COA Frontline

Become Certified in Public Health

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COF Annual Golf Tournament

LCDR Cynthia Chennault staffs the putting contest. The grand prize was the pictured guitar signed by country music stars Brooks and Dunn and Reba McEntire.

by David Corrigan, COA Deputy Director

The PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF) held its 16th annual golf tournament on September 19 at Maryland National Golf Club in Frederick. The cool weather in the morning started the day off right and ended in the mid-seventies – perfect weather for a day of golf. Golfers ate Chic-fil-A sandwiches and coffee for breakfast and headed out for a live rendition of the National Anthem by Caleb Green, an Army veteran that sings for the Washington Capitols hockey team. Lunch was provided by the chef at the golf club and focused on a Mediterranean theme. The number of raffle prizes given away at lunch may have been more than ever. There were also prizes given away for closest to the hole and farthest drive.

see **GOLF** *continued on page 7*

from the Executive Director

Jacqueline Rychnovsky,
PhD, FAANP, CAE
Captain (Ret.), Nurse Corps, US Navy

2022 Member Survey

In August of 2020, during a strategic planning session held by the Board of Directors, COA made a commitment to become a data driven organization. One important component of a healthy association is conducting a member survey every 1-3 years. Our survey conducted in June 2021 assisted staff and the Board of Directors in creating our implementation strategy for executing the strategic plan, and this year was no different. We intentionally selected the same survey questions used last year so we could accurately measure changes in member priorities and trends to determine improvement in our processes and programs. It is also important for us to focus on where we are not meeting your expectations so we can improve.

I sincerely appreciate the 825 members, nearly 18% of our membership, who took time to complete the survey! The industry standard for completion of a members survey is 3-5% (Baehr,

see **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** *on page 22*

COA Member Benefits

Capitol Hill Representation
Efforts on Capitol Hill continually support all Commissioned Corps officers – active, former, reserve, 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
Newsletter reports on monthly activities and items of interest of COA and the USPHS Commissioned Corps

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

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

USF Online Programs
Discounted degree and certificate programs like PhD, DrPH, MPH, MSPH, and MHA

NYMC Online MPH
50 percent discount for the online MPH and certificate programs

Scholarship Programs
College scholarships for children, grandchildren, and spouses of COA members and high school seniors

The Ohio State University
In-state tuition for graduate nursing and certification programs

CPH Exam Discount
Deep member discount and free study guide for Certified in Public Health (CPH) Exam

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

COA Board of Directors: Meet Our Newest Directors

CDR NEELAM GHIYA

CDR Neelam Ghiya serves as the Health Services Officer Representative on the COA Board of Directors and is the current Co-Chair of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. CDR Ghiya is stationed at CDC in Atlanta, GA. She works in the CDC's Office of the Director, Office of Science (OS) as the Senior Advisor for Training and Communications and is a CDC Emergency Coordinator (EC). She served as an inaugural coordinator of the CDC Director's Public Health Grand Rounds. Neelam is a former CDC Director's Emergency Preparedness and Response Special Assistant and Chief of Staff Special Assistant.

LCDR CHRISTOPHER MENDOZA-TRUONG

LCDR Christopher Mendoza-Truong serves as the Pharmacist Representative on the COA Board of Directors and is the current Chair of the Legislative Affairs Committee. LCDR Mendoza-Truong currently is detailed to the Department of Homeland Security as the Assistant Health Service Administrator for the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, Washington where he oversees the coordinated delivery of healthcare of detainees within the correctional facility. LCDR Mendoza-Truong has worked throughout his career to improve access to care in underserved communities since he began his Commissioned Corps Career.

LCDR TRACI MURRAY

LCDR Traci Murray serves as the Nurse Representative on the COA Board of Directors and also serves as the Vice Chair of the Local Branch Committee. She has led teams responsible for creating a publicity and outreach plan for awards, which increased participation in COA Awards programs, including timeline and content for submission. Within the Nurse Category, LCDR Murray currently serves as Assistant Regional Administrator for SAMHSA HHS Region 6 office based in Dallas, TX. She provides regional leadership and consultation to 5 HHS Region VI states and 68 Tribal Nations on behavioral health planning, finance, operations, and healthcare reform implementation.

CAPT LUIS RODRIGUEZ

CAPT Rodriguez serves as a Field Representative on the COA Board of Directors and is the Chair of the Local Branch Committee. He is an Environmental Health Specialist in the CDC National Center for Environmental Health in Atlanta, GA. He has had assignments with the FDA and CDC. PHS has taken him around the nation and the world, serving mostly in the field with assignments in Puerto Rico, Maryland, Florida, and Georgia. He has served in 40 international TDYs in 22 countries with multiple OPDIVs, and several deployments. CAPT Rodriguez chairs the National COA Local Branch Committee, served in the National COA Retiree Committee, and has been part of several COA branches.

see **DIRECTORS/TRUSTEES** *continued on page 3*

DIRECTORS/TRUSTEES from page 2

LT EVAN WILLIAMS

LTJG Evan Williams serves as the Ready Reserve representative is a pharmacist in the USPHS Ready Reserve and is a Vice Chair of the Outreach Committee. He is one of the original 11 reservists to commission with OBC Class 128/01. Serving in Region 9 out of Henderson, NV, he joined COA in July 2021. In his civilian role, Dr. Williams is Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice and Director of Accreditation at the Roseman University. He practices clinically at Valley Hospital Medical Center in Las Vegas, where he provides clinical pharmacy services with a focus in transitions of care, precepts residents and students, and serves on their residency advisory committee

COF Board of Trustees: Meet Our Newest Trustees

GENE MIGLIACCIO

Dr. Gene Migliaccio serves as Associate Dean and Professor at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health. He oversees school-wide student practicums, community engagement, and the Doctor of Public Health Program (DrPH). He served in the U.S. Air Force (AF) Medical Service as a hospital/health services administrator until joining the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Corps. While he was a PHS officer, he served in 5 Federal Departments: Defense, Health and Human Services, Justice, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs. Dr Migliaccio also served as Acting Chief of Staff for the U.S. Surgeon General. He holds a DrPH from Tulane University and a Master of Public Health from the University of Hawaii. He received a proclamation from the Mayor of Houston for assistance with coordinating the federal health care response to 200,000+ Katrina evacuees in Houston, Texas. In 2020, he was selected as Health Care Leader of the Year by the PHS Commissioned Officers Association. Dr. Migliaccio served as a COF board trustee from 2009-2010 and President of COF from 2012-2014. Welcome back, Dr. Migliaccio.

BETTY RUFUS

CAPT (ret) Betty Rufus served 24 years in the USPHS with various hospitals, Indian Health Service, and Bureau of Prisons across 11 duty station assignments. She functioned as a hospital nurse officer, a community health nurse cadet, a nurse practitioner, and a health service administrator prior to retirement. CAPT Rufus believes the USPHS needs to be more visible within the U.S. to showcase the positive impact it has as a health provider within our country.

HARLEM GUNNESS, PhD, MPH

CDR (ret) Harlem J. Gunness, Ph.D., MPH has a long-standing career in public health serving community-based organizations, hospitals, local, state and federal health departments, private industries, and universities. Currently, he holds the position of Director, Public Health Program, at St. John's University. Prior to this assignment, he was a senior officer with the US Public Health Service (USPHS) stationed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Global Migration and Quarantine, Quarantine Border Health Services Branch. There, he conducted disease surveillance and epidemiological investigations on highly infectious communicable disease (such as MERS-Covi, MDR-TB, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), and managed the operations of the unprecedented 2014-2016 Ebola Entry Screening Program at the CDC New York Quarantine Station, JFK International Airport.

TINE HANSEN-TURTON, MGA, JD

Tine Hansen-Turton is currently President and CEO of Woods, which provides life cycle care to meet the lifelong needs of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injuries and/or mental health challenges.

Woods serves 22,000 individuals primarily from Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Hansen-Turton also oversees Woods' eight related non-profit corporations in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Hansen-Turton teaches public and social innovations, leading nonprofits, health policy and the social innovations lab at University of Pennsylvania Fels Institute of Government, Social Policy and School of Nursing. She also teaches leading nonprofits and social enterprise at PCOM.

She has received several advocacy and leadership awards, the prestigious Eisenhower Fellowship, the Business Journal 40 under 40 Leadership, Women of Distinction, and the Most Admired CEO Awards. She was named one of the 101 emerging Philadelphia connectors by Leadership, Inc. and American Express NextGen Independent Sector Fellow.

Hansen-Turton has served on both private and nonprofit boards and is active on many boards. She received her BA from Slippery Rock University, her Master of Government/Public Administration from University of Pennsylvania, and her JD from Temple University.

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Certified in Public Health: A Great Way to Become More Specialized in Our Profession

by CDR Kelly Valente, PharmD, Immediate Past Chair of COA

On June 24, after reviewing my promotion score sheet and strategizing how I could make myself more competitive to the promotion board and a more polished professional, I looked into the National Board of Public Health Examiners Certification in Public Health. I was elated to see that COA had partnered with the National Board of Public Health Examiners and the exam was offered at a discounted rate.

At first, I was not sure if this credential was a good fit for me; I am pharmacist who works in emergency management. However, the more I looked into what knowledge was required for the credential, it was absolutely a good fit.

The certification in Public Health focuses on the world of working with a state or local public health department. The test is 200 multiple-choice questions and is split up into 10 different domains of study, which include evidence-based approaches to public health, communication, leadership, law and ethics, public health biology and human disease risk, collaboration and partnership, program planning and evaluation, program management policy in public health, and health equity and social justice.

There are many different options to study for the test. The American Public Health Association sells a book on their website, "*Certified in Public Health Exam Review Guide*," which has practice exams and other tools to assist in preparing for the exam. Springer Publishing sells a book called "Certification in Public Health (CPH) Q&A Exam Review." These books sell for about 60 to 75 dollars. The Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) also has different study resources, as well. ASPPH hosts a series of webinars archived on the National Board of Public Health Examiners' website. These webinars focus on content from the ten CPH domain areas. Each session is approximately two hours long and includes a presentation, lecture, and interactive segments. ASPPH also has a study guide which includes journal articles and recommended books.

I decided to use ASPPH's study guide and purchased a few of their books on thriftbooks.com. I then used the app "Quizlet" and searched for CPH flashcards and questions. When I did not know a concept, I used the books from thriftbooks.com or pulled up a Youtube® video or used a ASPPH webinar. Youtube® was really helpful with relearning biostatistics. You will need to know the different types of studies and how to analyze the data. I took the test in 6 weeks and passed by 12 points. My test had a lot of strategic planning questions and environmental health. Luckily, I was familiar with strategic planning with my committee work. I struggled with the environmental health questions.

Now it is time to start working on recertification credits, one needs 50 recertification credits every two years. These can be earned in different ways. The website explains this in detail.

In the end, I am happy I took the test. I learned a lot of public health concepts that I can related to my new job in emergency management and it is always good to refresh my knowledge of biostatistics. I would recommend this certification for officers who work or deploy with public health departments. I am grateful for COA for supporting this certification and providing a discount.

CPH Content Outline

The National Board of Public Health Examiners conducted a job task analysis (JTA) in 2016 to validate the knowledge tested by the CPH examination. A JTA is a carefully constructed survey used to determine the body of knowledge that a segment of a profession's workforce needs to know to competently perform their jobs, and typically, a JTA is the basis for developing a credentialing examination. CPH Content Outline as of January 1, 2019 (PDF)

CPH Domain Areas

Evidence-based Approaches to Public Health (10%)

Communication (10%)

Leadership (10%)

Law and Ethics (10%)

Public Health Biology and Human Disease Risk (10%)

Collaboration and Partnership (10%)

Program Planning and Evaluation (10%)

Program Management (10%)

Policy in Public Health (10%)

Health Equity and Social Justice (10%)

Resources

Job Task Analysis Report

Use JTA Data

Article on CPH Job Task Analysis process published in Public Health Reports 2017

Article on Relationship between CEPH, PHAB accreditation criteria and CPH domains published in Journal of Public Health Management and Practice 2018

National Board of Public Health Examiners

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COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Board of Directors

In a World of Acquaintances, Be a Friend…

by CDR Kelly Valente, PharmD, Immediate Past Chair of COA

Recently, I was catching up with a friend who is a spouse of a PHS officer. We talked about how with the ever-moving goal posts and benchmarks of promotion, permanent changes of stations, masters' degrees, certification studying, and additional trainings, it is very hard to make and maintain friendships. She said, "We have a lot of acquaintances, but no one who would call the police if they did not hear from us." I, too, feel the same way. This is an odd feeling. As I move along this path of benchmark completion and become a more polished professional and person, I realize that I do not have anything in common with many people in my work and personal communities.

However, it is not just a "PHS benchmark" thing. In June 2022, the New York Times reported that for years, friendships in America have been in decline, and this trend accelerated during the pandemic. In the 1990s, when I first became a PHS officer, 3 percent of Americans reported they had no close friends. In 2021, 13 percent of women and 8 percent of men aged 30 to 49 said they had lost touch with most of their friends. We can blame the "benchmark chasing," but it is not the only cause for us to feel disconnected.

see **BOARD** *continued on page 7*

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GOLF from page 1

The best prize of all, a signed guitar by Brooks and Dunn and Reba McEntire, was provided to the closest putt to the pin on the putting green contest. Surprisingly, three participants made the putt in the hole and the winner had to be decided by picking a name out of a hat.

COF thanks all of those involved. We appreciate sponsors, local businesses who donated raffle prizes, all participants, and the many volunteers who helped to make the golf tournament possible.

If you or someone you know may be interested in sponsoring the annual golf tournament, please share this website with them: www.phscof.org/golf-tournament.

Practice makes perfect. A golfer practices on the putting green before the tournament begins.

The winning foursome poses with their first place plaques at the luncheon after the tournament.

Caleb Green, singer of the National Anthem, poses with the foursome from FedFinancial Credit Union.

BOARD from page 6

Some of us live in austere environments, work full time from home, or deploy multiple times and are in constant catch up mode with our steady-state job. Our kids are over-scheduled, with college and scholarships more competitive than ever. We can lose friends due to a permanent change of station or when one name is on the promotion list and one name is not (or even just the fear of this).

In 2020, Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy published a book titled "Together," about the decline of social relationships and ways to reconnect. After reading this book, I found that this is where COA and its local branches are more important than ever. One of VADM Murthy's key takeaways was "help and be helped." This reminded me of the old adage: "be a friend to have friends." As we live in a new world alongside COVID-19, your branches should start meeting again and holding in-person activities. Seek ways to bring people together.

As we look forward to the end of the year, officers should start offering help to those who are overwhelmed with promotion preparation. Officers should not be looking on social media platforms for help, it shows the senior officers do not care about developing the future. Other than other hand, check in on the helpers and offer them help as well. Just because someone is on Facebook living their best life does not mean they are doing well. Officers are not going to post about their struggles with depression or substance use. Ask questions, "How are you?" and "Is everything ok?" COA is the only organization that strives for the well being of Commissioned Corps officers and I ask you use this organization to support each other. We need officers to feel uplifted more than ever. Don't be just another acquaintance.

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Improving Tinnitus Awareness at Fort Carson

by LCDR Courtney Wood, MEd, CCC-SLP, CBIS

Together with the Evans Army Community Hospital (EACH) Audiology Department and the Fort Carson Solider Readiness Processing Audiology Department, the Speech-Language Pathology team at the Fort Carson Intrepid Spirit Center (ISC) developed an updated informational brochure to educate service members about management strategies for tinnitus symptoms. This project was to support activities for *Better Speech and Hearing Month*, which is in May. Improving tinnitus awareness for service members is one of many essential educational projects that Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists do to promote public health awareness for managing the cognitive-communication, swallowing, and hearing aspects of living.

Tinnitus is when someone experiences a ringing or a buzzing in the ears that is not caused by an external sound. Tinnitus can happen occasionally or chronically and without any specific diagnosis or reason. Additionally, tinnitus can occur from a traumatic brain injury (TBI) event or as a side effect of medications often used to treat cognitive or behavioral issues associated with TBI.

Ms. Rachel Edwards, MEd, CCC-SLP, CBIS and LCDR Courtney Wood, MEd, CCC-SLP, CBIS worked to help service members understand the causes of tinnitus and improve awareness of the current ways to manage tinnitus. Service members may be able to find some relief in tinnitus symptoms through diet, wearable sound generators, masking apps, and a treatment modality for acoustic neural stimulation. The endeavors of the ISC Speech-Language Pathology team fosters an educational campaign that will impact over 300 service members who experience the effects of tinnitus.

Ms. Rachel Edwards, MEd, CCC-SLP, CBIS and LCDR Courtney Wood, MEd, CCC-SLP, CBIS are ready to distribute the tinnitus brochures in the Audiology Department at EACH and at Solider Readiness Processing.

National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Stair Climb

by LCDR Shayne Gallaway, PhD and LT Regena Hardy, MSW

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation 6th Annual 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb, held this year on September 10, serves as a way to honor and remember the FDNY firefighters, police, and EMS who selflessly gave their lives so that others might live. Each participant pays tribute to an FDNY firefighter, police officer, or EMS personnel by climbing the equivalent of the 110 stories of the World Trade Center and carrying a picture of them along the way. Participation ensures that each of the 343 firefighters, 60 police officers, and 10 EMS personnel are honored and so the world will never forget.

This event was co-led by LCDR Shayne Gallaway (CDC, Scientist, Phoenix COA) and LT Regena Hardy (LT, Social Work, East Valley COA). 9 USPHS officers and family members participated, including representation from 3 agencies (CDC, ICE, and IHS) and 4 COA local branches (Phoenix, East Valley, Four Corners and South Florida). These officers came from across Arizona (Phoenix, Eloy, Florence, Red Mesa) and even included a representative from Miami who was TDY in the area. After a rousing ceremony, posting of the Colors, and moment of remembrance, officers participated alongside over 1,000 other community members and firefighters to complete the grueling trek up, down, and all around the Salt River Fields Baseball Stadium on a balmy 95-degree night in Phoenix. Officers enjoyed and benefited from great camaraderie, friendship, and support of one another during the tiring event. It was a great night, a more than worthy cause, and something we're committed to doing again next year.

LT Alysehka "Aly" Jusino-Acosta (Pharmacist, ICE) and LT Regena Hardy (Social Work, ICE) pause to snap a selfie during the stair climb.

Providing Support Beyond Clinical Roles

Disclaimer: The findings and conclusions of the article are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

by LCDR Jaime Altman, MPA, BSN, RN and LCDR James Ireland, Pharm.D., M.S., BCPS, CPH, CMQ/OE

The effects of the COVID pandemic were felt across the world, and in every community. However, some communities were more impacted than others, particularly those located in remote and rural areas. While COVID rates were increasing, American Samoa (AS), a remote U.S. territory located in the South Pacific Ocean, had the unique ability to self-isolate from the rest of the world by imposing travel restrictions. However, being remote also contributed to its challenges in their efforts to provide medical care when COVID reached the island.

COVID-19 treatment was provided at local departments of health (DOH) clinics and in the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Tropical Medical Center. LBJ is a single-story facility built in 1968 and is the only hospital in AS. Although it's ranked among the best hospitals in the Pacific Ocean, its remote location presented challenges to meet the demands and medical needs of the community. LBJ faced fixed staffing levels and supply delivery issues. To address staffing issues, U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Commissioned Officers were deployed to AS to assist with the growing number of COVID-19 cases. The Federal Response team also included

Exterior of LBJ Tropical Medical Center where staff worked 24 hours per day providing COVID testing and care.

the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Army Corps of Engineers to provide logistical support and recommendations to assist LBJ's COVID response.

We were offered the unique opportunity to provide support beyond our clinical roles. ASPR asked us to conduct a short-term quality improvement and infection control assessment. The goal was to provide continued support to LBJ hospital leadership,

see **ROLES** continued on page 12

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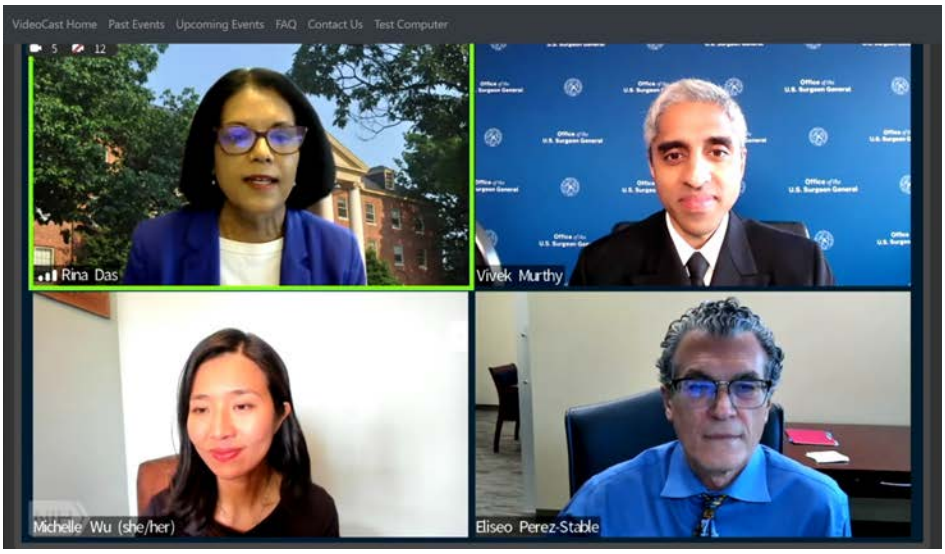
The Second Event of the VADM Vivek H. Murthy Distinguished Lecture Series for Public Health Leadership

by CDR Yoon Kong, PharmD, BCGP, RAC (U.S.) and CAPT Curi Kim, MD, MPH

Dr. Rina Das (President of FAPAC NIH chapter), Dr. Vivek Murthy, Mayor Michelle Wu and Dr. Eliseo Pérez-Stable (Director, NIMHD)



The inaugural VADM Vivek H. Murthy Distinguished Lecture Series for Public Health Leadership was launched on May 27, 2021in honor of Dr. Murthy, the 19th and 21st Surgeon General of the United States. The goal of the series is to recognize a leader whose enduring efforts have made a significant impact on advancing public health. The event is held in May to observe Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month. The Federal Asian Pacific American Council's National Institutes of Health chapter (FAPAC NIH) and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) organized this event in partnership with the USPHS Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC), FAPAC's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) chapter, FAPAC's Parklawn chapter, the Association of Asian Pacific Islander Employees of CDC/ATSDR (AAPIECA), the Health Resources and Services Administration's Asian American and Pacific Islander Employee Resource Group (HRSA AAPI ERG), and NIH's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

The second event of this lecture series took place on May 11, 2022, with over 500 attendees in a virtual venue. VADM Murthy recognized Michelle Wu, Mayor of Boston, for her leadership in addressing anti-Asian racism and mental health stigma in the AANHPI community. The President of FAPAC NIH chapter, Dr. Rina Das, gave the opening remarks, followed by Dr. Eliseo Pérez-Stable, NIMHD Director, who provided welcoming remarks and highlighted the important role of public health leaders and NIH in addressing health equity. VADM Murthy and Mayor Wu then shared their personal experiences very candidly, noting some key challenges in their career paths and discussing how to cope with mental health issues given the cultural barriers faced by members of the AANHPI community. They commented on the critical importance of addressing health disparities and emphasized the urgency to rebuild social connections to heal our communities. In their leadership roles, they have created new initiatives to strengthen communities, recognizing that social bonds are deeply tied to both mental and physical health.

During the Q&A session, VADM Murthy and Mayor Wu drew attention to the necessity of increasing AANHPI visibility via its next generation of leaders. In closing, they reinforced the message that collective efforts are impactful with the power to transform our community through stronger connections, appreciation of our cultures and histories, and hope for the future.

This virtual conversation has been archived and can be viewed here:

https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=45154

Stay tuned for next event in the VADM Vivek H. Murthy Distinguished Lecture Series for Public Health Leadership!

We Want To Hear From All Local Branches!

by CAPT Luis Rodriguez and LCDR Traci Murray, Chair and Vice-chair Local Branch Committee

Members are the heart of local branches and those branches are the heart of associations. COA Local Branches are no different - they serve their members and nurture esprit de corps. National COA supports local branches mainly through the Local Branch Committee. The Local Branch Committee is composed of a Chair and a Vice-chair that both hold a seat on the COA Board of Directors, a small number of volunteers, and the presidents of the local branches.

Since we took office as chairs of the Local Branch Committee on July 1st, we have been working on updating our list of active local branches. We have found that the information was not up-to-date in part because local branches have not recently submitted a Branch Officer Update Form. This form assists keeping national COA current on local branch officer information. When elections are held or changes take place regarding contact information, it is important to complete this form and submit to COA promptly. This enables COA to provide current information on a regular basis and helps to best serve all COA members and potential members.

Additionally, there are local branches from which national COA has not heard anything for years. One of our main goals is to have vibrant local branches that ensure their members get as much out of their membership as possible. For this reason, national COA needs to have current leadership information from all local branches. Branch dissolution is an unfortunate outcome that may result if local branches are not heard from.

Action item for all local branch presidents: please submit a Branch Officer Update Form no later than October 31st, 2022. This will ensure we have updated information on your local branch for the COA operational year 2022-2023. Remember that local branch leadership terms should also run July to June, which is COA's operational year. We suggest each branch has elections in May, has an orderly transition in June (including sending a Branch Officer Update Form), and the new leadership starts on July 1st each year. Having national COA and its branches on the same operational year will help tremendously.

We look forward to continuing supporting the local branches. Should you have questions, please do not hesitate contacting Donna Sparrow, Membership Coordinator, at dsparrow@coausphs.org.

Resources:

Local branch information: https://coausphs.org/COA/COA/Local-Branches/Branch-Information.aspx?hkey=76952ee1-e53a-4690-b50a-0490016c49b3

Branch Officer Update Form https://coausphs.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Local%20Branches/9.3.21_bou_updated.pdf

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ROLES from page 10
ensure all recommendations were implemented, obtain a general assessment of isolation precautions, assess risk to other patients, and report any ongoing issues.

We began by conducting a walk-through of every patient ward, to include the newly erected quarantine tent, emergency room testing tent, and two COVID-extension tents. Our walkthrough was conducted alongside the charge nurse of each unit, who provided a clinical snapshot of each patient. We then conducted a chart review with the LBJ Infection Control Supervisor to obtain the admitting diagnosis, initial COVID PCR result, COVID screening, use of aerosol-generating procedures, and oxygen status.

Our review confirmed that a designated COVID ward was created. Patient transfer protocols to and from this area were being followed. LBJ staff utilized designated donning and doffing areas and followed the patient transfer flow chart designed to reduce COVID transmission. COVID testing was required for all patients prior to entry into the facility. Upon arrival, patients with a clinic appointment, or in need of emergency room services, were directed to one of the two open-air tents used for COVID testing. In particular, the testing protocol in the ER tent created long lines and prevented those requiring acute and urgent care to be evaluated immediately. Providing 24/7 coverage to staff this testing tent put an additional strain on an already understaffed facility. After speaking with patients, we discovered most were using the ER for non-emergency medical needs and asymptomatic COVID testing. To further reduce virus transmission, we recommended implementing a pre-screening prior to ER tent admission in order to separate possible COVID-19 patients from COVID negative patients. To reduce the long wait lines, patients were directed to obtain COVID tests and basic wellness needs at the DOH clinic across the street. Facility staff were outfitting patient rooms to prepare for incoming portable HEPA infiltration units needed to reduce viral aerosol exposure and limit the risk of virus transmission.

Although being remote imposed unique challenges to their healthcare delivery system, our assessment determined LBJ instituted many protocols and control measures to minimize the risk and spread of infection, thus improving patient care. In the end, the key factor enabling this facility to persevere through the pandemic was the hard work and dedication of the staff who worked tirelessly to care for the patients of American Samoa.

Promotion Ceremony Remarks

by RDML Jonathan Mermin, MD, MPH

Note: These inspiring remarks are reprinted with permission; they were given by the presiding officer, RDML Mermin, during the Atlanta-area promotion ceremony held on Friday, September 16, 2022 aboard CDC's Roybal Campus.

You are working for the federal government in a difficult time in America's history, but one with great potential for us as PHS officers. The spread of COVID-19 challenged officers and their families, and the implementation of restrictive promotion rates has mixed today's celebration with survivor guilt. Recent tensions in society and legal decisions have stressed communities and put civil liberties and public health at risk. We are asked to promote public health and decrease health inequity at a time when the nation is increasingly polarized. Vaccination is life-saving, it isn't supposed to be controversial. Public health officials were given legal authorities to protect and promote health, not so they could be targeted for hate and violence. How do we change ideas and change lives in a time with such uncertainty and such need?

I believe you would not be here, promoted to a level of higher responsibility if you have not already met with these challenges and tackled some of them. I am confident that if you were not a person who strove to make the world better every day, you would not be an officer here today. PHS officers have the audacity of purpose. Now is a time when the explicit core values of the PHS ring true--keep a steadfast commitment to leadership, service, integrity, and excellence.

I want to highlight 3 points for your future. First, I am confident that you are happier having joined the Commissioned Corps. The two most important variables are supportive relationships and work with an underlying purpose. You have both. Look around you and know that your fellow officers and the people you brought with you are your supportive partners. Many of us are drawn to work in the PHS because of a passion for doing good—the knowledge that accepting health inequity or disease is untenable, and that we use our days turning work into meaningful science, providing a few extra years of life for people we will never meet. By monitoring health and caring for the underserved, the PHS acts as a conscience for America. Being an officer in the PHS is about being a part of something more important than ourselves, and that provides a sense of meaning that transcends individual achievement.

The second point is to do less and do it well. There are many options in the myriad paths ahead of you. You have limited resources as a person and becoming overwhelmed rapidly leads to lower quality work and annoying your colleagues and friends with pleas of being too busy—too busy to do good quality work or to see them. And, speaking on behalf of your mother—too busy to call. Conscious prioritization is hard, but it is honest. Times like these induce a frenetic response. This is not as good as focusing, using your and your team's skills, and giving you a sense of ownership and artistry.

My third point, to stand firm on values, is one that connects you to hundreds of thousands of other people committed

RDML Mermin

to upholding the Constitution. We have seen many people keep this commitment during the history of our nation, sometimes to their peril, and others abandon this same oath. It will not occur often, but when it does I ask that you make the choice to stick with principle large or small. You will not always be treated well in life, even when you do your best. I encourage you to hold tight to the feeling that you are still good, and you are still doing good, and that you deserve to keep a strong sense of self in easy reaching distance. There will be times that you need it--as well as a spoonful of humility.

I feel fortunate to work alongside all of you. I hope that at least for a moment you can take a break from it all and enjoy what you have accomplished and embrace your loved ones. For without your work the world be a lesser place. In officio salutis.

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

CALL FOR *FRONTLINE* ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

The National COA Communications and Public Relations Committee is seeking articles for publication in *Frontline*

Article Topic Ideas*:

1) **Deployment stories** (COVID-19, Unaccompanied Children, Operation Allies Welcome, Innovative Readiness Training missions, or others not mentioned)
2) Highlight a **local COA branch event**
3) Have you recently completed an **advanced educational degree, certificate, or training program**? We want to highlight your success and showcase the advancement of our fellow officers.
4) Have you completed a **unique or special project**, either by yourself or as a team?
5) **Resiliency and self-care**: What does resiliency as a PHS officer mean to you? How do you engage in self-care?
6) **Leadership**: Discuss a leadership role you have you taken on recently, either in a job position or a special project.
7) What **advice** do you have to share with other officers, based on your own personal experiences?
8) What do the USPHS **core values** of leadership, integrity, service, and excellence mean to you?
9) **Officer spotlight**: recognize a fellow officer for their contributions to COA, the Corps, and/or to their communities. We encourage highlighting officers from various categories and specialties.

The Communications and Public Relations Committee is available to review and edit articles prior to submission to *Frontline*. Please send articles to coa.comm.pr@gmail.com and allow 1-2 weeks for review.

Frontline publication guidelines can be found at https://tinyurl.com/frontlineguidelines

Please note, articles will only be accepted for publication if the author(s) and subject(s) of the article are current, up-to-date COA members.

*The list of topics above is not exhaustive. It is intended to foster inspiration and provide recommendations for article topics. Officers are encouraged to write about anything they feel would benefit the COA community.

Punch Up Your Exercise Routine with Boxing Benefits

by CDR Molly Rutledge and CDR Katie Jacques

Boxing is a sport that has been practiced since before the time of ancient Greece and the original Olympics. It has been used to train people for performance in the art of striking, as well as general physical conditioning. Boxing is not exclusive to elite athletes and exercise enthusiasts. Everyone, regardless of age or level of fitness, can enjoy the many benefits boxing can offer.

Boxing is a sport with regular, repeated movements, which promote muscle toning. Whether you're learning striking techniques, how to move correctly, or doing fitness exercises such as push-ups, squats and crunches, your entire body is put to work and progressively toned: the arms, abs, legs, and glutes among others.

While activities like cycling or running rely on rhythmic, repetitive motions that allow heart rate to stay stable, boxing is a repeated sequence of ballistic, full-body movements. You jab, cross, duck, and weave, and your heart rate spikes. It's easy for any fitness routine to become monotonous, but boxing will keep you on your toes as it involves thorough focus, which makes the time speed by. And unlike running on the treadmill, there's always something new to learn so you have a real inclination to keep training. Boxing is also beneficial for stress reduction. As we enter the busy promotion and holiday season, grab an accountability buddy and try heavy bag boxing to help manage the work-life balance. You might even be able to knock out and level-up your APFT scores while you're at it!

CDRs Molly Rutledge and Katie Jacques seen here during their biweekly boxing training in Anchorage, Alaska.

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-CDR C.

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Disclaimer: The findings and conclusions of the article are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Music, Dancing, and COVID Vaccinations

by LCDR James Ireland, Pharm.D., M.S., BCPS, CPH, CMQ/OE, LCDR Jaime Altman, MPA, BSN, RN

Hot & humid tropical weather with a mild ocean breeze; vehicles lined up as far as the eye could see; island music blaring so loud you had to shout to communicate with the officer right next to you; all while stationed on a tiny island in the middle of the South Pacific. These were all experienced by PHS Officers working one of the weekend drive-thru COVID vaccination clinics on the island of Tutuila, American Samoa from March through May, 2022. Deploying in support of this mission proved to be a rewarding and memorable experience for the officers.

Strict quarantine orders implemented by the American Samoa Department of Health (DOH) kept American Samoa COVID free throughout 2020 and 2021. After the first COVID case in February 2022, efforts were made to decrease the burden on very limited medical resources. Although much of the local population had already started their COVID vaccination series, additional efforts were made to increase vaccination rates and provide additional COVID treatments. While vaccination clinics and COVID treatment clinics were operated during the week, DOH implemented weekend drive-thru vaccination clinics to expand community-based outreach efforts and to provide options to those who were otherwise unavailable during the week due to work, mobility issues, etc.

The drive-thru vaccination clinics were conducted on weekends in two different locations which included the Pago Pago International Airport, and the Fagatogo Marketplace. For the officers and DOH staff, the mornings started early with a 6:00 a.m. arrival to help set up and prepare the clinic for opening. It wasn't unusual to see many cars lined up early in the morning, sometimes several hours early, waiting for the clinic to open. Breakfast was served early, with servings of local cuisine such as pork chops, chicken soup, hard boiled eggs, and spam & cheese sandwiches. Before the events started, local DOH staff and volunteers huddled to sing a harmonized gospel song so powerful, vibrant and beautiful it left a lasting impression.

After local staff offered a prayer, officers donned their PPE, the clinic opened and the organized chaos began. Islanders pulled their vehicles up to one of several drive-thru booths where officers and staff filled out screening questionnaires and administered COVID vaccinations. The patients were in very high spirits and

Vehicles lined up prior to the drive-through COVID vaccination clinic (American Samoa)

were eager to get vaccinated. Many patients spoke English, however some only spoke Samoan. Learning some Samoan phrases such as "fa a vaivai lou lima", which translates to "relax your arm", proved to be helpful in assisting patients. It almost felt as if they embraced this drive-thru vaccination clinic not only as an opportunity to get vaccinated, but as an event. The fun and lively atmosphere of each event created not only a demand, but a genuine appreciation for the service being provided. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves listening to the music, dancing, and spending time with friends and family.

The overall pace and demeanor of the islanders is very calm and laid back. They thoroughly enjoy the simple things in life. Many pickup trucks pulled up with both the cab and bed full of patients who were eagerly awaiting to get their jab. The island of Tutuila is very small (54.9 square miles), and the salty air, tropical climate, and proximity to the ocean takes its toll on vehicles, rusting them out rather quickly. Many brand new 4x4 pickup trucks and SUVs were among the vehicles driven to the clinic that day.

These drive-thru vaccination clinics were an essential part of a concerted effort to help increase the vaccination rates on the island. Deployed officers gained insight into varying cultural outreach programs and were impacted by the respect, hospitality, and gratitude expressed by the people of American Samoa.

Walter F Snyder Environmental Health Award Recipient

This article is being republished with permission from the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF).

ANN ARBOR, Mich. – NSF, a global public health and safety organization, and the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), representing more than 6,000 members of the environmental health workforce, announced today that Captain (CAPT) Luis O. Rodriguez, MS, REHS/RS, CP-FS, CPO, DAAS, is the 2022 recipient of the Walter F. Snyder Environmental Health Award. CAPT Rodriguez, a Senior Environmental Health Specialist for the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) assigned to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), will receive the award on June 30 at the 2022 NEHA Annual Education Conference. He has dedicated his career of more than 20 years to safeguarding environmental health and safety.

"It is an incredible honor to be recognized by my peers and be part of those professionals seeking to improve environmental health services across the nation," said Rodriguez.

The Snyder Award was created in 1971 in honor of Walter F. Snyder, co-founder and first executive director of NSF. Presented by NSF and NEHA, it is awarded annually to individuals who continue Snyder's legacy through outstanding contributions to environmental and public health.

"From improving emergency preparedness to strengthening environmental health programs nationwide, Luis has spent his entire career demonstrating his commitment to improving and protecting public health," said Pedro Sancha, President and CEO of NSF. "We have witnessed Luis' dedication firsthand at NSF through his active participation on the NSF Joint Committee of Food Equipment and NSF Council of Public Health Consultants. His efforts and support have had a lasting value and positive impact on public health and safety. Through these achievements and many more, Luis has proved himself worthy of the Walter F. Snyder Award."

CAPT Luis Rodriguez, recipient of the Walter F Snyder Environmental Health Award

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Spiritual Wellness

by LCDR Katrina Redman, MT, SPOC, M.Div., Chaplain (BGCT)

Who Is My Neighbor?

I've been studying the subject of neighbors over the last month, and what better time to talk about neighbors than during the month of Halloween! I remember having a costume, just like the one on the right, and spending the whole night just trying to keep the eye holes in the right place so that I could see. Classic!

You may be asking "What do neighbors have to do with my own personal spirituality?" A lot! Most religious practices and moral-value belief systems encourage service to others that are around us or far away from us. They can also involve celebrations and feasts with an emphasis on sharing and inviting others to join in the festivities.

The most important thing about neighbors, however, is that they watch us and how we live our daily lives. Usually this is not in a creepy, call the cops kind of way (YIKES!). They watch us to either make sure that we are okay or to be inspired by us. This is called your testimony, a profession, or just being a role model of your beliefs. This is very important because not only could you help your neighbor by demonstrating a healthy spirituality, but they might inspire you as well.

In our officership, we have opportunities to be spiritual role models also. This is important because another officer may reach a crisis point and not have the same resilience factors that you have. They may ask to lean on yours (i.e. prayer/meditation, etc.) in order to get through the crisis. It is also healthy to express well-wishes to your fellow officers on their spiritual holy days even if you don't share their beliefs because it encourages them to be healthy. It is healthy to learn about their spiritual practices and what it means to them as well.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Christian teaching is a response to the question of "Who is my neighbor?" The answer was the person that showed mercy to someone in need. We don't live in a bubble. Our lives impact the lives of others. Make a commitment today to be a good neighbor to all.

Education: Sukkot

A seven-day celebration and observance in Judaism which celebrates the harvest and the time the Jewish people spent in their journey from Egypt to Israel. A sukkah is a temporary shelter made with a natural roof to provide shade and see the stars at night.

Spiritual Exercises

1. Search https://www.deseret.com/2015/9/29/20573283/what-is-sukkot-and-why-are-my-jewish-neighbors-eating-in-a-shack
2. Book: Trick or Treat: A History of Halloween by Lisa Morton
3. Learn about the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Bible (Luke 10:25-37)
4. Find a picture of you in a Halloween costume or doing a good deed and send it to me

Questions? Comments? Contact me at khredman@hotmail.com.

The CFC is a great way for USPHS Commissioned Officers to support causes near and dear to our hearts. *We can donate to the CFC, via the CFC Giving webpage, (https://cfcgiving.opm.gov/welcome) through January 14, 2023.*

Using CFC code 42884, please pledge a donation to the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health.

Why? Because the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation has stepped up our programs to "advance public health for a healthier nation." Our PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) is committed to the advancement of public health & the development of public health Leaders. Our PHS COF supports:

BARCLAY-GIEL SEED GRANTS: We provide over $100,000 each year to fund public health grants in communities around the country.

USPHS SCIENTIFIC & TRAINING SYMPOSIUM: The annual conference continues to offer free continuing education credits and many opportunities to network with fellow PHS officers while learning about advances in the field of public health.

JOAG/COF KOOP SPEAKER SERIES: We work closely with JOAG officers to host a series of talks with researchers and community-based organizations regarding a range of public health topics.

RADM MISHOE 'BELIEVE' DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS: COF provides grants to high school seniors pursuing health sciences and public health collegiate studies.

COA FAMILY MEMBER SCHOLARSHIPS: Scholarships for family members of COA members.

RADM MICHAEL FELLOWSHIP: Scholarships for junior officers serving in the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

PHS & COA LOCAL BRANCH REQUESTS: COF provides grants for a range of Local Branch programs like golf tournament or run/walk fundraisers to health education events.

Please remember CFC code 42884 on the CFC Webpage: https://cfcgiving.opm.gov/welcome

Include 42884 in your pledges. Your generous donation will support COF to advance public health for a healthier nation.!

Dedication Ceremony for the Fort Carson Intrepid Spirit Center

by LCDR Narisa Tappitake, LCDR Courtney Wood, and LTJG Devon Barbieri

With the support of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund (IFHF) and the Fort Carson Evans Army Community Hospital (EACH), the Fort Carson Intrepid Spirit Center (ISC) officially opened in July 2022. The Fort Carson ISC's goal is to provide comprehensive health care, education, and research across the continuum of care for diagnosing and treating traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress (PTS). CDR Selena Bobula, the current Fort Carson ISC Director, was the Master of Ceremony for the dedication ceremony.

Contributions from the Fisher family's non-profit, IFHF, made Fort Carson's $13 million ISC facility possible. To date, the IFHF has supported the construction of 9 of 10 planned ISC military treatment facilities by supporting a $100 million fundraising campaign. This campaign effort is charting the course for high-quality and state-of-the-art Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) care for service members and their families.

The ISC initiative started in 2010 when the IFHF constructed the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NiCOE) at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, and provided demonstrative support for research in TBI Care. The NiCOE mission includes a patient-centered interdisciplinary model of care which brings all providers together under one roof to collaborate in the care of TBI wounded service members – a mission the Fort Carson ISC proudly upholds.

ISCs are known for intensive outpatient programs explicitly designed to support service members with persistent symptoms after a concussion or traumatic brain injury. All ISCs provide individual and group treatment, including the Fort Carson ISC. The group setting provides treatment from multiple disciplines as well as peer support. This type of treatment can be especially effective for those with chronic symptoms. Treatment includes creative arts therapies, behavioral health treatment, educational classes on headache management and pharmacy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreational opportunities, and community reintegration outings.

(L to R) CAPT Renee Pazdan (ret), CAPT Alicia Souvignier, CDR Selena Bobula, LCDR Courtney Wood, and LCDR Narisa Tappitake look forward to providing outstanding care for service members experiencing the effect of TBI and PTS.

The Fort Carson ISC will provide TBI care to service members stationed in Colorado Springs and the region's service members. The region includes Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. This facility is the ninth ISC built for the National Intrepid Centers of Excellence (NICOE) network. The final ISC is scheduled for Fort Bliss, TX. It is currently in its community fundraising phase with the IFHF, with the groundbreaking expected to happen soon.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR from page 1

2016) so this is impressive. Responders were 70% active-duty officers, 27% retired officers, 2% Ready Reserve officers, and 1% "other" category.

MEMBERSHIP

Officers report first joining COA upon recommendation from a colleague or peer (57%), for networking opportunities (43%), and to be part of the COA family (46%). Members first heard about our organization at the Officer Basic Course (OBC) (29%), or from a superior or peer (44%). Now that we can attend the OBC Open House, new OBC member numbers will increase. Eighty-three percent of responders renew each year, are Life Members, or are new members who haven't yet had an opportunity to renew. Eleven percent of members do not renew each year, and some members who don't renew each year report a lapse if they miss the renewal reminder. If this is you, and you can think of ways for HQ to better communicate about your renewal becoming due, please let us know.

BENEFITS

It is essential that we understand not only why you join, but which COA benefits you value most. For the second year in a row, advocacy on Capitol Hill (78%), advocacy with the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) and other agencies (71%), and advocacy for parity in retail discounts with other branches of the military (37%) rank in the top three most important member benefits. Least important is the ability to wear the COA ribbon during COA events. Whether we sunset this benefit or not, it will be discussed by the Board of Directors in the upcoming year. Our partnerships with the Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), OSG, and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) rank as the most important to fulfilling COA's mission (3.74, 3.55, and 3.27 respectively).

COMMUNICATIONS

Direct and focused emails, our monthly newsletter Frontline, and messages through your Local Branch leaders are the primary ways that our members indicate they choose to receive communications from COA. As an association, we are still struggling with direct email communications ending up in spam or junk folders. While 59% report that they use a personal email address for COA communications, 14% say it's still easier and timelier to read COA emails using their work address. If this is you, please consider

Word Cloud to illustrate response to question "What is one word you would use to describe COA" on the 2022 Membership Survey.

adding a personal email address in the secondary field. If you have trouble accessing your profile, I can do this for you! Drop me a line at jrychnovsky@coausphs.org. For the second year in a row there seems to be an interest in receiving text message communications so we will explore this in the future.

SYMPOSIUM

An impressive 18% of respondents indicate they attend the USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium annually if they are able. Nineteen percent have never attended but hope to, which is why we are committed to keeping costs down, offering junior scholarships, and holding the event in cities that are accessible geographically.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Forty-five percent of respondents want COA to be more engaged with CCHQ, OSG, and OASH, down from 55% last year. We see this as significant progress on the ongoing and mutually beneficial relationship that we are continuing to develop and foster with your leadership. You indicate an interest in more virtual networking opportunities as well as leadership training or other education, so we've got that for action.

I want to sincerely thank those of you who completed the survey. It takes time to give feedback, and the easy thing to do when a survey arrives is to push the "delete" button. But many of you didn't and, for that, we are grateful. Whether you love or hate word clouds, I am pleased to share this one which was created in response to the final question "What is one word you would use to describe COA."

Until next month!

PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation

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