

Foundation Announces 2023 RADM Michael Fellowship Recipients

The PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF) will provide funding for three officers to attend the University of Maryland School of Public Health Certificate Program as recipients of the 2023 RADM Jerrold M. Michael Fellowship. The funding is valued at approximately \$12,000 per student. The Fellows include LCDR Briana Rider, LT Gabriella Marie Wuyke, and LCDR Mirabelle Adamu. Recipients are junior officers in the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (US PHSCC) who were selected based on their professional accomplishments and educational goals.

The Foundation established this fellowship program in 2009 to honor the late Rear Admiral Jerrold Michael. He was an engineer officer with a lifelong passion for improved public health education. The devotion RADM Michael had for both the USPHS Commissioned Corps and academia is legendary. He was Dean of the University of Hawaii (UH) School of Public Health from 1972 to 1992 and continued as a Professor of Public Health until 1995. RADM Michael later served as Professor Emeritus at UH and as an Adjunct Professor of Global Health at the Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University.

Lieutenant Commander Briana Bond Rider, PharmD, FISMP, CPPS, NHDP-BC, CHEC wrote in her application that “obtaining a Certificate of Global Health will allow me to more effectively support existing and emerging emergency response missions. Furthermore, pursuing formal global health training will allow me to better deal with the challenges of improving public health to better support the mission of the USPHS.” She currently works as a Program Analyst in the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Regional Response Office with the Incident Management Team (IMT) Division.

After receiving notification of the award, Lieutenant Gabriella Marie Wuyke, PhD, MSc has decided to pursue the Certificate of Health Analytics. “Not only do I wish to serve my country and support global health missions around the world, but I also hope that with the drive to continuously learn, I can give back as an educator. Like RADM Michael, I aspire to teach and mentor students from the lessons I learned in my career.” She currently serves as a Public Health Advisor in the Fiscal Planning and Evaluation Office Global Health Center, Office of the Director Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Lieutenant Commander Mirabelle Neh Adamu, PharmD, MPH will be seeking a Certificate in Global Health to “increase knowledge of issues, policies, and practices in global health. It will also allow me to work more effectively in my role as a PHERST Pharmacist officer in strategic decision-making as I arise to lead global health initiatives that continuously impact the health security of our nation and the world at large.” She is a Pharmacy Officer with the Public Health Emergency Response Strike Team (PHERST) Region 3, Office of the Surgeon General Commissioned Corps Headquarters.

see **FELLOWSHIP** on page 6

from the
Executive
Director



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

Advocacy is something we do every day, for each of you. Sometimes the initiatives are big, like explaining to the airlines why active-duty officers deserve waived baggage fees and priority boarding like their Armed Forces colleagues, and sometimes our efforts are small, but in a way no less important or consequential.

Last week I received a random email from a vendor who was selling “Women Veterans Honor Pins.” My curiosity was piqued, so I opened the message. The individual was selling a nicely designed pin, “die-struck and enamel-filled, highly polished, with dual rear clasps, 5 pins for \$27.00.” Not bad, I thought. Here is a graphic of the pin.

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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 USPHS 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

CPH Exam Discount

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

May I Have A Volunteer Please?

by LCDR Kassidy Burchett RN, MBA-HC, LCDR Joseph (Chad) Ralls RN, LCDR Sandra Carpio, DrPH, MS, and LT Jazmin Reed PhD

Recently, LCDR Kassidy Burchett and I (LCDR Chad Ralls) volunteered to co-lead the Volunteer Coordination Workgroup within the JOAG Outreach Planning Subcommittee (SC) to assist with planning for the 2023 USPHS Symposium in Tulsa, Oklahoma. We were not sure what to expect from our volunteer commitment, but after reading the standard operating procedures (SOPs), we discovered that we had quite a bit of responsibility. We quickly found out that our Planning SC Leads, LCDR Peter Hughes and LT Jazmin Reed, were great resources to answer our questions and help keep us on track.

We started by learning to use the tools that had historically assisted previous leads in the volunteer coordination process. We immediately realized that communication was our primary tool. Both LCDR Kassidy and I are assigned to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), and that comes with additional challenges, as our work email addresses can only be accessed while physically at work. Tracking all the announcements and volunteers while on our work computers proved to be quite a task. Also, as co-department heads of Health Services at the Federal Correctional Institution, El Reno, we receive constant emails in multiple inboxes of institutional happenings, staff requests, and other work updates, and soon realized that we needed to work together to carve out time and create a special JOAG folder to fulfill our JOAG commitment.

LCDR Burchett and I have different personalities, but we complemented

each other, which helped us throughout our journey to troubleshoot issues and accomplish our goals as volunteer coordinators. She is very communication-driven and a “go getter,” while I’m more reserved and thrive with technicalities. With our combined attributes and efforts, we created marketing materials for the JOAG Room/Ride Share Program for the symposium that was accessed 31 times resulting in more officers being able to attend symposium in a more cost-effective manner. We also received 35 volunteer commitments for two wonderful causes in the Tulsa community, 13 volunteer commitments for the Junior Officer Career Enhancement Booth, and seven volunteer commitments to take photographs of JOAG-led events at symposium. We also supported the Uniform SC within the JOAG Outreach Committee with recruiting over 50 volunteers to successfully staff the Uniform Inspection Booth. During the symposium, we managed on-site volunteer logistics to ensure that all activities were staffed appropriately, all volunteers understood their assigned tasks, and addressed any questions they had.

Together, with valuable insight from our SC leads, LCDR Burchett and I met our commitment and gained invaluable insight into what happens outside of our BOP fences. We interacted and communicated with some wonderful USPHS officers and ultimately met them all at symposium. We learned along the way that offering officers access to our personal emails and cell phones was beneficial as it allowed us to think about the commitment outside of our daily duties. In all, we gained valuable experiences outside of our comfort zone, networked with some amazing and dedicated officers, and gained some friends.



September Is Environmental Health Month

by CDR Robert Horsch, Ph.D., MPH, CIH, REHS; LCDR Tyler White, CIH, REHS; LT Justin Rusch, MS, REHS; LT Paula Valdisera; LTJG Kiwanda McLemore, MPH, MS, CHES

Please join Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) as we celebrate Environmental Health Month this September.

September 26th is identified as World Environmental Health Day by the International Federation of Environmental Health. The Environmental Health Officer Professional Advisory Committee (EHOPAC) joins environmental health organizations around the globe to recognize and celebrate the profession and its impact on global health. The EHOPAC welcomes all officers in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps to join the celebration in its declaration of Environmental Health (EH) Month each September.

For nearly 80 years, EHOs have proudly served in the USPHS Commissioned Corps to protect and advance the nation's health and safety. USPHS Commissioned Corps EHOs have a distinguished history of serving the public health needs of all Americans.

What is Environmental Health?

EH is defined as the science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting wellness by identifying and evaluating environmental sources and hazardous agents, and limiting exposures to hazardous physical, chemical, and biological agents in air, water, soil, food, and or settings that may adversely affect human health. Among public health professions, EH specializes in identifying the environmental factors that lead to disease. Historically, EH practitioners inspected water sources and food establishments within the community or issued permits for events. Over time, EH professionals came to work in a variety of settings as toxicologists, accident investigators, and safety professionals. EH has evolved alongside other public health professions, applying its core competencies to new issues and challenges such as climate science, environmental injustice, and health disparities. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for EH subject matter experts within specialty areas assessing the risk of airborne disease transmission (e.g., via ventilation systems), mitigating disease risk (e.g., identifying appropriate PPE for personnel/respirator fit testing), and selecting appropriate mechanisms to prevent disease transmission from surfaces (e.g., designing and implementing disinfection programs).

EHO History

The Public Health Service Acts of 1943 and 1944 authorized the USPHS Commissioned Corps to commission additional professions, including Sanitarians. The first Sanitarians were called to active duty in 1943, including CAPT John C. Eason Jr., the first African American USPHS officer. Early Sanitarians' work assignments included Malaria control and other EH services like water purification, sewage disposal, food sanitation, and insect



LT Paula Valdisera facilitated a car seat check point on the U&O Reservation in Fort Duchesne, UT as part of the Ute Indian Tribe's Annual Kids Day in April 2023.

and rodent control. Over the next several decades, the duties of Sanitarians expanded to include industrial hygiene, occupational health, and radiation/health physics. In 1999, the name of the Sanitarian category was officially changed to the EHO category to better represent the growing and diverse nature of the category. Read more about our category's history: [The Evolution of the Environmental Health Officer Category.](#)

EHOs in Action

As of 2023, approximately 315 EHOs serve the USPHS Commissioned Corps at 15 federal agencies and programs, most commonly the Indian Health Service, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). EHOs provide critical services in the fields of epidemiological surveillance, disease prevention, radiological health, industrial hygiene, food safety, health policy, injury prevention and education, project management, and emergency preparedness. EHOs may specialize or practice broadly in the field, with positions including responding to environmental threats that result from natural or man-made disasters and filling critical roles such as safety officers to support clinical missions. The EHO category responded to over 230 deployments between 2020-2021 for the COVID-19 response. EHOs were called upon for their expertise in preventing airborne disease transmission, with a critical need for respirator fit testing, disinfection specialists, and ventilation experts.

The EHOs of the USPHS Commissioned Corps are proud to showcase their service and heritage. We welcome you to celebrate with us as we live our commitment to service and the practice of EH this September!

Commissioned Corps Officers Attend FDA Basic Investigator Training

by LT Dena Elimam, PhD, MPH, LT Iqra Iftikhar, MPH, LT Samuel Aboagye, MPH, REHS, LT Gifty Tuffour, MPH, BSN, RN, LT Wendelljoy Manio, RN-PHN, LCDR Patricia Wrona, MPH, RS, LCDR Ulysses Singleton, PT, DPT, FAC-COR.

From July 31 – August 18, 2023, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA) held their New Hire Basic Investigator Training in Gaithersburg, MD for their latest cohort of field investigators. The training covers a standard curriculum for all newly hired field investigators and lab analysts to ensure they possess the knowledge and skills needed in enforcing the FDA regulations. Field investigators, also known as regulatory or Consumer Safety Officers (CSOs), represent the agency's frontlines in protecting public health and ensuring that the commodities regulated by the FDA are safe and effective for consumers. Seven U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps (CC) officers, working in ORA's food, devices, and imports programs participated in the training. They learned about the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics (FD&C) Act and other laws that the agency enforces, how the laws apply to the different FDA-regulated commodities as well as essential investigational skills.

The seven trainees included LCDR Ulysses Singleton, who previously served in the U.S. Navy as a hospital corpsman prior to commissioning in the USPHS in 2018. His most recent job was instructional officer with the training branch at CC Headquarters (CCHQ). In his new assignment, LCDR Singleton will be working as a CSO in the devices program at the Tampa, FL resident post.

LCDR Patricia Wrona was a prior Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP) participant and commissioned as an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) in 2018. She previously worked as an EHO for the Indian Health Service prior to her transfer to the FDA in March 2023. LCDR Wrona currently works as a CSO under the FDA's Human and Animal Food (HAF) program in the Tempe, AZ resident post.

LT Samuel Aboagye was a hospital corpsman with the U.S. Navy before commissioning with USPHS in 2018 as an EHO. He worked as a Safety and Environmental Officer with the U.S. Coast Guard for three years before transferring to FDA's HAF program as a CSO in Roanoke, VA.

LT Wendelljoy Manio commissioned as a Senior COSTEP (SRCOSTEP) nurse with the BOP in San Diego, CA in 2018. She later became the Infectious Disease Coordinator in 2020 prior to her transfer to FDA in January 2023. She currently works as a CSO for the Division of West Coast Imports in the Ontario, CA resident post.

LT Gifty Tuffour commissioned in 2021 as a Health Service Officer (HSO). She previously worked as an Assistant Health Service Administrator and Facility Healthcare Program Manager with the



LCDR Ulysses Singleton, LCDR Patricia Wrona, LT Samuel Aboagye, LT Dena Elimam, LT Iqra Iftikhar, LT Gifty Tuffour, LT Wendelljoy Manio.

Immigration Health Service Corps (IHSC) prior to her transition to FDA. She currently works as a CSO with FDA's HAF program in the Wilmington, DE resident post.

LT Dena Elimam is a newly commissioned Scientist Officer and was called to active duty in May 2023. She currently works as a CSO with FDA's HAF program in the East Brunswick, NJ resident post.

LT Iftikhar is a newly commissioned HSO and graduated from OBC on July 21st, 2023. LT Iftikhar's first assignment is in Richmond, VA as a CSO with FDA's HAF program.

In addition to the training, the three-week period provided the officers with opportunities to engage in several USPHS-related activities. To promote officership, LCDR Ulysses Singleton and LCDR Patricia Wrona offered to provide assistance and answer questions for the newly commissioned officers at the training during a group dinner. Some of the topics covered included previous agency assignments, readiness, deployments, awards and promotions. Some of the officers also took the opportunity to participate in local USPHS-organized events. LT Dena Elimam and LT Iqra Iftikhar participated in an FDA Commissioned Corps Network Adopt-A-Highway sponsored event. They joined a group of local officers to clean a two-miles stretch in front of the FDA Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD.

At the conclusion of the training, the officers gained a deeper understanding of their roles as regulatory officers in the enforcement of the FDA laws and regulations. They learned valuable field investigative skills including promoting voluntary compliance, interviewing techniques, sample collections, and how to apply and reference the laws and regulations from the FD&C Act during field assignments. The officers are committed to applying the skills they acquired during the training in protecting the public's health in service of the FDA and USPHS missions.

Helping Lives Through Community Service

by LT LaToya Jacobs-Kibble, MPH, CHES, LT Tessa Fletcher, DNP, and LT Catherine Lamptey, RN, BSN

The U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps has a long history of providing help to communities in need anywhere across the nation, and at times, internationally. During the recent 2023 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium, officers had the opportunity to continue their great service within the local community of Tulsa, Oklahoma, led by CAPT Beverly Dandridge and LCDR Maria R. Delossantos. The Nurse Professional Advisory Committee (N-PAC) collaborated with three local non-profit organizations – Emergency Infant Services, Ronald McDonald House Charities, and Habitat for Humanity – and provided USPHS officers who volunteered to support their mission of service for their current community needs.

Emergency Infant Services has played a vital role in supporting families within the Tulsa, Oklahoma area for the past 46 years. Founded by a Presbyterian Church, this organization has maintained its operations through donations from the community, grants, and fundraising. With more than 75 active volunteers and 17 full time staff members, the organization currently provides support to more than 100 families per day offering social services, community resources, furniture, and clothing. USPHS officers CAPT Beverly Dandridge, LCDR Maria Delossantos, LT Bobbi Tallman, and LT Amy Moore volunteered to support the mission of Emergency Infant Services by assisting with restocking and re-organizing gift bins. The officers also organized and sorted clothing, toys and blankets for infants, children, and adults. These items were to be distributed to a local boutique where families can “shop” for needed supplies at no cost to the family.

The first Ronald McDonald House Charities opened its doors in 1974, in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. With the vision of Dr. Audrey Evans, a local pediatric oncologist, it provides a “home away from home” for parents of seriously ill children. Since its inception, the Ronald McDonald House Charities has expanded globally, caring for families around the world through their three core programs, Ronald McDonald House Programs, Ronald McDonald Family Room Programs, and Ronald McDonald Care Mobile Programs. On May 7, 2023, USPHS officers CAPT Beverly Dandridge, LCDR Peter Hughes, LCDR Angelina Williams, LT LaToya Jacobs-Kibble, and LT Azeezat Lawal, volunteered as guest bakers at the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tulsa. The officers baked cookies and cakes to provide approximately 98 individual servings to feed the families currently being housed while their children receive medical care for chronic illnesses at a local hospital. The facility currently has a 24-room capacity and provides daily meals to families as they stay within proximity to their loved one. The volunteer work of these officers allowed guest to treat themselves to a dessert without the additional worries of preparation and cleaning.



Officers volunteer as guest bakers at the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tulsa.

The organization Habitat for Humanity originated from a concept of partnership housing. Farmer Clarence Jordan along with founders Millard and Linda Fuller developed this concept with a focus on those in need of adequate shelter; anticipating that volunteers could work side by side to build decent and affordable houses within a nonprofit framework. This would allow the mortgage payments for new homeowners to be combined with no interest loans. On May 8, 2023, LTJG Gayon Earle participated in a volunteer mission at the Green Country Habitat for Humanity in Tulsa, OK. Here she was placed in the Restore Habitat for Humanity's nonprofit home furnishings and donation center. LTJG Earle worked alongside other volunteers in sorting donations, arranging the showroom floor, and helping customers to put purchases in their vehicles. The service provided allowed this officer to engage with recipients of homes built by Habitat for Humanity and hear their unique stories of perseverance. Listening to the inspirational testimonies and knowing that the services rendered brought great assistance to those in need, made the hot, dusty, and laborious day bearable for LTJG Earle.

To volunteer is a highly rewarding experience, especially when the positive impact on individual's lives is so evident. These officers were able to participate in activities that provided valuable personal and professional networking opportunities and enhanced interpersonal skills, problem-solving, and teamwork. All officers are encouraged to seek volunteer opportunities to contribute, serve and care for others in our daily lives, supporting our professional mission to protect, promote, and advance the health of the nation.

Flexing the Interdependence Muscle

by CDR Katie Jacques, PT, DPT, OCS, CAHA, CPL, COA
Chair- Elect

The temperature in the air with Commissioned Corps is mixed in nature now. We want to acknowledge, at COA, we hear you. This column covers several topics that have a common thread, flexing the interdependence muscle, not the independence one.

I have two little girls - three and five years old. As a parent, it is often encouraged to teach our children to be independent and self-reliant. Independence is a valuable attribute. It helps them pursue passions, develop skill sets, and become self-sufficient. In addition to independence, I am finding it equally important to focus on interdependence - how we rely on others and how to be a person whom others can rely on.

One of the only constants in life is change, and we cannot do it alone. In the Corps, we are seeing changes occurring in policy, an unknown future with Ready Reserve and PHERST, and entering a new promotion cycle process starting this year. These types of changes are not unheard of in our sister services. I was recently chatting with my cousin who is in the Army and stationed in Alaska. For the past three months, he thought he was going to be deployed for a year. He has a lot of time, planning and energy spent in getting ready to go. Twenty-four hours before he was supposed to leave, his orders were pulled, and he was told to stay in place. I asked him how I could support him in such a quick, unpredictable pivot. He shared, "by listening, being a friend and support - everything else will fall in place." Now, it's not

easy or always serendipitous. But what I heard at that moment from him, was interdependence. He had a trusted place to share confrontational and uncomfortable feelings within his trusted community circle to navigate the situation.

It is human nature to have feelings about decisions or situations that are out of our control. We may be jealous of a fellow officer who was promoted, or one that had job security at a time when another officer is feeling vulnerable. We don't have to judge ourselves for having these feelings, but we do have to hold ourselves accountable for how we act in response to those feelings.

A rising tide lifts all boats. Take this time to lean on your COA and officer communities. We are here to elevate each other. I am fortunate to have an amazing COA and officer community. COA wants everyone to have that experience. I am a lifetime member and appreciate the opportunity to be a member of my local branch. I want to take a moment to share my gratitude for COA. As the sole organization to serve the USPHS, it gracefully flexes the interdependence muscle. It is a common thread for all officers who are members, locally and nationally, and allows us to have a space to be creative, like hosting an Invisible Corps documentary screening. COA has served all officers with major wins which are summarized on the COA website. It is a place to lean on each other. If you are not a member, please consider it. If you have not renewed your membership, I hope you consider all COA has to offer and renew today. I strongly believe every officer should be a member. Come be interdependent with us!

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The Foundation congratulates all three officers for seeking continuing education opportunities to improve the health of the communities they serve. It would also like to thank the donors who support this scholarship program and the volunteers who reviewed the fellowship applications. More information about the RADM Jerrold Michael Fellowship can be found at:

<https://www.phscof.org/scholarships/radm-michael-fellowship/>



Fellowship Recipient
LT Gabriella Wuyke



Fellowship Recipient
LCDR Briana Rider



Fellowship Recipient
LCDR Mirabelle Adamu

Meet our Newest COA Directors and COF Trustee

LCDR JENNA COPE

LCDR Jenna Cope serves as the Dietitian Representative on the COA Board of Directors. She is a Senior Public Health Analyst in the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth at Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. At HRSA, she is a Program Coordinator for the Telehealth Broadband Pilot Program and a Project Officer with the Evidence-Based Telehealth Network Program.



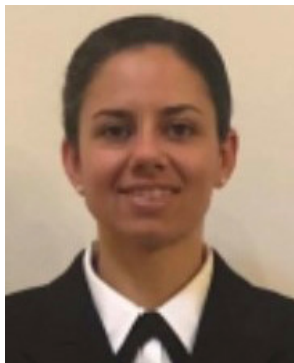
LCDR RACHEL FORCHE

LCDR Forche began her career with the USPHS in 2015 as a JRCOSTEP and commissioned full time in 2017 at the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she worked on longitudinal tobacco research and contributed to regulatory science in the Center for Tobacco Products. From 2019-2023, LCDR Forche served at Federal Occupational Health (FOH) in Dallas, TX, conducting and overseeing environmental, occupational health, and safety assessments and trainings for >22 federal agencies nationwide. Currently, LCDR Forche is a Public Health Advisor at the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), where she works with state and local health departments on their public health preparedness & response cooperative agreements. As an Environmental Health Officer, LCDR Forche has deployed in response to Hurricanes Harvey, Florence, and Fiona; the United Nations General Assembly; COVID-19; and Remote Area Medical missions.



CDR ALYSSA GIVENS

CDR Alyssa Givens serves as the Nurse Representative on the COA Board of Directors. CDR Givens is currently assigned to the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). She has held the position of Aeromedical Branch Chief providing medical oversight of prisoner transportation and Utilization Review Coordinator responsible for care management of prisoners within USMS custody. CDR Givens has served as a track team lead and track presentation mediator for the COF Symposium Abstract



Committee and was selected to assist on the USPHS Symposium Nurse Category Day Planning Committee. She recently became a member of the COA Communications and Public Relations Committee.

CAPT TERRY HOFFELD (RET)

CAPT Hoffeld serves as one of the three Retired Officer Representatives on the COA Board of Directors. CAPT Hoffeld was commissioned as a USPHS Dental Officer (Scientist) at the National Institute of Dental Research, NIH. He co-founded and chaired an NIH-wide monthly ROS forum that still meets. He also coordinated the research component of a new Oral Medicine Fellowship Program. He volunteered for an emergency detail to the NIH Division of Research Grants (DRG; now Center for Scientific Review, CSR). He was selected as a LEGIS Fellow, serving a half-year as a Legislative Assistant in a U.S. Senate Office. CAPT Hoffeld was then appointed as Director of the Office of Scientific Review at the new Agency for Healthcare Policy and Research (now AHRQ) and then returned to CSR. While on active duty for thirty years, he served on a series of local COA committees culminating in two consecutive terms as President of the DC Area COA Branch Board of Directors. As a Retired Officer Representative, Terry also holds a spot as a Trustee for the COF Board.



RADM DAVID GOLDMAN (RET)

RADM David Goldman (Ret), M.D., MPH, is serving his first year on the COF Board of Trustees. Before retirement, his most recent position was with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the Chief Medical Officer, Office of Food Policy and Response. Dr. Goldman is a board-certified family medicine and preventive medicine/public health physician, and a member of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service since February 2002. He spent 10 years in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, practicing both family medicine and preventive medicine. He then spent 3 ½ years at the Virginia Department of Health, first as a District Health Director, then briefly as the Deputy State Epidemiologist, before joining the USPHS and FSIS.



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Of course, I emailed him back right away, saying “As a woman veteran, I appreciate the sentiment of this pin. But do you realize that you have left two groups of women veterans off your pin—female officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS)? We have eight uniformed services in our federal government, not six. NOAA and USPHS veterans are fully entitled to all federal veteran benefits, including care and disability benefits from the VA. In fact, federal law defines and views them as equal. When this supply of pins is sold, we hope your company will consider modifying the pin.”

He wrote back directly, saying “Thank you for writing...and WOW. Many thousands of these pins have shipped to honor our women veterans over the past 3 years across the U.S. And this is the very first such reply. Straight up, I did not know. I was not aware. And I am intrigued. A female veteran (USAF, ret), national VSO leader, and I originally collaborated on this pin. When I think back on some of the ranks who have ordered, and still no such notice. Captain Rychnovsky, you have certainly stirred my ‘must know...must study’ response. I am grateful for this insight to delve into. Right away.”

Captain (retired) Alan Echt, Chair of COA’s Legislative Affairs Committee, suggested that I send him a graphic of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) coin which includes all eight services, and language from the Department of Veterans Affairs website that defines active military service as full-time

service, other than active duty for training, as a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service, Environmental Science Services Administration, or National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or its predecessor, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, which I did. I will let you know if I hear back about a redesigned pin, should it ever become available.

On a related note, we received an invitation to attend the August Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs State Conference. One of our Retired Officer Directors, Captain (Ret.) Margo Riggs, attended to represent COA, as both a veteran and a Kentucky resident. Be on the lookout for an article from her in October about her experience. COA’s Deputy Director, Dave Corrigan, also attended the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) semi-annual meeting in Buffalo, New York, where he continues to make excellent connections to advocate on your behalf. Remember, 100% of us will be veterans one day if you are not already. This is important to YOU.

And finally, unfortunately we have not received any additional updates regarding the waiver for active-duty baggage fees from Delta, American, Sun Country, Horizon, Republic, Jet Blue, Alaska, and Hawaiian Airlines, but we have not stopped checking. We appreciate the pro bono work being done for COA by the Law Office of Shannon James on this initiative.

Until next month!



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Heart of America COA Partners with US Army for a Webinar on Spiritual Resilience

by LCDR Dwight Ferguson, PhD, REHS/RS

We often go through life carrying burdens from trauma or moral injury. Moral injury is described by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as, “doing an act against your moral beliefs and failure to act according to your moral beliefs.”¹ How we process trauma or moral injury can help us overcome difficult and horrendous situations. Recently, the Heart of America (HOA) COA collaborated with Chaplain Daniel Herring, US Army, Fort Leavenworth to provide a webinar on spiritual care and resilience for trauma and moral injury. During the live online webinar, offered to all COA officers and their families, Chaplain Herring provided an overview of trauma, moral injury, spiritual injury, and spiritual care for those suffering from trauma, moral injury and spiritual injury. Moreover, Chaplain Herring discussed methods to address trauma and moral injury through spiritual care.

An outcome we can often experience due to trauma and moral injury is guilt. One method to address this guilt is to identify whether the guilt experienced is illegitimate (feeling of wrongdoing when you did not do something wrong) or legitimate (feeling for actual wrongdoing or not responding correctly). Chaplain Herring discussed an approach to addressing illegitimate guilt with truth and facts, and legitimate guilt with confession and forgiveness. Another



Although the event was held virtually for COA members, four Army Chaplains were able to join LCDR Ferguson (Left) and Chaplain Herring (Second from left) in-person aboard Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for the resilience training.

resource offered by Chaplain Herring was utilizing a spiritual practice of lamentation (a way to express sorrow). In addition, Chaplain Herring provided examples from movies and books where the characters expressed various enactments of laments. As a chaplain with a Judeo-Christian framework, Chaplain Herring referenced Psalm 13 as an example of going from lamentation to praise. Furthermore, he discussed that chaplains provide resources for all who seek their assistance regardless of a person having a specific spiritual tradition or no spiritual tradition. Thus, chaplains can be a valuable

resource for officers and their families during the highs and lows of life.

We all have struggles that we are going through. Whether it is a trauma or moral injury. As officers in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and members of COA, we don't have to carry our grief, shame and guilt alone. Seeking spiritual care through chaplains is one way to foster and improve the spiritual well-being of our officers.

1. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/cooccurring/moral_injury.asp#:~:text=Moral%20injury%20is%20the%20distressing,individual's%20values%20and%20moral%20beliefs.

Advancing Public Health through Promoting Environmental Stewardship at NIH Take Your Child to Work Day

by CAPT Leo Angelo Gumapas, LCDR Armin Oormazdi and LCDR Matthew Hunt

The National Institute of Health (NIH) organized its Earth Day Activities in front of Building 1 on the NIH Bethesda Campus in Bethesda, MD during the 29th Anniversary of Take Your Child to Work Day on April 27, 2023. There was a total of 19 different Earth Day activities to protect the environment and minimize your environmental impact.

USPHS Commissioned Corps Engineers set up a booth that featured two different activities to discuss the public health implications of electricity generated through fossil fuel combustion. Fossil fuel combustion emissions consist of sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxides, carbon dioxide, mercury, and other pollutants.

The first activity consisted of a bike that generated electricity, which was used to power a stereo playing music. Students and adults wanted to generate the most power measured in watts. It was entertaining to watch everyone wait in line and then have their turn on the bike. Students and adults observed that the maximum power that was able to be generated was limited by the maximum bike speed. The exhibit taught students the importance of exercise, how electricity can be generated, and how much electricity is needed to run specific appliances.

The second activity featured the importance of energy storage as a critical component to renewable energy. USPHS Commissioned Corps Engineers built a circuit, which consisted of a solar panel charging a lithium battery, and the lithium battery was powering an electrical fan. When the solar panel was covered, the electrical fan continued to operate because the lithium battery provided power to the motor.

The circuit provided an informative dialog on the current limitation of renewable energy for reducing fossil fuel combustion due to power generation variances based on the time of day. Fossil fuel generators would need to continue to operate to provide electricity to customers when the sun is not shining, or the wind is not blowing. However, when a renewable energy source is combined with energy storage, the capability of air pollution free and carbon pollution free electricity can be provided, and an all-electric building can continue to operate.



LCDR Armin Oormazdi operating a bike that generates electricity to power a stereo during the Earth Day activities organized during the 29th NIH Take Your Child to Work Day on April 27, 2023.

The USPHS Engineers discussed the following in closing with each visit how individuals can be a part of the solution:

1. Federal Tax Credits and Maryland Energy Income Tax Credits to build a clean energy system in your residence, which is either installing solar panels, battery energy storage, or both.
2. Participation in "Green Pricing," which is pay for a small premium to your electricity provider to provide you with electricity generated by renewable energy.
3. Practicing to conserve energy because the United States is the 2nd country in the world that uses the most energy per home.

Over a 4-hour time span, 375 individuals stopped by the USPHS booth to either ride the bike that generated electricity or to play with solar panel-battery-fan circuit.

The dedication, professionalism, and willingness of the USPHS Commissioned Corps Engineers to serve resulted in not only a successful event but also the advancement of the USPHS mission while highlighting public health and engineering concepts. Their involvement in this event helped promote the role of engineering and the connection to public health.

Don't Delay Your TRICARE Covered Cancer Screenings

by Military Health System and the Defense Health Agency
Strategic Communications Division

If you had cancer, you'd probably want to know as soon as possible. That's because when it comes to cancer, time is critical. Generally, the earlier a cancer is found, the easier it may be to treat or cure. Some types of cancer can be detected before a person even shows symptoms. TRICARE covers screenings for these cancers as part of your preventive care benefit.

You can get some cancer screenings during your next Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HP&DP) exam, which makes prioritizing cancer screenings and other preventive services more convenient. And as outlined in the TRICARE Costs and Fees Fact Sheet, you'll have no out-of-pocket costs for getting preventive care when you follow your plan's rules.

Your age, your sex, and if you have certain risk factors determine which cancers you should be screened for and how often you should be screened for them. Read on to learn which cancer screenings are appropriate for you.

1. Breast Cancer

TRICARE covers clinical breast exams during a covered HP&DP exam. TRICARE also covers mammograms every 12 months for women who are:

- Age 40 or older
- Age 30 or older with a 15% or greater lifetime risk of developing breast cancer

For women age 30 or older with a 20% or greater lifetime risk of developing breast cancer, TRICARE covers annual breast MRI screening in addition to annual mammograms.

2. Cervical Cancer

TRICARE covers Pap tests (also called Pap smears) for women starting at age 21. Generally, you should get a Pap test at least once every three years. Your provider may recommend that you get Pap tests more frequently.

If you're age 30 or older, TRICARE also covers HPV DNA testing when done in conjunction with a Pap test.

3. Colorectal Cancer

If you're age 45 or older with average risk for colon cancer, TRICARE covers several different types of screenings for colorectal cancer. Ask your provider about which screenings are appropriate for you.

4. Lung Cancer

Do you have a history of smoking? TRICARE covers lung cancer screening if you:

- Are 50 to 80 years old
- Have a 20 pack per year or more history of smoking
- Currently smoke or have quit smoking within the past 15 years

5. Oral Cavity and Pharyngeal Cancers

TRICARE covers a complete oral cavity examination as part of routine preventive care if you're an adult at high risk due to exposure to tobacco or excessive amounts of alcohol.

6. Prostate Cancer

TRICARE covers annual prostate cancer exams for men. Your coverage depends on your age and other factors. Typically, TRICARE covers your testing if you're age 50 or older with at least a 10-year life expectancy. However, you may be eligible for prostate cancer exams starting at age 40 or age 45 if you have certain risk factors (family history, race).

7. Skin Cancer

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S. TRICARE covers skin cancer exams if you:

- Have a family or personal history of skin cancer
- Have increased occupational or recreational exposure to sunlight
- Show clinical evidence of precursor lesions

Precursor lesions are abnormal areas of your skin that could turn into cancer. Talk to your provider if you notice any changes in your skin, including a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a change in a mole, or if you have concerns about your exposure to sunlight.

8. Testicular Cancer

Are you a male age 13 through 39? TRICARE covers testicular cancer exams annually if you have a history of cryptorchidism, orchiopexy, or testicular atrophy.

9. Thyroid Cancer

TRICARE covers thyroid cancer physical exams for adults with a history of upper body exposure to radiation.

Because clinical recommendations for cancer screenings can change over time, talk to your provider about which screenings are right for you. And remember, these screenings are meant to detect cancer before symptoms appear. If you show signs or symptoms of any type of cancer, visit your provider as soon as possible. Visit the CDC and the National Cancer Institute websites to learn more.

Public Health Is a National Security Issue

by Captain Pietro D. Marghella, U.S. Navy (Retired)

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Part 1: On 11 May 2023, the federal public health emergency related to the coronavirus expired. As U.S. citizens breathe a sigh of relief that the COVID-19 pandemic might actually be over, it is a good time to review the nation's preparedness for similar emerging national security threats. Bottom-line: "Domestic preparedness" remains an illusion.

After at least ten major "incidents of national significance"—including the COVID-19 pandemic—over the past two decades, the nation has demonstrated an inability to conduct an effective incident management response.¹ This is especially true for the healthcare and public health critical infrastructure and key resource sectors.

The reason for this continual failure? Public health does not get a seat at the table when it comes to addressing national security issues. In fact, public health has never really been treated as a national security concern. This is a fatal mistake.

By early May 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began to hit its hard and violent stride. Dr. Rick Bright, ousted director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Agency, warned Congress during nationally televised testimony that the nation would face a "darkest winter" if steps were not taken to better manage the outbreak. Many of those involved with the military, disaster management, and public health preparedness communities caught the message Dr. Bright was sending.

"Dark Winter" was the name of a 2001 senior-level national war game intended to examine the national security, intergovernmental, and information management challenges of a bioterrorism attack on the U.S. homeland.² Conducted just 80 days before 9/11 and scheduled to last several days, the exercise ended after less than eight hours when the scenario, using smallpox as the protagonist agent, "broke" the gameplay and overwhelmed the players representing the President, the National Security Council, and key cabinet officials.

The United States lost nearly 1.2 million citizens to the COVID-19 pandemic—more than double the number of Americans killed as a result of every war fought by the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries. Threats to the nation's public health are threats to national security. Dreamstime

Despite this, exercise facilitators published the following findings based on their observations:

1. An attack on the United States with biological weapons could threaten vital national security interests. Massive civilian casualties, breakdown in essential institutions, violation of democratic processes, civil disorder, loss of confidence in



The United States lost nearly 1.2 million citizens to the COVID-19 pandemic—more than double the number of Americans killed as a result of every war fought by the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries. Threats to the nation's public health are threats to national security.

government, and reduced strategic flexibility abroad are among the ways a biological attack could compromise U.S. security.

2. Current organizational structure and capabilities are not well-suited for the management of a [biological weapons] attack. Major "fault lines" exist between different levels of government (federal, state, and local), between government and the private sector, among different institutions and agencies, and within the public and private sector. These "disconnects" could impede situational awareness and compromise the ability to limit loss of life, suffering, and economic damage.
3. There is no surge capability in the U.S. healthcare and public health systems or the pharmaceutical and vaccines industries. This institutionally limited surge capacity could result in hospitals being overwhelmed and becoming inoperable, and it could impede public health agencies' analysis of the scope, source, and progress of the epidemic, their ability to educate and reassure the public, and their capacity to limit casualties and the spread of disease.
4. Dealing with the media will be a major immediate challenge at all levels of government. Information management and communications (e.g., dealing with the press effectively, communication with citizens, maintaining the information flows necessary for command and control at all institutional levels) will be a critical element in crisis/consequence management.
5. Should a contagious bioweapon pathogen be used, containing the spread of disease will present significant ethical, political, cultural, operational, and legal challenges.³

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Part 2 of this article will be published in the October issue of *Frontline*.

COA Advocates for State Benefits at NASDVA Conference

by Dave Corrigan, Deputy Director of COA

As promised last month, I want to offer a follow-up to my article in August's issue of Frontline (page 4). I attended the annual conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) in Buffalo, New York on August 14th and 15th and was able to meet with a number of state directors of veterans affairs to discuss USPHS parity.

In the past, COA never attended the annual NASDVA conference but has since realized the value of constant networking with state directors in-person to build necessary relationships for advocacy at the state level. Our members have seen the recent updates throughout the summer about national legislation and the efforts COA is taking to save the USPHS Ready Reserve and Public Health Emergency Response Strike Team (PHERST). With that said, COA, its Legislative Affairs Committee, and individual members have been hard at work fighting for parity across multiple states including Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Arizona, Ohio, Alaska, and Michigan. The NASDVA conference was a great opportunity for us to meet face-to-face with a lot of the veterans advocates we have spoken to via email or phone.

In fact, the Executive Director of NASDVA now makes it a point to ensure advocates for USPHS have a time slot to present to all the attendees. This year, USPHS Commissioned Corps Legislative Affairs joined me at the conference to speak. Rear Admiral Susan Orsega, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) and the US Surgeon General. (SG), briefed the audience to educate attendees about what the USPHS is, where USPHS officers serve, and what hurdles USPHS officers face when applying for benefits at the state-level.

COA is able to take a more direct approach and ask states to assist us in our efforts in their state. Although many state directors are unable to make immediate changes to state laws or policies, they are a strong voice in supporting our efforts when we advocate to the legislature. The Commissioner of Alabama's Department of Veterans Affairs, RADM (Ret) Kent Davis, USN, is a supporter and has committed to assisting COA in extending veterans status to USPHS officers in Alabama.

Similarly, the Deputy Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Michigan, Robert Near, met with me to discuss extending veterans benefits to USPHS and NOAA officers. His intent is to create a blanket law that would allow for USPHS (and NOAA) to be eligible for all veterans benefits. COA has worked with the USPHS Commissioned Corps Legislative Affairs officers on this effort. They will be submitting a white paper to Michigan on the role and impact of USPHS in Michigan. COA has submitted our input to Michigan on the role and impact of COA and its members within Michigan. The Michigan Legislature relies on the Department of Veterans Affairs for input on laws and Mr. Near is confident this will pass. We are hopeful that there will be movement on this in the beginning of the new year.

Although state-level advocacy is the main effort of COA at the NASDVA conference, it is also a great opportunity for COA staff to learn about the latest information in veterans benefits at the federal VA. Since a one quarter of COA members are retirees, and each one of you will be a veteran at some point, we find this information helpful to provide to our members when needed. Additionally, we are able to network with high-ranking officials at the VA and gain points of contact for different offices that we may contact at the request of a member. This year, the Under Secretaries for the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the Veterans Benefits administration (VBA) were all in attendance and provided updates on their respective departments within the VA. Veterans disability benefits in relation to the PACT Act was a large portion of much of the presentations.

Additionally, I was able to speak to one of the NCA representatives that COA speaks to when one of our members has an issue or inquiry with a National Cemetery. This executive has worked with COA and agreed to have his office present to COA about burial in national cemeteries. That COA gathering and presentation will occur on November 8th via Zoom.

I hope this update was helpful. We will continue to work towards parity. If you would like to be involved or lead the effort on a state-level fight, let me know. Please reach out to advocacy@coausphs.org with any questions.

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35 USPHS Officers Promoted at CDC Roybal Campus

by Dave Corrigan, COA Deputy Director

I had the distinct opportunity to visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Roybal Campus in Atlanta, Georgia on Friday, August 25, 2023 to witness the annual Atlanta-area USPHS Promotion Ceremony. I was joined by RDML (Ret) Steve Solomon, past-president of the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF). During the ceremony, which was held as a collaboration of CDC and Atlanta COA (ACOA), 35 officers were promoted to Lieutenant Commander (LCDR), Commander (CDR), and Captain (CAPT). CAPT Deb Dee, Director of CDC/ATSDR Commissioned Corps Liaison Office served as the adjutant and was responsible for the planning and execution of a flawless event.

The ceremony opened with remarks by Dr. Debra Houry, Chief Medical Officer for CDC's Roybal Campus. As a civilian, she spoke about the important role that USPHS officers play through CDC. RDML Richard Schobitz, Director of Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), gave the keynote address and spoke to the importance of leadership for the newly promoted officers. To promote each of the officers, RADM Jonathan Mermin, Director for the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, served as the presiding officer.

A number of officers were unable to attend in-person and attended virtually to be promoted. The rest of the officers walked to the stage with their guests and conducted the changing of their shoulder bars and saluted the presiding officer. Among those officers in attendance, COA's Chair, LCDR James Gooch, was promoted to Commander during the ceremony. Additionally, COA Board Director Neelam Ghiya was promoted to Captain.

To close out the ceremony, RDML Cedric Guyton, Deputy Director for USPHS Commissioned Corps Services spoke about the importance that family is to the officers and how each of the family members in attendance should be celebrated, as well. After the event, officers, family members, and guests joined together in a reception and cake cutting, which was sponsored by ACOA.



RADM Jonathan Mermin with newly-promoted CDR James Gooch and family during the 2023 Annual Atlanta-area Promotion Ceremony at CDC Roybal Campus

Congratulations to all officers who were promoted:

To Captain

Jane Baumbblatt
Tracie Gardner
Neelam Ghiya
Alyson Goodman
Melissa Briggs Hagan
David Hunter

Jennifer Lind
Sarah Meyer
Danielle Milles
Julie Rae Sinclair
Jacinta Smith
Sara Vagi

To Commander

James Gooch
Ugonna Ijeoma
Jona Johnson
Marie Johnston
Ruth Link-Gelles
Neil Murthy

Ijeoma Perry
Colleen Scott
Katrina Sloan
Rebekah Stewart
Diya Surie
Laura Vonnahme

To Lieutenant Commander

Chiazor Eziakor
Dianca Finch
Sean Griffing
Sarah Hughes
Chandria Jones
Ana Lauer

Amanda Pullman
Phillip Salvatore
Allison Siu
Jeffrey Walker
Marien Wiley

North Central COA Serves Meal to Families at the Ronald McDonald House

by LCDR Amanda Wurdeman, PharmD, BCPS

On Monday, June 26, 2023, five officers from the North Central COA (NCCOA) branch volunteered to serve a meal at the Ronald McDonald House in Rochester, Minnesota. The Ronald McDonald House Charities provides housing and support to families seeking medical care for their children at the Mayo Clinic. It is the charity's flagship facility with the capacity to house up to about 70 families. Community volunteers are offered the opportunity to purchase the food, prepare, and serve the evening meal to the families who are staying there while their child undergoes medical treatment. The NCCOA officers provided sub sandwiches (with all the fixings), fruit salad, pickles, chips, and ice cream to approximately 50 people. "It is a meaningful way to provide support and help offset the time and cost to feed their families during this stressful time," said LT Kaitlyn Woodman. The event was a great success and the officers of NCCOA plan to return to the Ronald McDonald House to volunteer on a regular basis.



NCCOA officers ready to serve the meal they prepared for families at the Ronald McDonald House. (Left to right) LT Kaitlyn Woodman, LCDR Amanda Wurdeman, CDR Chao Moua, LTJG David Vieth, LT Gabriel Langseth



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Volunteering to Fight Against Food Insecurity

by LCDR Ryan Pommier DPT, OCS and LCDR Hana Kim, Ph.D., ABPP

Cape May, New Jersey - On April 29, 2023, the Cape May Community Food Closet received a much-needed facelift thanks to the efforts of two dedicated U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) officers and their families. LCDRs Ryan Pommier and Hana Kim, along with their dependents, volunteered their day to repaint the facility, which had not seen a fresh coat of paint in nearly two decades. This act of service reflected the Corps' commitment to public health and helping those in need. Nancy Hanslowe, Executive Director of the Cape May Community Food Closet, expressed her gratitude for the volunteer-led initiative, stating, "The last time our facility was painted was roughly 20 years ago and the place was in dire need of some sprucing up. The dedication shown by LCDR Pommier, LCDR Kim, and their families is truly heartwarming."

The Cape May Community Food Closet has been actively serving the community since 1981, ensuring that all its neighbors have access to nutritious food in Cape May, Cape May Point, West Cape May, and Lower Township, New Jersey. Their mission centers on fighting hunger through the procurement and distribution of groceries for qualified or low-income individuals and families on both regular and emergency bases. The organization operates through partnerships with donors and volunteers, maximizing resources to alleviate food insecurity.

Each month, the Food Closet provides groceries to approximately 300 families, consisting of around 400 adults and 150 children. Clients can visit the facility on the second and fourth Fridays of the month, where they can select a range of food items, including fresh produce, frozen meats, dairy products, and various canned, dried, and personal care items. For those who are homebound, the organization extends its service to approximately 80 families through home deliveries. The Cape May Community Food Closet is entirely run by volunteers, allowing an astounding 99% of donations to be directly allocated towards providing groceries to families in need.

LCDRs Pommier and Kim are not new to lending a helping hand to the Food Closet. Last December, they volunteered to assist



LCDR Hana Kim and Son front/middle, LCDR Ryan Pommier and spouse far right.

with preparations for a holiday food drive, showcasing their commitment to supporting this vital community resource.

Food pantries like the Cape May Community Food Closet are crucial assets to communities nationwide. Over 53 million people in the United States relied on food pantries for their daily sustenance in 2021. The economic challenges brought on by the pandemic only exacerbated the need, with long lines and increased demand for food banks across the country. Rising inflation, with grocery prices soaring by 11.8% in 2022, has further compounded the problem. LCDR Pommier shared his passion for volunteering at food banks, emphasizing how charitable organizations like these play a crucial role in addressing the needs of the less fortunate and rely heavily on volunteers to fulfill their missions.

The selfless efforts of LCDRs Ryan Pommier and Hana Kim, both detailed to the U.S Coast Guard at Training Center Cape May, in collaboration with the Cape May Community Food Closet, are an inspiring example of how a caring community can come together and make a lasting impact in the fight against hunger. Their dedication and leadership inspires others to follow, promoting a stronger and more compassionate Cape May.

NATIONAL CEMETERY BRIEF FROM NCA



PRESENTERS

Featuring:

- Larry Provost, M.P.S., M. Div.
National Cemetery Administration
Outreach Officer

Your Host:

- CAPT (Ret) Jacqueline
Rychnovsky COA Executive
Director



JOIN US

Planning for one's death is not easy. Join COA as the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) presents tips on how to plan for a burial at a national cemetery to alleviate stress on your family at the time of need.



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You can also use the QR code to register for this member-only event.

The 2023 USPHS Exercise Challenge

by LT Abbey Timmons, PT, DPT, WMS, and LCDR Angela Thompson-Paul, PhD, MSPH

2023 marked another successful year for the USPHS Exercise Challenge. While maintaining physical fitness as a part of basic readiness, many officers find it difficult to make the time for regular exercise. The USPHS Exercise Challenge creates a tangible goal to strive for, while also creating a forum for connecting and interacting with other officers.

As one of the Surgeon General Teams chartered activities, the USPHS Exercise Challenge supports the Surgeon General's initiatives and the Health and Human Services [2018 Physical Activities Guidelines for Americans](#). Running from January 2 to March 12, the 2023 USPHS Exercise Challenge required participants to exercise at least 150 minutes weekly at a moderate intensity for a minimum of 8 out of 10 weeks to earn a Letter of Appreciation. Participants can accomplish their exercise minutes through any type of cardiovascular or strength training activities. Participants reported running, rock climbing, skiing, dancing, CrossFit, yoga, swimming, weightlifting, and many other activities. It included opportunities for peer engagement through "extra credit" activities. Examples included the Zoom HIIT high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workout led by LCDR Nic Williams, a USPHS Exercise Challenge Playlist developed from songs recommended by participants, and a Healthy Cooking Demonstration with Registered Dietitian, LCDR Patricia Ellis via Zoom. Weekly newsletters offered information on a nutrition, fitness, or well-being related topic each week as well as quick stats, and reminders to log exercise minutes for the prior week.

The Exercise Challenge included 815 participants including civilians and USPHS Officers from all professional categories and 663 of these officers (81.3%) completed the event. An astonishing 1.5 million exercise minutes were logged. Participants earning LOAs averaged 246 minutes of exercise weekly and 142 officers averaged 300 minutes or more each week over the course of the challenge. Pharmacists had the highest number of participants from any single category at 175, while dietitians were the only category with a 100% participant completion rate. Participants hailed from all over the globe, logging their exercise minutes in 44 different U.S. states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Saipan, Thailand, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Switzerland, Kenya, Mozambique, and India.

The goal of the Exercise Challenge was to engage Commissioned Corps officers in consistent physical activity, and to facilitate a community of support. The beginning of the calendar year is a popular time for setting goals, but motivation often fades as the days and weeks go by. It is inspiring to be part of a group of people committed to accomplishing a common goal, and this year's Exercise Challenge was no exception. In the post-challenge survey, participants reported that they liked the accountability and motivation provided by the challenge, the timing at the beginning of the year, and the camaraderie. Participants shared



USPHS officers around the country take part in the 2023 USPHS Exercise Challenge.

ideas for continual improvement of the annual challenge including requests for more group activities, meet-ups, and opportunities for interaction. The USPHS Exercise Challenge is a successful mechanism to foster social connections and esprit de corps while improving officer health and well-being. In the upcoming challenge, we will look for even more opportunities to foster community, connection, and a bit of healthy competition.

Thank you to all the participants for making the 2023 Exercise Challenge a resounding success. Also, thank you to the committee members for all their work before, during, and after the Exercise Challenge. Their commitment and dedication drove the success of the 2023 USPHS Exercise Challenge, and there is no doubt that they will build on that momentum and make next year's challenge even better!

The 2024 USPHS Exercise Challenge will run from January 1 – March 10 2024. If you're not already signed up, you can sign up for it by scanning the QR code and clicking subscribe on the right-hand side in the Options box. We'll see you in January!

Check out the 2023 Exercise Challenge Playlist – these are a list of Workout Favs recommended by fellow officers. Download using your favorite streaming method for your next workout!

[Apple](#)

[Spotify](#)

[YouTube Music](#)



Learning Opportunities with the USUHS Center for Health Professions Education

by CDR Mary J Thoennes, RPh, CDCES, BCACP

The Center for Health Professions Education (CHPE) at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) is a leading institution in the field of health professions education. CHPE coursework is open to employees of the federal government with preference given to uniformed personnel with health professional experience. USUHS CHPE is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

CHPE offers two graduate certificates, two master's degrees, and a doctorate degree in health professions education. The certificates are designed for professionals who want to advance their knowledge and skills in specific areas of health professions education. The Introduction to Foundations in Health Professions Education (I-FHPE) is the initial certificate available and consists of completing six credit hours. The Foundations in Health Professions Education (FHPE) builds upon the I-FHPE with an additional seven credit hours of coursework (13 hours total).

The master's programs build upon the FHPE coursework. The Master's of Education in Health Professions Education (Med-HPE) is centered on innovation in education and the scholarship of learning. Students develop and present an innovative project related to teaching, curriculum development, mentoring, assessment, and educational leadership or administration. The Master of Health Professions Education (MHPE) requires learners to conduct and publish original research related to HPE. Students who complete a Master's degree are eligible to enroll in the PhD program.

The classes are designed with the busy health care professional in mind. Classes are grouped into three domains that include leadership, education, and research. All students in the program are assigned an advisor to help them navigate the program requirements and schedule. The work for the certificates can be done online with the majority of course work being asynchronous – meaning it is done at the learner's convenience – since learners are based all over the world. Some classes do have mandatory class meetings or office hours. The classes are designed to review past experiences or work through current challenges, so learners are able to apply the content immediately. For instance, I was enrolled in a program evaluation class as our site prepared for a residency program accreditation. Every week as I worked through the class content, I applied the course material to the accreditation survey process. I was even able to utilize the survey process as a practicum (practical experience credit) for the program.

CHPE's programs are designed for health care professionals who work in academic settings, clinical settings, or government agencies who want to advance their careers in health professions education. To start classes in May 2024, the application window is open September 1 through November 1, 2023.

General information on the CHPE can be found at <https://chpe.usuhs.edu/graduate-programs/ifhpe-fhpe>

Application and FAQ for the program can be found at <https://chpe.usuhs.edu/home/admissions>

COA Donations

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CDR Katrina Redman, MT, SPOC, M.Div., PBCC

Musical Instruments and Worship

Do your worship practices include the use of musical instruments? Mine does. I love to sing and play an instrument in my worship. I may not always play or sing the right notes, but I own it! I put my heart into it because it is a valuable part of my worship. There is a reason why music has been a part of worship for thousands of years. Let's explore that.

I recently read a great article on the role of music in worship. In the article, the author, Rob Still, lists 4 purposes for music in worship. First, music helps people to form a connection with God. Both the words and the music form a powerful connection to the human soul, and this helps people to focus on God. Second, it gives us the vocabulary and the actions to express praise to God. When we physically participate in this together, it draws us closer to each other, which is uplifting. Third, music helps us to express our emotions. It forms a two-way exchange of feelings helping God to connect with man and man to connect with God. Finally, music helps to unite, encourage, and inspire us when we worship with others. It invites the presence of our Holy one into our midst.



There is a modern religion known as Eckankar that I learned about several years ago. The goal of ECKists is to become a coworker with God by drawing nearer to the light and sound of God. They practice this through HU meditation and sounds to reach a higher spiritual plane. This may differ from your belief system, but it demonstrates how even self-generated sounds without words, or an instrument, can be used for worship practices.

Maybe you're wondering, "How is CDR Redman going to tie musical instruments into officership?" I'm glad that you asked! The USPHS usually begins our formal gatherings with the National Anthem and the PHS March. When we sing these songs together it should draw us closer together as a Corps and inspire us just like music in worship does. So, sing it loud and sing it proud, fellow officers! May the melody of your heart be attuned to the unity of our mission today and always. You're in my thoughts and prayers.

CORRECTION (*Frontline* article Volume 61, Issue 6): Days of Ashura were observed on July 27-28, 2023, not August 18-19, 2023. My apologies for the error in the dates.

Education: Nayrouz

Tibetan Buddhists use cymbals in prayers and rituals. They are also used in meditation to create a sonic tapestry effect.

Spiritual Exercises

1. Article: <https://robstill.com/purpose-of-church-worship-role-of-music/>
2. Website: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-eckankar-beliefs-history-symbol.html>
3. Consider learning a musical instrument or singing in your worship practices. Share with someone of a different belief system about the role of music in your belief practices

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

OBITUARIES

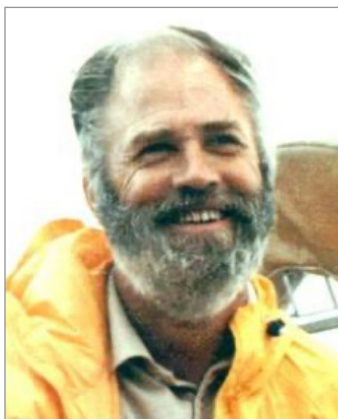
CAPT John G. Bailey - Life Member

Redmond, Washington - John Gregory Bailey, Sr. was born in Seattle, WA, on May 20, 1934, and died in Redmond, WA, on April 10, 2023.

John graduated from the University of Washington as a Civil Engineer. John entered the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Officer Corps and retired in 1984 after 27

years of service. His career in the U.S. Public Health Service included an assignment to the U.S. Park Service on the Natchez Trace Parkway, a master's degree at Harvard, and 24 years (1960-1984) at the Center for Devices and Radiological Health in Rockville, MD, with a 2-year assignment to the State of Oregon Department of Health.

He married Donna Maxwell in 1961 in Rockville, MD. In 1981, John & Donna started Baileywick Sailboat Charters on Chesapeake Bay that they continued until 2009 when they retired from their home in Lusby, MD and moved to Redmond, WA.



CAPT Robert Neill - Life Member

Albuquerque, New Mexico - Robert Harold Neill set sail on the unknown sea of the afterlife on Friday, March 17, 2023. He was born on Sunday, February 9, 1930, in Passaic, New Jersey, to Rosemary and William Neill. After graduating from Lyndhurst High

School, he attended Stevens Institute of Technology. He graduated in 1951 with a degree in mechanical engineering.

In 1957, he joined the United States Public Health Service as a commissioned officer, where he discovered his passion for protecting the public from radiation. In 1959 he attended Harvard and earned a master's degree in public health. In 1978 he formed the Environmental Evaluation Group for the State of New Mexico to provide an independent review of the WIPP project in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

He believed that small acts of kindness make the world a better place. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Townley; daughter, Helen; grandson, Robert, and many nieces, nephews, and friends. Bob loved sailing, skiing, tennis, and enjoying life.



CAPT William Chin - Life Member (no obituary found)

CDR Celeste Davis - Life Member (no obituary found)

CAPT Margaret DiClemente - Life Member (no obituary found)

Dear Editor,

It was with sadness that I read of the death of William J. Lucca (Passing of the First Director of COA). I had the pleasure of working with Bill (as he preferred to be addressed) pursuant to my terms on the COA Board of Directors, as president of the Parklawn COA chapter, and as a routine member of COA. He headed and guided the organization throughout most of my active-duty career. Serving through some of the most harrowing episodes of the existence of the United States Public Health Service, when its very survival was questionable, Bill fought administrative battles on numerous fronts to save our magnificent and vital uniformed service. Whenever possible, he would visit COA chapters throughout the United States. His primary concern was always for the welfare of the officers, both active duty and retired.

Bill was a gentleman of the first order. Utilizing his extensive sense of humor, his modesty and decorum, he could make

a person that he just met feel at ease and that he or she had just made a friend. Occasionally, I was at COA headquarters in Washington, DC, seeking Bill's advice and counsel on an issue or discussing a COA matter with which I had some involvement. I vividly recall his standing at the podium at COA business meetings at an annual convention explaining what was current and vital. His interaction with the attendees, answering their questions and addressing their concerns, was a major function of the gathering. Bill always chose exciting venues for the meetings with interesting and enjoyable events.

I have not seen or spoken with him in many years which I regret. Bill Lucca accomplished a great deal for the officers of the United States Public Health Service. May he rest in peace.

CAPT Melvin Lessing, USPHS (Ret.)

June 19, 2023

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CAPT Mark Anderson
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We Welcome New Members of COA, August 1 - August 31, 2023

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LCDR Doll Billingslea, NC
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CAPT Maria Dinger, MD

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LCDR Paul Roszko, MD
LTJG Zainab Savard, FL
LCDR Rebekah Tiller, GA
LT Clarissa-Cecile Wu, NM

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