hotel/convention center for some of the "not so good things" like the abysmal air

see **PRESIDENT** continued on page 12

# Bureau of Prison Officers from FCC Butner Deploy in response to Hurricane Irma

by CDR Yvonne Lassiter

In October 2017, members of Rapid Deployment Force Team 1 were deployed in response to Hurricane Irma. Pictured above are three nurses, one nurse practitioner and one physician assistant. These providers are assigned to the Federal Bureau of Prisons at the Federal Correctional Complex in Butner, NC. They flew from Raleigh-Durham to Atlanta, where they met with the rest of their RDF-1 team members. From Atlanta everyone rode in chartered buses to Orlando, FL, where they received additional direction and respiratory fit testing. The next day they were off to Fort Myers, FL. Upon arrival they were assigned to a special-needs shelter at a high school in Fort Myers. The residents of the shelter had been displaced from their homes by the hurricane and many came with very few personal items. PHS teams worked twelve-fourteen hours a day assisting this very vulnerable population, which was grateful to receive care. As USPHS Commissioned Officers, the team did what it was called upon to do, which is to serve the most vulnerable and underserved. The team did so with pride and distinction.



*Pictured are from left to right: LCDR M. Van Sickle, PHS Officer, CDR Y. Lassiter, PHS Officer and LCDR D. Lowe*

## Arctic Branch COA Members Volunteer at Alaska Mission of Mercy

by CDR Joseph Holshoe and CDR Stella Wisner

On April 13-14, 2018, members of the COA Arctic Branch in Fairbanks, AK, joined 374 local area volunteers to help provide free dental care to Alaska residents at the Alaska Mission of Mercy (AKMOM) - Fairbanks event. Mission of Mercy is a faith-based community organization that provides free healthcare, dental care, and prescription medications to the uninsured, underinsured, and to those who “fall through the cracks” of our healthcare system. At this event, patients came from as far as Anchorage (600 miles) to receive free dental care, as well as wellness assessments and assistance in coordination of care with local service agencies. Many patients camped outside the event site overnight in order to secure their place in line.



Among those who participated were COA members CDR Joe Holshoe and CDR Stella Wisner. CDR Holshoe is a psychiatric nurse practitioner stationed with the US Army at Fort Wainwright, and he served as one of the providers at the Medical Triage station, ensuring that patients were healthy enough to receive dental treatment. After the patients were medically cleared, they were sent to the Dental Triage station, where CDR Wisner provided oral cancer screenings and determined patients’ dental needs. CDR Wisner is a dental officer stationed with the Indian Health Service in Fairbanks. As she is also an exodontist, CDR Wisner was pulled from Dental Triage to help remove teeth at the Oral Surgery station when the line became backed-up. In addition to oral surgery, patients also received fillings, cleanings, and root canals. A limited number of patients also received temporary dentures to replace teeth that were removed. There were a great number of patients suffering from dental infections and pain who benefited from this free care. In total, AKMOM provided 652 patients with \$743,026.60 worth of free dental treatments.

The AKMOM event is one of many Mission of Mercy intensive weekend clinical events that have occurred across the US supported by the America’s Dentists Care Foundation (ADCF). PHS Commissioned Corps officers of all categories have volunteered at these events and, in addition to dentists and dental hygienists, there is also a need for medical professionals such as physicians, nurses, physician assistants, and pharmacists. Non-medical volunteers are also needed for other roles such as registration, interpreters, and data entry.



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COMMITTEE

Awards

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Email us to volunteer at

[coamembership@coausphs.org](mailto:coamembership@coausphs.org)



# Not a Pleasant Thing to Contemplate

by Col. Jim Currie, USA (ret.)

I'm writing about death, a subject that many of us would just as soon avoid. But it catches up with all of us sooner or later, and when we are gone, most of us would probably like to be remembered at our final resting place. That's what this article is about: how your next-of-kin (NOK) can obtain a suitable marker for your gravesite. There are two different kinds of markers I am going to cover in this article, and the forms for ordering them are posted on the COA website.



The first of these markers is what is called the "Standard Government Headstone or Marker." It is available for all deceased veterans who were discharged under conditions other than Dishonorable and who are buried in private or local government cemeteries (not VA cemeteries). Your NOK will need a copy of your DD-214 or the USPHS form PHS-6134 Statement of Service, and you have to have served a minimum of twenty-four months on continuous active duty. VA Form 40-1330 is the one used to order this marker. It is found on the COA website at <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1832/va-form-claim-for-standard-government-headstone-or-marker.pdf>. The instructions illustrate the types of insignia—religious or non-religious—that can be engraved on the marker.

The second type of marker is the bronze medallion that can be affixed to a privately-purchased tombstone in a private or local government cemetery. VA Form 40-1330M, found on the COA website at <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1833/va-form-claim-for-government-medallion-for-placement-in-private-cemetery.pdf>, is the proper one to use for the medallion, which comes in three sizes. As with the standard headstone, you must have served for twenty-four months continuous active duty and have been discharged under honorable conditions.



This marker is the one about which we have been having many discussions with the VA. As you will note when you access the form, there are boxes indicating branch of service. USPHS is not one of them. We contacted the VA about this omission, and their response was that it is hard to change a government form. We rejected this excuse, as it is the VA's own form. It's not as if they had to get permission from the Defense Department or elsewhere. We pursued this issue with the VA, and the staff there went so far as to refer the question to the VA Office of General Counsel to see if PHS officers were even eligible for the medallion. We insisted that this was unnecessary, but they did it anyway. Well, surprise, OGC came back and said that PHS officers are eligible for the medallion, so we then asked how long it would take for them to change the form. The official VA response was that they didn't know, but that if PHS officer next-of-kin wanted to order the medallion, they should check "Other," and provide an explanation. We find that completely unacceptable and will continue to pursue this with the VA. Meanwhile, that's how your NOK can obtain the medallion.

We fully understand that PHS officers want to plan for a suitable memorial, so we trust that this information will be helpful as you do so.



# COF Leadership Training: Bring the training opportunity to you!

by CDR Michael Verdugo, CDR Jessica Graham and CDR Chris vanTwuyver

How do we get leadership training to help us grow as Commissioned Corps officers? Sometimes we can get it from DCCPR; sometimes we can get it from our agency or duty location; and sometimes we just have to go and get it ourselves! With the support of the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF), this is exactly what twenty officers from twelve different duty stations representing five different COA branches (Bemidji, WI; Chicago, IL; Great Lakes, MI; North Central, NC; and Twin Cities, MN) and four different agencies (IHS, FDA, CDC and BOP) did.

On the weekend of 5-6 May, these twenty officers participated in “Developing and Implementing an Outward Mindset” a two-day leadership development program previously held at the COF Symposium in Chattanooga and scheduled this year as another two-day preconference session in Dallas. While attending the annual COF Symposium and the opportunities there to train and network with other officers may be preferred, for many officers that can be difficult due to a variety of duty station responsibilities, support, or distance. With the support of COF, bringing this training closer to officers’ duty station is quite feasible and is a terrific way to help officers invest in their own personal and professional development as officers and leaders.

Some officers came from as far away as Chicago, IL and the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, with several participants driving ten hours and over 630 miles. Leadership officers from the regional COA branches providing “organizing muscle.” Coordination was challenging, but starting four months early made it relatively easy to identify a central location and date when most folks interested in participating could attend. The FDA district office in Minneapolis was selected as a manageable location for everyone, minimizing cost and travel time. Besides travel costs, each participant only had to pay \$180 for the training materials. The fact that the normal registration for this



course or type of training is \$900-\$1200 made this a great opportunity and value.

This training built on the material from the “Leadership and Self-deception” book circles in which most participants had previously participated. Additionally, this training has been offered by IHS, BOP and FDA at other locations besides the offerings that COF has provided at the annual Symposium. Feedback from participants included:

- “Great workshop, great facilitators, great use of my time! Thank you for the opportunity! The knowledge I gained will have a positive impact on my work life and home life!”
- “I loved this workshop! I can’t wait to go back and use what I learned in my work and marriage/life.”
- “This workshop has been an eye-opener for the way I view problems at work and home. I recommend this workshop to provide a deeper understanding of others and to slow the pace, to see positive outcomes. I was very much ‘in the box’, but now I have the tools to get out!”
- “Thank you to all who brought this to our region and officers in the Midwest! I enjoyed the books and am excited to apply the new insights and skills I learned.”

- “I hope that this course is routinely offered to USPHS Officers and HHS Leadership. The course is a small investment of time and money, but provides many tools that new and experienced leaders can use to become more effective leaders.”

As Commissioned Corps officers, we have many needs and challenges in learning to become better leaders and officers. Taking advantage of low-cost training opportunities that align with agency and other officer activities is one thing we can control and do ourselves. We know that leadership learning is a continuous journey. Learning new concepts and skills is only the first step, and the real adult learning occurs as we continue to practice and integrate these concepts and tools into our everyday lives and experiences. To help “invite” this learning, participants received a challenge coin with a real “challenge”, to practice what they learned in this workshop for at least five minutes every day for ninety consecutive days.

If you are interested in how to coordinate a similar training or learn how we made it happen, please reach out to CDR Michael Verdugo at [Michael.verdugo@ihs.gov](mailto:Michael.verdugo@ihs.gov), CDR Jessica Graham at [Jessica.graham@ihs.gov](mailto:Jessica.graham@ihs.gov) or CDR Chris van Twuyver at [Chris.vantwuyver@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:Chris.vantwuyver@fda.hhs.gov).

# Keeping on Track with the New Weight Standards Using Mobile Apps

by CDR Danielle Mills, CDR Jamie Mutter, and LCDR LaJeana Hawkins

On July 20, 2017, CCHQ officially released the Corps Retention Weight Standards. If you are feeling nervous about the new standards or just want to get to a healthier weight, there may be some good assistance options within reach of your smart phone. A balanced diet and a proper exercise routine in combination are very effective in helping you lose extra pounds and get in shape. Mobile apps can provide additional resources and help hold you accountable. They can help keep you on track and collect your personal health and fitness data. What follows is a review of some free apps that might prove helpful. Many of them use tracking tools to monitor your weight, food intake, and exercise habits, while others provide guidance for making healthy choices when

grocery shopping or eating out. Additionally, many weight loss and fitness apps have components meant to increase your motivation, including community support, point systems, and tools that document the progress you've made over time.

My Fitness Pal is an app that calculates calories, allows user users to track their food intake, and track exercise. The app offers an extensive food database with over 6 million different foods, which makes it is easy to keep a daily food journal. The food database also includes several restaurants' foods, which can help guide users to select healthier options when eating out. Some of the additional features include a barcode scanner which makes it easy to add nutritional information for packaged food. Users can also track weight and search for and save their own healthy recipes.

see **APPS** continued on page 10

# Fighting Docs Win Championship

by CAPT Timothy Jiggins

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) hockey team, the Fighting Docs, is comprised students, staff, and faculty from USUHS and the nearby Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. The USPHS contingent this year included CAPT Timothy Jiggins, an Environmental Health Officer at FDA, and ENS Quinn Bott, a former Pharmacist Officer who is now a second-year USUHS medical student. Despite frequently losing players to deployments, rotations, and Operation Bushmaster, the Fighting Docs finished the regular season in first place.

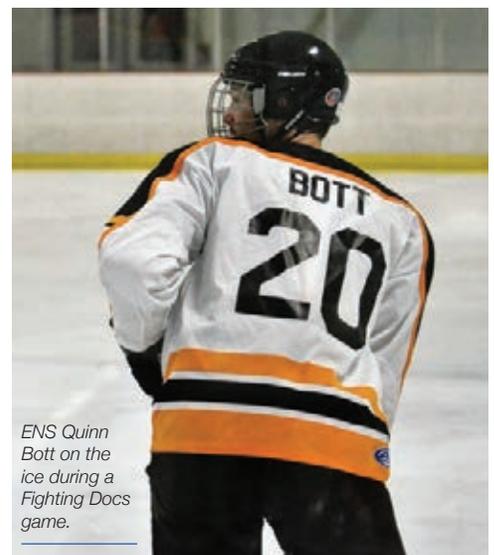
The Docs swept their division playoff series thanks to CAPT Jiggins' game winning goal, his lone point during the playoffs. The Fighting Docs are now invited to the Hockey North America League Championships in Toronto, though the demands of military service make it unlikely they'll be able to field a team. ENS Bott, completing a clerkship at Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Augusta, GA, was forced to miss the playoffs. He did, however, play a game last fall just hours after running the Army Ten Miler. We're certain his dedication to military medicine and public health will serve him well in the future.



Fighting Docs with the Division Championship Trophy. CAPT Timothy Jiggins, back row 4th from left. ENS Bott not present.



ENS Quinn Bott prepares to receive a pass during a Fighting Docs game.



ENS Quinn Bott on the ice during a Fighting Docs game.

# Arlington Wreath-Laying Ceremony Honors Nurses' Wartime Service

by Judy Rensberger

RADM Carol Romano (Ret.), a longtime COA member, Foundation Trustee, and former Chief Nurse Officer of the USPHS, led off the 2018 wreath-laying ceremony at the Nurses' Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery. The annual ceremony, held this year on 7 May, honors the dedication of uniformed nurses who served our country in wartime.

In her opening remarks, RADM Romano reflected on what inspires someone to become a nurse in the first place, what nurses do, and what their role has been throughout our history.

"In the silent war against disease, injury and illness that we all fight on our unique and separate battlefields each day, it is the nurse who has the power to bring the silent moments of cease fire into the hearts of those we serve," she said. "It is in those precious moments of silence that only the nurse can bring the gift of caring, the glimmer of hope, and the promise of health and peace for a nation and a world."

The wreath-laying ceremony was held on a picture-perfect day, amidst mature trees on the impeccably-groomed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery's Section 21. RADM Romano and Nurse Corps leaders from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and USPHS laid the wreath at the base of the towering statue of Florence Nightingale, considered the founder of modern nursing. The site is footsteps away from old-fashioned headstones marking the graves of contract nurses who were recruited by the U.S. Army to care for servicemen injured during the Spanish-American War of 1898.

The wreath-laying ceremony is held each year during National Nurses week, which itself is always scheduled near 12 May, the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale in England in 1820.

RADM Romano is Dean and Professor of the Daniel K. Inouye Graduate School of Nursing at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Bethesda, Maryland. She has long been recognized for her pioneering work in the field of nursing informatics. As a USPHS nurse, she worked for thirty-four years at the NIH Clinical Research Center as a clinician, clinical investigator, and nurse educator and leader.

Invited guests included current and former leaders representing the Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, U.S. Coast Guard, Air Force Nurse Corps, Navy Nurse Corps, Army Nurse Corps, and the American Nurses Association (ANA). COA was represented by Executive Director Jim Currie and Government Relations Director Judy Rensberger.

This year's theme for National Nurses Week, selected by the ANA was "Nurses: Inspire, Innovate, Influence."



*Wreath for the Nurses' Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery*



*USPHS officers assist in the wreath-laying ceremony*



*RADM (Ret.) Carol Romano addresses the crowd*

# NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

**APPS** from page 8

he application tracks exercise by syncing with over fifty wearable devices such as Fitbit, Apple Health, and Garmin. [My Fitness Pal](#) also has built-in community support with a message board where people can share tips and successes stories.

[Lose It!](#) focuses primarily on calorie counting and weight tracking. The app analyzes users' weight, age, and health goals to generate daily calories needs along with a personalized weight-loss plan. After the weight-loss plan has been developed, users can log their daily food intake. The app has a database of over seven million foods which include several restaurant items and popular food brands. This app also has a barcode scanner to track packaged foods. In addition, it has a "Snap It" feature which allows users to track food intake and portion sizes by taking a picture of their meals. The app has a community component through which individuals can participate in challenges with other users, share information, and ask questions. This app can also be synced with other weight loss and wearable fitness devices to track exercise and can be used with other fitness products such as smart scales and certain blood pressure monitors.

[Fooducate](#) assists with healthy food choices while grocery shopping through its food grading system. The Fooducate scanner allows users to scan the barcode on packed food items to produce a letter score from A to D, based on the product's nutritional value. It also provides nutrition facts and ingredients. In addition to the letter grade, the scanner will also warn of unhealthy ingredients that are commonly hidden in products, such as trans-fat and high-fructose corn syrup. It will offer a list of healthier alternatives. The app also has tools that allow users to keep track of exercise habits and calorie intake. While this app is free, there is a monthly subscription cost to have the ability to scan certain products for allergens along with other nutrient tracking features.

[SworKit](#) offers targeted workout programs for all fitness levels. Users can select whether they want to build strength, do yoga, cardio, stretch, or pilates. The app allows users to create their own custom workout routine to fit their exercise goals. Each workout is different to ensure that users are not bored and stay alert. The premium version, which has a monthly subscription, unlocks additional features for a fully-customizable experience. It also offers the ability to talk to trainers.

[Freeletics](#) provides over 900 workout routines that only use bodyweight. The routines cover a variety of muscle groups and fitness levels and last anywhere from ten to thirty minutes. All the routines are designed to only use your bodyweight as your exercise equipment. The app provides audio and video guides with step-by-step instructions and sequences for each workout.

Although there are several benefits to using weight loss and fitness apps, some do have downfalls. Some people may find them to be time-consuming and overwhelming. Nevertheless, weight loss and fitness apps are certainly worth trying, to see if they can assist you in reaching your goals. With so many different features, you may need to try a few before finding one that best suits your needs.

App	Top 3 Reasons Why we love it
<b>Calorie Counter - My Fitness Pal</b>	Comprehensive food diary lets you set a calorie goal and log everything you eat to stay on track
	Recipe import feature makes determining the nutritional stats of your homemade meals quick and easy
	Check restaurant order recommendations to make healthy choices while dining out
<b>Lose it! Calorie Counter</b>	Innovative food photo lets you snap a picture to generate a calorie count estimate
	Allows you to choose from several serving size measurements, saving you from number crunching
	Suggests calorie intake per meal to help you stay satisfied
<b>Fooducate Healthy Weight Loss &amp; Calorie Counter</b>	Food grades and explanations let you learn what's really in your food and help you make healthier choices
	Personalized nutrition toolbox
	Super easy health tracker
<b>SworKit: Workouts and Fitness Plans</b>	Workouts for all experience levels with build your own custom feature
	Time estimations help you fit workouts into your schedule
	Follow guided workout plans and even enjoy your own personal trainer
<b>Freeletics Bodyweight</b>	Great home workout that uses your body as your only tool
	High quality tutorial videos for individual exercises that help get your pumped for your workout
	Rest periods in your routines help you pace yourself, while a built-in timer motivates you to keep moving

# Senator Van Hollen Presented with Public Health Leadership Award



COA Board Chair CAPT (Dr.) Dean Coppola, USPHS (ret.) presented the award to Senator Van Hollen. Other COA members present were CAPT (Dr.) Paul Jung, CAPT (Dr.) Beth Fritsch, and LCDR Chris Sheehan.

In a May 16 ceremony in the Hart Senate Office Building, Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) was presented the 2017 Congressional Public Health Leadership Award by the Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service (COA).

Senator Van Hollen was selected for this award because of his voting record throughout many years of public service, a record which demonstrates his commitment to public health. He voted against elimination of the “Prevention and Public Health Fund,” voted for regulating tobacco as a drug, voted to expand the Children’s Health Insurance Program, voted to give mental health full equity with physical health, and voted to require negotiated prescription drug prices for Medicare Part D. Due to his stellar voting record, he was given a 100% rating by the American Public Health Association.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, he understands that the “power of the purse” is one of Congress’ most important and effective tools, especially in the silent war against disease. During the Ebola outbreak, Senator Van Hollen said, “There’s no doubt that the deep health care cuts that we’ve seen have made it more difficult to respond in a rapid and comprehensive way to the Ebola outbreak . . . They’re doing everything they can with the resources they have now, but the cuts they’ve seen in past years, they were like eroding the foundation and it clearly meant that they were starting from behind.”

COA gave the first Congressional Public Health Leadership Award in 2014. Previous recipients include Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL), Sen. Johnny Isackson (R-GA), Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE), Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA), and Rep. Gene Green (D-TX).

A vertical banner with a blue background. At the top left is the USPHS logo, a circular emblem with a gear and a caduceus. To its right is the text "USPHS SCIENTIFIC & TRAINING SYMPOSIUM". Below the logo is the URL "surveymonkey.com/r/YGVK9DB". The main image is a large red cherry on a black stem, positioned as if it is sliding down a white slide. In the background, a building with a dome and trees are visible under a blue sky.

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## Bluegrass COA volunteers at “Hope for Haiti”

by CDR Katrina Cable

On 21 April 2018 a group of US PHS officers, together with friends, coworkers, and families, participated in an outreach activity titled “Hope for Haiti” in Lexington, KY. These officers are stationed at FMC Lexington, KY, and are members of the Bluegrass Chapter of the Commissioned Officers Association (COA). Civil service staff were encouraged to participate and worked alongside their PHS coworkers. Everyone worked with members of a local church to pack food for Haitian children. Over 6,000 volunteers packed 1 million meals over two days. Those meals will be shipped to Port Au Prince, Haiti, and will help feed over 3,000 children, one meal a day, for one year.

## **PRESIDENT** from page 4

conditioning situation in the halls, general areas and lobbies. Man, it was hot and I kept hearing Patty exclaim as we went from event to event, "I'M MELTING, I'M MELTING," like in the Wizard of Oz. Many of you know that I was stationed at Phoenix Indian Medical Center for a long time in the 1990's, but in Arizona, it's a DRY HEAT! At least the AC in the hotel sleeping rooms worked a little better. Our symposium planning staff and COA/COF staff met with hotel folks at the end of the meeting and spelled out their displeasure with several items. Any rebates can be rolled into more scholarships for junior officers next year. That's a good outcome we can all smile about.

Our trustees voted in late April to renew the terms of three COF Trustees who have served three years. I'm happy to report that RADM (ret.) Sven Rodenbeck, CAPT (ret.) Jim Minor, and Mr. Michael Terry were all unanimously renewed for their second three-year term. Our nominating committee, chaired by RADM (ret.) Dick Bertin did a stellar job soliciting nominations for new Trustees. By the time you read this, you will have three new COF Trustees on board, replacing term-limited Trustees: myself, CAPT (ret.) Mary Lambert and CAPT (ret.) Bill Haffner. Replacing RADM Bertin as a joint COA/COF Trustee will be CAPT (ret.) Dean Coppola, who was elected by the COA membership. Also, by the time you read this, your Trustees will have elected a new President, Vice President and Treasurer for the next term. It was great to see such a wonderful slate of retired senior officer's

stand-up for service on this board. Many organizations have only one candidate per vacancy, but we were blessed with two candidates for each vacant slot. As I come off the board, I feel great that the folks stepping up will keep our momentum going.

As I reflect on my last two years as your Foundation President, I am shocked at how fast it went; it seems like just yesterday I was writing my first *Frontline* column in the summer of 2016 and thanking my mentor Bob Williams for his guidance, steady hand on the helm, and confidence in my skills to stand a watch as your President. What an honor it has been to lead this Foundation and help shape the work of the Foundation for many years to come! With our expansion of the Outward Mindset officer leadership training, our growth of the John Adams Society by the incredible bequest from CAPT (ret.) Martha Barclay-Giel, the full-funding of our COF Capital Fund with \$2 million so we can fund our "seed grants program," or the soon-to-be awarding of a large number of inaugural CAPT Martha Barclay-Giel COF Grants to community groups all over the United States to advance, promote, and protect the health and safety of our Nation. We have done some amazing growing together over the past two years. I have learned so much from all of you, and you have kept me focused, inspired, driven, and passionate about our Foundation and our beloved Corps. I especially want to thank my wife Patty who loaned me to the Foundation for the past six years and

who supported me in all my activities with the Foundation. I want to thank my fellow Trustees for having faith in my leadership, for your friendship, and most of all, for your honest feedback. I will miss working with all of you day-in and day-out. I want to thank our incredible COA/COF staff for their patience, guidance, and unwavering support when I needed something or had a request. Jim, John, Teresa, Erica, Donna, Judy, you were always there with that 'Can Do' spirit, no matter how small or large the request. Thank you for your personal love of the USPHS, its officers both active and retired, and for your love of our great nation whom you also serve.

And lastly, I want to thank all the officers, both active and retired, who have helped me grow as a man, a dad and grandpa, a husband, a son, a brother, an officer of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and a public health leader. As I step aside to rest and reflect, I will think of all of you in all my activities, knowing that whatever it is that I do next, I owe a tremendous gratitude to all of you for helping to shape my life and my future. Thank you for your service, your sacrifice, and your passion. I will sleep well tonight knowing that many of you have the Watch.

We congratulate the following individuals on their selection as trustees of the Foundation: CAPT (ret.) Dean Coppola , RADM (ret.) Steven Galson, RADM (ret.) Randall Gardner, and Mr. John Dimaggio. Their terms started on 1 July.

Best regards for a healthy and safe future.

## **Golf Tournament**

The Commissioned Officer Association annual golf tournament is headed back to Maryland National Golf Club on September 17, 2018. This will be the 11th year the tournament has been held with all proceeds going to the Commissioned Officers Foundation scholarship fund. We are gearing up for another successful event and are looking for more participants and sponsors to ensure that this year's event is the best one yet. Follow all of our updates on Facebook using the link below.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1827341667298512/>

If you would like to participate or volunteer this year, please contact LCDR David Schwab at [dsterp93@yahoo.com](mailto:dsterp93@yahoo.com)



# HBCUs Commended at 53rd Annual USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium for Tobacco Control Leadership

Arizonans Concerned about Smoking, a long-time friend and supporter of both COA and COF, presented Health Leadership Awards on 7 June during the 53rd Annual United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Scientific and Training Symposium in Dallas, TX.

These awards were conferred on five Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) for their Tobacco-Free Campus policies, which include no E-Cigarettes/vaping devices (at a minimum). Two Unsung Heroes were also recognized.

This is the fifth USPHS Symposium where HBCUs who have achieved total Tobacco-Free Campus-wide Policies including no E-Cigarettes/vaping devices (at a minimum) were commended for their tobacco-control leadership.

(Tobacco Control) Health Leadership Awards were conferred this year to the following five HBCUs: **Lincoln University** of Jefferson City, MO – Accepting for Lincoln University was USPHS Pharmacist CDR Thomas E. Addison.

**Wilberforce University** of Wilberforce, OH – Accepting for Wilberforce University were two Wilberforce University alumni from the Class of 1973 who are both retired Educators: Ms. Carolyn B. Bond and Ms. Sandra Forsythe (Miss Wilberforce 1972-1973).

**Benedict College** of Columbia, SC

**Mississippi Valley State University** of Itta Bena, MS

**Coahoma Community College** of Clarksdale, MS – Accepting for these three Institutions were three Legacy Foundation's HBCU Steering Committee Representatives: USPHS Captain James LaVelle Dickens, DNP, RN, FNP-BC, FAANP; USPHS Captain Elijah Martin who also serves as Region III Minority Health Consultant for the Office of Minority Health; and USPHS Commander Stacy Harper, who was responsible for helping to secure Legacy Foundation funding for four HBCUs in Texas.

Also honored during the ceremony as Unsung Heroes were: **John E. McElligott**, Deputy Executive Director, USPHS COA/COF for the Advancement of Public Health well known and for excellence in serving others and

**John M. Spealman**, Mechanical Engineer and a strong Advocate of Clean Smoke-Free Air for over fifty years, now retired living near a County Road in Texas. Accepting for Mr. Spealman was Acting Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS), USPHS RADM Michael D. Weahke, MHA, MBA.



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# Junior Officer Spotlight: Meet LCDR Clara Stevens

Physical Therapist LCDR Clara Stevens, assigned to Federal Medical Center, Carswell in Fort Worth, TX, was the Therapists' category "Junior Officer of the Month" for April 2018. She manages multiple specialty clinics at her site, including the Orthopedic and Electromyography clinics. Recognizing the need to decrease opioid dependence in inmates, she developed and co-leads a multidisciplinary chronic pain management program which implements conservative pain management treatment options for incarcerated women assigned to the prison. This intensive nine-week program includes weekly physical therapy, psychology, and pain science lectures as well as guest speakers from multiple disciplines. This program has greatly reduced the use of narcotics in the facility for non-cancer chronic pain. LCDR Stevens is committed to health education and is a lifelong learner who completed her Master's degree in Public Health in May, 2018.

LCDR Stevens is a voting member of the Therapist Professional Advisory Committee (TPAC) and serves on multiple subcommittees. Her work as chair of the

Health Promotion, Disease Prevention subcommittee has fostered several projects worthy of recognition. These include an interactive health and wellness calendar; a Step it Up! wellness initiative in support of VADM Vivek Murthy's call to action; a multi-category Opioid Awareness booth at the 2017 Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) National Symposium; the therapist coaching program; and TPAC Healthy Lifestyle Challenges. She is also a member of the TPAC Social Media Subcommittee and Co-lead of the upcoming Therapist Category Day at the COF National Symposium. For the 2018 COF Symposium she is organizing a Therapist informational booth to assist officers with meeting the height/weight standards and has co-developed a Therapist coaching program to virtually assist officers struggling to meet the height/weight standards. The booth also plans to have therapists available to provide general information for officers with injuries which may limit exercise tolerance, as well as providing general health, wellness, and injury prevention information.

LCDR Stevens is a proud member of Rapid

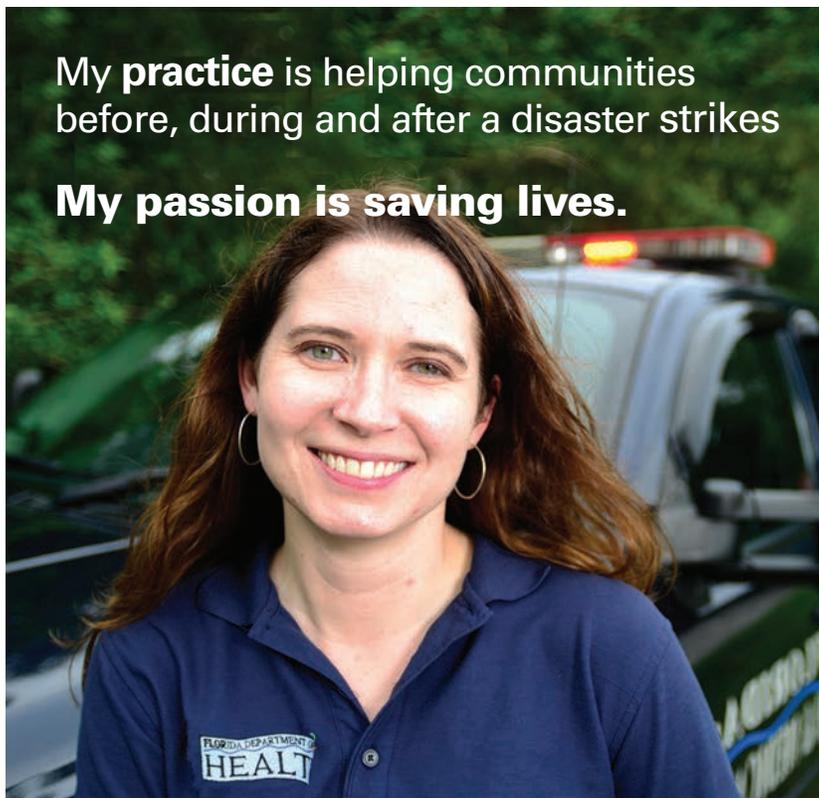


Deployment Force-Three (RDF-3) and is the team's Deputy PIO officer. She deployed to the 2016 Louisiana Floods, the 2017 Chattanooga Remote Area Medical Community Outreach event, and to Puerto Rico with RDF-2 following Hurricane Maria.

Pictured above is LCDR Stevens showing chair exercises to a patient at the Federal Medical Station in Puerto Rico. She is an active COA member and has served as the Tucson Branch COA Secretary and Vice-President. The Therapist Category is proud to recognize LCDR Stevens for her outstanding contributions to her agency, the mission, and the Corps.

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# 2018 DMV Hometown Mission

by CDR Jennifer Moon and LCDR Rhonita Culver

The Inaugural District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia (DMV) Hometown Mission occurred during the week of 15 April 2018. Hometown Missions are a special initiative of the Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group (BCOAG) and are designed to focus on local community outreach needs and foster *esprit de corps* among Commissioned Corps officers across the country. These missions are an expansion of the New Orleans, LA, community service missions established by BCOAG after Hurricane Katrina in 2007. Given the large number of officers in the Washington, DC, area, along with the accessibility to both the Surgeon General's office and the Commissioned Officers Foundation headquarters, the DMV is an ideal location for this type of mission. Scheduled activities included a 5K walk/run, USPHS awareness presentations in local universities, community service projects, and health education workshops in local schools.

BCOAG members met on Sunday, 15 April at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial for a group photo that will be featured in the 2019 USPHS Calendar. The official kickoff for the mission was a social event at Firehouse Station 1 in Silver Spring on Monday evening, 16 April. Officers gathered to learn more about and discuss upcoming events. The first school outreach event was at the Beers Elementary School, where officers presented the NPS PACE handwashing curriculum to K-5 grade students. On Wednesday, 17 April, officers went out in force at several high schools, universities, and participating in community service activities throughout the DMV area. Mission coordinators partnered with Martha's Table, a local community outreach organization, to support programs to educate elementary school children and their parents on healthy eating and feeding the homeless. Officers assisted in preparing meals and distributed healthy grocery items. On Thursday, 18 April, officers went back into local high schools presenting on USPHS Commissioned Corps awareness and opioid abuse prevention.

The mission ended with a 5K Walk/Run held at the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail in Oxon Hill, MD. Event registration was free, and the 5K was open to the public. Both the walk/run and USPHS Awareness were promoted on 96.3 WHUR radio, via a "Taking it to the Streets" segment. Fifty-five officers, family, and friends participated, along with PHS Officer volunteers. The first, second, and third place runners and walkers were recognized with a certificate and ribbon. The 5K was supported by RaceWire race management and sponsored by the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF). The Grand Marshall for the event was CAPT Beverly Dandridge.

During this mission, we reached over 350 students at a total of ten elementary, middle, and high school and local universities. If you are interested in hosting a hometown mission in your area, please email [bcog\\_outreach@gmail.com](mailto:bcog_outreach@gmail.com) for more information and assistance. Special thanks to 2018 DMV Hometown Mission Planning Committee members who are in COA: CDR Jennifer Moon, LCDR Cornelius Moore and LCDR Rhonita Culver and BCAOG Chair, LCDR Oluwaseun Asante.



LCDR LaToya Martin helps to feed the homeless during the Martha's Table Dinner & Dishes Outreach



(From left) CAPT Beverly Dandridge, Grand Marshall of the 5K, recognizes LCDR Michael Gifford with Second Place in the Runner Category



PHS Officers, family and friends at the start of the 5K on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail.



Martha's Table Joyful Market: (From left) LCDR Edward Valdespino, LCDR Jorielle Houston, CAPT Latonia Ford, and LCDR Rosson Smith provide guidance to students and parents on health eating during the Martha's Table Joyful Market Outreach at Malcolm X Elementary School



CDR Leo Gumapas provides a handwashing demonstration to elementary school students at Beers Elementary School

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** from page 1

really bad start to their day and crashed into someone else on the beltway, my commute can last anywhere from thirty-five minutes to two hours. My goal is to get to work by 0900. I generally listen to National Public Radio, followed at 0900 by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), if I am still on the road. These two sources give me a flavor of both national and international news. If I am bored by what I hear, I tune to Sirius XM and listen to classical music. I have an office radio tuned to classical music during the day. We have private offices at COA headquarters, so I am not disturbing other staff with my music.

Arrival at work involves making the rounds and greeting the COA/COF staff in their offices. I then plop tea bags or loose tea into my proper British teapot, which I purchased at Whittards Tea Shop in Covent Garden, London, many years ago. The teapot has a small chip on its spout, but it still holds three large mugs of strong English Breakfast Tea. I know it is my imagination, but I think tea tastes better when brewed in a British teapot. I generally drink two pots of tea a day, as I do not drink coffee.

I then turn to my Outlook account and see the emails that were either too complicated to answer from home or which have come in since I left for work. The first step with all email requests is to determine whether the person is a current member of COA. As of 31 May we have 5610 active members, representing about 65 percent of the Commissioned Corps. But that still leaves 35 percent of active duty officers who do not support COA. We work for and represent our members, so I tell non-members as politely as I can that our database shows them as being inactive, and we will not be able to help them.

Their response is sometimes astonishment that they have allowed their COA membership to lapse, and they promise to re-join immediately. Sometimes they do so. Others whine and complain, suggesting that their membership status should not affect what we do for them. Others simply disappear back into the ether. We think it takes a particular type of chutzpah to ask for help from an organization you don't support, but there are all kinds of people in the world, even among PHS officers.

Following my start-up routine (greetings and tea), I started Monday of this week (11 June) by drafting a letter to the Marriott Corporation, parent of the Renaissance Hotel brand. As all 2018 Symposium attendees can verify, the convention hotel had significant problems. My letter can be found on the COA website at <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1848/letter-to-marriott-corporation-jun-2018.pdf>. In my letter I informed Marriott about three problems with the hotel: elevators, air conditioning, and roaches. Any one of these would have been bad enough. Together they formed a trifecta of unsatisfactory hotel management.

The roach infestation particularly stood out for me, as I have stayed in many third world establishments that had them. Most of the rooms in lesser-developed countries in which roaches appeared also contained lizards that attacked the roach population in a "green" way. I never objected to the lizards, but Dallas didn't offer them. (I have no doubt that a lizard presence in Dallas would have freaked out many of you; I have no such qualms). I appreciated the lizard-as-roach-control-agents approach more than I did the

leave-them-alone-and-maybe-they'll-go-away approach of the Dallas Renaissance folks. COA/COF staff met with hotel management while in Dallas and asked for a rebate on what we had paid them. I trust that Marriott will consider our feedback to them.

I then drafted a letter to Starbucks, which had a presence in the hotel. I don't normally frequent Starbucks, but I was looking for a sandwich, and I knew they sold them. I was totally appalled and disgusted when I went into the store and saw numerous cockroaches traipsing all over the cellophane-wrapped sandwiches in the cooler. I told the young woman behind the counter what I had observed. She shrugged. I went to the hotel manager, who said he would take care of it. I might have called the Dallas County Health Department, but I was sort of busy and didn't have the time to spare. We'll see what Starbucks thinks. Our letter to them can be found on the COA website at <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1856/letter-to-starbucks-june-2018.pdf>

Then, responding to a member email, I drafted a letter to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles. I had written a letter on his behalf earlier in the year after he had come to us and said that Texas DMV was not allowing him or his dependents to renew their driver's licenses using the military privilege. I thought we had taken care of the problem, but we had not. So, I sent a second letter to them. We will escalate if necessary.

My fourth letter of the day went to the federal Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) leadership. A former COA board member had asked me several months ago to send a letter to the TSP board requesting that they create an equities (stock) investment option that did not include tobacco or e-cigarette stocks. This is what is known as "socially-conscious investing," and it is quite common these days. In fact, shortly after I became your Executive Director in April 2014 I proposed to the COA and COF boards that we divest ourselves of any stocks in tobacco and e-cigarette companies, suggesting that it was hypocritical of us to profit from the folks we rail against. The two boards agreed unanimously, and our investment manager followed the guidance we gave her. She told me that many non-profit organizations have specific types of equities in which they don't wish to invest. Our returns and growth have not suffered from this decision.

I next responded to a member-generated email by calling a T-Mobile staffer I had met in Dallas. T-Mobile was an exhibitor at the Symposium, and they were touting their "military discount" to attendees. I carefully questioned them about their plan, as I had been told that there was no PHS option on the pull-down menu. In fact, I had written a letter to T-Mobile in May (please see my letter at <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1858/letter-to-t-mobile-re-military-and-veteran-discounts-may-2018.pdf>) asking them about the lack of this option. I have yet to receive a response. The staffer in Dallas assured me that this was a minor glitch and that they would fix it. (I followed up with him on Friday of that week with another phone call).

I also responded to a member email by drafting and sending a letter to the National Park Service (NPS). It had been a few years since we had an exchange of letters with the NPS, so I thought it appropriate to reach out to them once again and ask that they extend the military discount program to USPHS officers. Here's a link to the letter we sent to the Park Service: <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1845/>

[letter-to-the-national-park-service-june-2018.pdf](#) If you go to the COA website at <http://www.coausphs.org/advocacy/letters-and-news-media/>, you can see the back-and-forth we have had with the NPS over the years since I sent the first letter to them in 2014.

In one of my daily political feeds I saw a piece about a letter than seven U.S. Senators had sent to the head of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the group that provides the movie ratings and warnings to moviegoers. Their letter was a well-reasoned argument pointing out the harm that is done by the constant movie depiction of smoking as a desirable activity worth emulating. Studies have consistently shown that young people are influenced by seeing admirable characters smoking cigarettes and cigars. The Senators suggested that an “R” rating would be appropriate for movies that contained gratuitous smoking. I drafted individual letters to the Senators commending them for their outreach to the MPAA and telling them of our similar efforts with regard to on-stage smoking at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

(Following the anthrax attacks on Capitol Hill several years ago, an event after which USPHS officers were called in to provide their expertise, all mail to the Hill and certain other government offices in the DC area are sent through irradiation chambers to kill any living organisms associated with them. This means a several-week delivery delay, so we hand-deliver any letters we send to the Hill. I took three hours on Wednesday to do that with the letters I had drafted and printed on Monday. I then called each Senator’s office and either talked with the Healthcare Legislative Assistant or left them a detailed voicemail. The Senators to whom we delivered the letters were Blumenthal, Brown, Durbin, Gillibrand, Markey, Murray, and Van Hollen. We don’t know at this point whether any of these Senators will take us up on our request to join us on the Kennedy Center on-stage smoking issue. We shared our letters with leaders of Truth Initiative and Americans for Non-Smokers Rights, both groups with whom we work regularly.)

Our approach to the Kennedy Center President can be found on the COA website at <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1860/letter-to-kennedy-center-president-re-smoking-on-stage-january-2018-response-from-kennedy-center-president-re-smoking-on-stage-march-2018.pdf>. You can see that the Kennedy Center President blew me off with the irrelevant comment that these were “herbal cigarettes,” as if that mattered at all, and that they believed in “creative expression.” There is nothing creative, I think, in fictitious characters parading around a stage puffing away on cigarettes, herbal or otherwise. I wouldn’t expect anyone to do Winton Churchill without the cigar (see, *Darkest Hour*), but this was not Churchill.

We have continued to pursue action with regard to the Kennedy Center by reaching out to the Chairman of the Kennedy Center Board of Directors, with no success to date. Interestingly, we have learned that the Kennedy Center receives upwards of \$200,000 per year from Altria Corporation, parent of Phillip Morris tobacco. Is there a relationship between this donation and the response of the Kennedy Center President? You decide.

So, to the officer who posed the question at the Symposium that inspired this column, this is what one of my days is like. Any other day will be different. That’s part of what makes my job so challenging and so rewarding.



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# The Journey Begins: Personal and Professional Reflections on Commissioned Corps Officer Basic Course 102



by LT Lacreisha Ejike-King

According to Lao Tzu, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” My USPHS journey began as I attended OBC 102 in Potomac, MD in April 2018. I felt that April 8 couldn’t get here quickly enough, because this long-time dream was finally coming to fruition. Though I was excited, I must say that I was a little anxious about what to expect during the time away from my family and my job. I’m sure that my binge watching of armed forces boot camp videos on YouTube didn’t help matters much.

As OBC began, I found myself surrounded by like-minded eager folks ready to jump in and get started. We received formal instruction from by the COTA cadre, LT Valloric and CDR Weinburke. Though the cadre was small in number, the members were dedicated and determined to teach us how to not simply be officers, but to be good officers. They were supported by a panel of adjunct instructors including CAPT Beck, CAPT Belsito, CDR Morris, and many others who selflessly gave of their time and effort to ensure that we were provided a solid foundation on which to build our careers. I found myself inspired and motivated by the passion and pride for the USPHS that each instructor displayed while imparting their wisdom to us.

Needless to say, we learned a lot in those two weeks in Potomac. We learned about USPHS customs and courtesies, how to don the uniforms and present ourselves appropriately, how to drill, and how to brief groups and leadership on public health topics. When colleagues told me OBC was intense (often with a smirk), they weren’t kidding. Through the inspiration and encouragement of the instructors and from fellow OBCers, we found the strength to “push ourselves” (a catchphrase courtesy of LTJG Aboagye) to strive for greatness daily.

As I reflect on my OBC stint, I realize that I witnessed the Corps’ core values being exhibited daily. I saw leadership not only among those who served in official leadership positions, but also in others who were respectful of and receptive to others’ input. I saw my fellow OBC classmates display extraordinary physical fitness in PT and the APFT. In addition to their physical excellence, they ensured that all of us not only passed the APFT, but put forth a strong effort. OBC 102 Officers selflessly served and aided one another during our two weeks together. Prior service officers helped those of us new to uniformed service with drill precision and proper wear and care for uniform components. Physical therapist officers tended to an injured classmate. Those with personal vehicles shuttled



others to and from the uniform shop, and other officers stepped in to care for some who had fallen ill, all without batting an eye. Class leadership was supportive, and also held us accountable to the higher standards associated with officership.

In addition to my formal classroom learning, I found myself on an emotional journey of what becoming a Commissioned Corps officer truly means to me. One moment stands out in my memory. Standing in formation during morning colors on the day I first donned my khakis, I became misty-eyed as the National Anthem sounded during morning colors. This caught me off guard because I am not normally an emotional person. I thought of what I now represent and who I now represent, as well as how proud and grateful I am to have this opportunity.

In early April 2018, thirty-three strangers descended upon Potomac, MD, with shared goals of promoting, protecting, and advancing the health of the nation. After an intense two weeks of learning, studying, exercising, and encouraging one another, thirty-three officers emerged ready to assume the great responsibilities that lie ahead of us. We all started our USPHS journey with this single first step and determined to strive each day to become better officers. As I leave OBC and continue my USPHS journey, I remain encouraged and empowered as I recall the OBC 102 motto:

*“Discipline to stand for those who can’t!*

*Spirit to serve where others won’t!*

*Bonded to OBC 102!”*

Bon voyage to all the new officers of the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service!

# McElligott Visit to Phoenix



## McElligott Visit to Phoenix

During the month of April the local Phoenix Branch Commissioned Officer Association (COA) hosted John McElligott, the Deputy Executive Director of the COA. On April 19, McElligott visited the Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC), met the Commissioned Corps officers who work within the facility and viewed, first-hand, PIMC daily operations. PIMC is an ideal place to visit because it employs approximately 133 officers, each of whom fulfills a unique range of professions, programs, and public health initiatives.

McElligott's visit began by meeting the hospital's executive team, including the C.E.O., and the local branch COA board. A roundtable discussion between McElligott and the hospital's executive team shared an understanding that Public

Health Service (PHS) Officers provide crucial benefits to the organization and its mission. McElligott explained how COA advocates for officers on a national level. He shared his views of the importance of the Commissioned Corps work force and its pertinence in the delivery and achievement of public health initiatives for the nation.

After the meeting with the PIMC executive team, McElligott attended the monthly COA meeting as a distinguished guest. The April COA meeting commenced with McElligott discussing a spectrum of topics with local officers, ranging from local issues to national changes within the Commissioned Corps. Officers asked McElligott numerous questions about how such changes may affect their personal career paths. After the meeting, McElligott toured the facility with the local Phoenix

COA board. He was able to speak with and visit with officers stationed in various settings throughout the facility, including the Main Pharmacy, the Primary Care Medical Clinic, the National IHS Joslin Vision Network Teleophthalmology Program, Nutrition Clinic and various other clinics.

The visit from the COA Deputy Executive Director proved beneficial for all officers employed at PIMC. Many felt reassured that they have an advocate in the national COA, and were happy to make McElligott's acquaintance.

The local Phoenix COA executive board would like to express their gratitude to McElligott for his dedication and continued support as the Deputy Executive Director of COA.





# Sammie Finalist Retired Captain Yeargin-Allsopp

Caption: CAPT (Ret.) Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, M.D.

by COA Staff

CAPT (ret.) Marshalyn Yeargin-Allsopp, M.D., of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was selected as a finalist for the Sammies 2018. Presented by the Partnership for Public Service, Sammies are considered the Oscars for government service.

*Frontline:* When did you join the Commissioned Corps and how did you learn about it?

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** When selected for EIS Class of 1981, I was told about the Commissioned Corps. I had not heard of it previously. I discussed with physicians already at CDC and decided to sign up. I retired in 2001, after 20 years of service, and became a Civil Servant the same year.

*Frontline:* How long have you been Associate Director for Children and Special Health Care Needs?

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** I became the Associate Director in July 2015. I had been the Developmental Disabilities Branch Chief in the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities since 1999. Both positions are in the Division of Congenital and Developmental Disorders.

*Frontline:* You were nominated for having “pioneered research to understand the prevalence of autism and other developmental disabilities, influencing

the expansion of health, social and educational services for children with special needs.” Please share more details about the research method and outcomes.

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** I initiated the first population-based study on children with multiple developmental disabilities in the U.S. The Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities Study (MADDSP) provided the model for ongoing surveillance conducted by CDC. This pioneering work led to the establishment of what would become the model program for conducting surveillance of developmental disabilities: the Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities Surveillance Program (MADDSP). MADDSP remains the gold standard for population-based active surveillance system for developmental disabilities in the U.S.

In the mid-1990s, CDC began receiving calls and requests for data on autism. Professionals were concerned because it appeared that the numbers of families requesting services for children with autism was increasing dramatically. At the time there was no population-based surveillance program specific for autism. Based on the MADDSP model, CDC initiated a pilot study to assess the feasibility of adding the ongoing tracking of autism in 1998. By using MADDSP-based surveillance methods, CDC could respond quickly and determine the prevalence of autism in an investigation for Brick Township, New Jersey. The expansion of these methods to include autism led to the establishment of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network. For nearly two decades, ADDM has provided the nation with timely updates of the prevalence of autism. These estimates have been widely used by partners around the world to advocate and plan for services for children with autism.

Over the past twenty years, we’ve seen the replication of the MADDSP multiple source methodology model across the world. Analyses using MADDSP and

ADDM data have made a big impact on public health. This work has generated over 100 publications that have been cited 7,437 times to date.

The establishment of the methodology for tracking autism has no doubt propelled forward the science and support for people with autism in immeasurable ways. I am a Developmental Pediatrician by training. Being a clinician helps to know why the research matters. To me, it was more than just numbers.

*Frontline:* Where can readers find more information about your research?

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** On the website for the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd)

*Frontline:* Who nominated you for the Sammie?

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** Dr. Deborah Hirtz, previous Program Director with the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institutes of Health.

*Frontline:* Describe how it feels to be a Sammie finalist.

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** It is a very humbling experience to have been nominated and even more so, to be a finalist. When one reads the accomplishments of all the nominees and finalists, one cannot help but feel that one is in the company of a very special group of talented and dedicated federal scientists.

*Frontline:* Would you promote the Sammie awards with fellow USPHS officers and their civilian colleagues?

**CAPT Yeargin-Allsopp:** Absolutely! The idea is to give recognition in a way that is usually not given for the work that many do, not for fame or glory, but because of dedication and support of the mission to save and improve lives. There should be more Sammies; many more are deserving of this honor!

# The 2018 Scientific and Training Symposium

by Col (ret.) Jim Currie, *Executive Director*

Members of COA and supporters of public health met in Dallas from 4-7 June for the fifty-third annual USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. With over 1300 officers registered, this was the best-attended Symposium ever, and anecdotal reports suggest that attendees consider it to have been outstanding in terms of program and execution. The Renaissance Hotel in Addison, TX, a suburb of Dallas, was in need of serious refurbishment, with elevators (lack thereof), air conditioning (also lack thereof) and cockroaches (no lack thereof) constituting a trifecta of problems that reflected poorly on the Marriott Hotel chain. The Executive Director's column in this issue of *Frontline* addresses some of these issues, and if you go to the COA website, you will find letters that COA sent to both Marriott and Starbucks outlining some of the problems at the hotel. Please see: <http://www.coausphs.org/media/1848/letter-to-marriott-corporation-jun-2018.pdf> We will do our best to prevent a repeat of such problems when we venture to Minneapolis next year.

Pre-conference activities started on Monday, 4 June, with sessions on leadership training which spread over two days. A separate article describing this training appears in this issue of *Frontline*. The PHS Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF) has sponsored this training for several years, and it appears to be well-received by Corps officers. Other uniformed services provide such training as part of the routine educational advancement of their officers, but COF is alone in sponsoring such for the Corps.

A concurrent Monday morning Local Branch Workshop organized by COA Local Branch Committee Chair CAPT Karen Munoz was attended by approximately forty officers.

Monday evening's no-host reception was followed by a sold-out Anchor & Caduceus Dinner, the singular time during the Symposium when active duty officers put on their finest dress uniforms and retired officers (some, at least) attempt to squeeze into their best.

The A&C speaker was Jennifer Fogarty, Ph.D., Chief Scientist at the NASA Human Research Program. Her well-rehearsed and presented remarks touched on areas of great interest to many Corps officers. It was clear that she and others at NASA are



conducting research that has potential benefits for those who never leave earth on a space mission.

Both the Minority Officer Liaison Council and the Junior Officer Advisory Group started 5 June with early morning meetings and award presentations. Separate articles about the awards given out by each group will appear in this or a subsequent issue of *Frontline*.

Opening ceremonies for the Symposium took place at 0900 on 5 June. Following a welcome from COF President RADM (ret.) Mike Milner, attendees were treated to the annual Luther Terry Lecture, presented this year by Rishi Marchanda, M.D. Marchanda's presentation was particularly applicable, as he focused on looking for the upstream cause of problems, rather than just treating symptoms. He suggested that much of our approach to healthcare was focused on curing disease, rather than preventing it by looking "upstream," as he put it, discovering the root cause of the problem, and preventing the problem before it started.

The Terry Lecture was followed by six concurrent track sessions focusing on the following topics:

- Preparedness, Deployments, Response, and recovery
- Prescription for Wellness
- Environment and Social Factors
- Information Technology, Advances in technology, Social media
- Evidence for Action in Health Service Delivery
- Prevention, Health Promotion, and Personal Factors

COA held its well-attended annual meeting from 1200-1315. COA Board Chair CAPT (ret.) Dean Coppola spoke to the membership and presented the Health Leader of the Year Award to former Acting Surgeon General RADM (ret.) Steve Galson, in absentia. COA Awards Committee Chair LCDR Kristie Purdy then presented other awards on behalf of the Association. They were as follows:

Small Branch of the Year – Kiamichi (Southeast OK)

Large Branch of the Year – Golden Gate (San Francisco, CA)

Civilian Outstanding Support of the USPHS -- Susan Laird, Senior

see **SYMPOSIUM** continued on page 23

# PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation

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## We Welcome New Members of COA, May 1 to June 30, 2018

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**SYMPOSIUM** from page 21  
Health Communications Specialist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta

COA Executive Director Col. (ret.) Jim Currie then offered an account of the past year for COA, touching on membership, finances, and accomplishments. COA membership among active duty Corps officers is slightly up from a year ago, while retiree membership is down. Currie pointed out that approximately 35 percent of active duty Corps officers are not members of COA, but they enjoy many of the benefits that COA secures for its members. Dues payers should resent these ‘freeloaders,’ as Col. Currie so gently put it, and ought to reach out to their active duty colleagues and suggest that they join COA. The Executive Director ended by telling how COA had arranged the opportunity for the Assistant Secretary for Health, ADM Brett Giroir, to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day 2018. There is a separate story in this issue of *Frontline* recounting this event.

The COA annual meeting was followed by Opening Keynote presentations from ADM Giroir and from the Surgeon General, VADM Jerome Adams. Both men spoke to a full house, delivering speeches that touched directly on the future of the Corps. Following the Keynote addresses were more concurrent track sessions with the same titles as the earlier ones.

At 1645 on Tuesday were auditorium presentations from Deputy Surgeon general RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams and Commissioned Corps Headquarters Director RADM Joan Hunter. Both admirals touched on many subjects of great interest to Commissioned Corps officers.

Another reception preceded the annual concert from the USPHS Ensemble, which seized upon the Hispanic-Anglo heritage of Texas to present an inspired and dual-language potpourri of both instrumental and vocal music. It was well done, as is always the case with the Ensemble.

Category Day, a key part of any Symposium, took up all of 6 June, followed by category and general social events that evening.

Thursday, 7 June, started with hundreds of Commissioned Corps officers rising early, taking (and hopefully passing) the APFT, and participating in the Surgeon General’s 5K Run/Walk. Participants received the traditional T-shirt. Following time specifically devoted to visits to the amazing exhibitors, attendees were treated to the C. Everett Koop Memorial Keynote Lecture.

The Koop speaker was former National Football League placekicker Rolf Benirschke, who told of overcoming life-threatening surgery to return to his job with the San Diego Chargers football team. His prescription for good doctor/nurse/patient interaction was applicable to much of what PHS officers do in their careers.

On Thursday afternoon Dr. Leland Fairbanks and Arizonans Concerned about Smoking (ACAS) presented awards to some of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities that have adopted smoke-free campuses. ACAS is a long-time supporter of the Symposium. The afternoon concluded with more concurrent track sessions.

The fifty-fourth PHS Scientific and Training Symposium is scheduled for the first week in May 2019 in Minneapolis, MN.

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The COA (ISSN 10937161) is published monthly except a combined issue January/February and July/August by the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service, 8201 Corporate Drive, Suite 1170, Landover,

MD 20785, (301) 731-9080; Fax: (301) 731-9084; Periodicals Postage Paid at Hyattsville, MD and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to COA c/o Commissioned Officers Association, 8201 Corporate Drive, Suite 1170, Landover, MD 20785. A report of timely information concerning activities of the

Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. Distributed exclusively to Association Members.

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