

## Greater Texas COA Fundraises to Support PBS Documentary



GTCOA officers (back: LT Sara Blackmon, LCDR Stephanie Chiang, LCDR Tuan Nguyen, LT April Tyson, CDR Margaret Mahool; front: LCDR Rachel Forche, LCDR Abby Mozeke-Baker) wear their GTCOA t-shirts at BLS training in Dallas, TX (February 2023). The front of the t-shirt displays the new GTCOA logo, and the back of the t-shirt displays the new national COA logo.

by LCDR Rachel Forche & LCDR Tuan Nguyen

When the Greater Texas COA (GTCOA) Local Branch learned about the creation of the PBS Documentary “Invisible Corps: In Officio Saluti,” the branch wanted to donate to the cause and help document USPHS history through the creation of the film. The branch decided to fundraise by creating two new items which would incorporate the new COA logo and the first-ever GTCOA logo. GTCOA currently consists of officers throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex; however, there were previously separate Dallas and Fort Worth Branches. The branches

merged a few years ago but did not have an updated challenge coin to represent the new combined branch. Once the new national COA logo was premiered in the summer of 2022, GTCOA created a challenge coin incorporating the new COA logo and a design incorporating features from both Dallas and Fort Worth. In addition to the coins, the branch wanted to create branch-specific COA t-shirts for officers and their families to wear to community outreach and networking events. The branch collaborated with a graphic designer to commission GTCOA's first official logo, which is featured on the

see **GREATER TEXAS** continued on page 2

from the  
Executive  
Director



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

### Officer Takes Action

The job of the Commissioned Officers Association (COA) is to advocate for members on issues big or small. We can advise you, assist you, or make inquiries on your behalf. But do not underestimate your power in personal advocacy on issues that are uniquely and distinctly important to you.

I want to share a good news story about how a COA member, Commander Michael Gifford, made a difference. As he was completing his renewal paperwork for membership in the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP), he pursued the less expensive “military” renewal rate as a uniformed service officer. The rate was only offered to the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard, so he proactively reached out to ASSP to educate them on the U. S. Public Health Service (USPHS). He provided background



Commander  
Michael Gifford

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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

## 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

## GREATER TEXAS from page 1

front of the t-shirt. The logo incorporates the Dallas skyline, a longhorn representing Fort Worth, and one star, signifying "The Lone Star State." The back of the t-shirt displays the new national COA logo. The t-shirts have been a hit within the branch, and our officers and their family members have enjoyed wearing them to events such as Wreaths Across America (officers wore uniforms, family members wore GTCOA t-shirts), Martin Luther King Day of Service, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Region 6 Deployment Training Social, and Basic Life Support class. The creation of these two new fundraising items incorporating the new national COA and GTCOA logos has both increased esprit de corps within the branch and allowed GTCOA to fundraise to donate to the creation of the Public Broadcasting Service Documentary. The GTCOA is honored to have been able to contribute to the documentary and hopes to use any additional funds generated toward future community outreach events.



Alex Blackmon, son of LT Sara Blackmon, wearing his GTCOA t-shirt at Wreaths Across America in Dallas, TX (December 2022).



Photo of the new GTCOA Challenge Coin.



First ever logo for GTCOA



# A & C Dinner at COA Symposium

by LT Ngoc T Le, PharmD, BCPS

Last year, I had the opportunity to attend the 55th annual Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) Scientific & Training Symposium in Glendale, AZ. The symposium offers a variety of activities for officers to participate in such as pre-conference workshops, completing their yearly Army Physical Fitness Test, the Surgeon General's 5K Run/Walk, the Anchor & Caduceus Dinner, and Category Day. All these events have one thing in common, they provide an opportunity to network with colleagues in various categories and strengthen bonds. I would like to take this time to share with you one of the highlights of the conference – the Anchor & Caduceus Dinner. The Anchor & Caduceus dinner at last year's symposium was one of my favorite events at the conference. As a first-time attendee, I was warmly greeted and welcomed by all. It was easy to feel a strong sense of pride to stand side-by-side with admirable officers.

Upon entering, the banquet hall was bustling with attendees and event staff, where many exchanged greetings and lively conversation filled the air. Soon after, we found our seats and attendees took turns formally introducing themselves before the ceremony began. There were chief professional officers, retired officers, senior officers, junior officers, friends, family, COA staff and COA/COF Board members. It was a great opportunity for me and other junior officers to learn more about USPHS, different career paths, impact of COF, and how the symposium builds camaraderie. Many senior officers were very willing to share their advice and much of the information I gathered has been invaluable in planning for my future advancement in USPHS. Suffice to say, I was ecstatic to absorb all this new information and expand my network!

A while later, we were served food and beverages and the dinner program officially started with keynote speaker, CAPT



*Junior officers enjoy each other's company at the A&C dinner in Glendale, Arizona.*

Karen Munoz and her poem "We Fight, Too." The poem was particularly moving and inspirational; something I will not easily forget. I still remember she said "We fight the good fight" as a way to describe our commitment and contributions as USPHS officers to further the health of the public in the U.S. and around the globe; that our work matters. It is sometimes an uphill battle and we may not always be recognized, but we always put our best foot forward so that we may function as a cohesive unit. I left the dinner filled with a strong sense of pride and eagerness to do a better job as a USPHS officer. It is easy to say that attending the Anchor & Caduceus dinner was a fantastic way to kick off my first Commissioned Officers Foundation symposium week in Glendale.

I encourage anyone to attend should they want to learn more about COF or to expand their network. I certainly returned home with contact information for some truly great people that I continue to follow up with to this day. If last year's symposium was any indication, this year is going to be a must-attend event. The 56th Annual COF Scientific & Training Symposium will be held on May 8-11, 2023, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I hope to see you all there.

## Tricare Monthly Tips

by Defense Health Agency  
Communications Team

### How Does TRICARE Cover Different Types of Care?

Do you know where to go if you break a bone? What would you do if you had the flu? It's good to know the general types of health care available to you—especially when you need to make a quick decision about where to get care. And knowing

how TRICARE covers each type can help you understand your health plan's costs and rules for getting care. Read on to learn about types of care covered by TRICARE.

### Emergency Care

Emergency care is for an illness or injury that threatens your life, limb, sight, or safety. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, you should call 911

(or your international emergency number) or go to the nearest emergency room.

You don't need a referral or pre-authorization to seek emergency care. However, if you have a TRICARE Prime plan, you should do the following after receiving emergency care:

- Contact your primary care manager (PCM) within 24 hours or the next business day.

see **TRICARE** continued on page 10



# VA Acquires Land in Albuquerque for New National Cemetery

Originally printed by the Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration recently announced that it has acquired 230 acres of land in Albuquerque, NM for the future replacement of the Santa Fe National Cemetery. The VA acquired the property from UP II, LLC, a New Mexico limited liability company for \$2,840,706. The new land is located adjacent to the Petroglyph National Monument, due west of Albuquerque.

Santa Fe National Cemetery was established in 1875 and has served the Santa Fe / Albuquerque Veteran community for years. Nearly 70,000 veterans and eligible family members are interred there. Santa Fe National Cemetery is projected to run out of land for burials in the next 10 years. This new acquisition will allow VA to continue to provide burial services to our Veterans and their eligible family members for decades to come. There are roughly

81,000 veterans living within the 75-mile radius of the new site in Albuquerque.

VA operates 155 national cemeteries and 34 soldiers' lots and monument sites in 44 states and Puerto Rico. For Veterans not buried in a VA national cemetery, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, online at <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000. To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

For more information on Santa Fe National Cemetery, contact acting cemetery director Victor Vasquez at 505-988-6400 or visit [www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/santafe.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/santafe.asp).

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# April is Occupational Therapy Month

by LT Samora Casimir, OTD, OTR/L and  
LT Kelsey Buelow, OTR/L, CLT

April is Occupational Therapy Month. This is the time where occupational therapists across the nation share about their profession, the great impact we have on our clients' lives, and the many achievements occupational therapy practitioners have accomplished throughout history. According to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), occupational therapy enables people of all ages to participate in their daily living tasks. Occupational therapy practitioners use evidence-based research to assist people with various disabilities and disorders to achieve their individual goals regarding their physical and mental health. They improve the functionality of individuals to their highest level, build confidence, increase their independence in daily living skills, and improve patient safety.

What does this look like in practice? Occupational therapy includes customizing and/or adapting a client's environment, maximizing their function post-injury/illness, creating customized orthotics for individuals with hand injuries/disorders, improving children's engagement, and much more. An occupational therapy clinician could spend their morning assessing a patient's safety while dressing or bathing, then spend their afternoon creating a hand orthotic for a trigger finger, and finish their day working to integrate a child's reflex patterns to improve engagement in school.

Occupational therapists were first known as reconstruction aides when they engaged returning soldiers from World War I who were struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They provided these soldiers with bedside craft-related activities and mental-health treatment. During the 1940's, the U.S. Army War Emergency courses in occupational therapy began, and the Army-Navy Nurse Corps & Women's Medical Specialists Corps included occupational therapists. The Public



*LT Samora Casimir OTD,OTR/L, stationed at National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD.*

Health Service Act of 1944 authorized the USPHS to commission occupational therapy practitioners.

Occupational therapists provide their services in numerous settings such as hospitals, outpatient clinics, a client's home, and even within a school setting. As referenced above, occupational therapy practitioners have a significant history working with veterans in diverse methods spanning over physical, cognitive, sensory, and psychosocial domains. Occupational therapists are skilled in utilizing various approaches and comprehensive treatment plans in order to provide clients tools and solutions to enhance their quality of life and engagement at home, at work, and within their community. Within the USPHS, occupational therapy services are delivered in multiple federal agencies such as the Indian Health Services (IHS), Bureau of Prisons (BOP), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Department of Defense (DOD).

It is easy to see how beautifully the core values of USPHS (leadership, integrity, service, and excellence) correspond with the values and focus of the occupational therapy profession. Our work as occupational therapists is a seamless

fit, allowing us to contribute in positive ways to those we serve. We are skilled in viewing individuals with different cultural backgrounds holistically and in using client-centered care. We foster the highest quality of care with continued promotion of research, continued professional knowledge, and advanced learning through continuing education courses and certification opportunities. Occupational therapy practitioners are inspired to be leaders with a history of advocating for others including those with disabilities and in need of accommodations.

In 2021, the U.S. News & World Report ranked Occupational Therapy as the #10 best healthcare job. In addition, Congress unveiled the Omnibus Legislative Package to include multiple provisions to strengthen mental health services provided by occupational therapists. This, in-turn, increased the ability of occupational therapy practitioners to provide community mental health services. Most recently, in January 2023, Congress extended Medicare telehealth waivers through the end of 2024, encouraging occupational therapists to provide their services virtually to Medicare beneficiaries for all of 2023 and 2024. Per AOTA's "Vision 2025," primary core

see **OT MONTH** continued on page 18

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

# 2023 FAMILY MEMBER SCHOLARSHIPS

## HISTORY

The PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF) offers a scholarship program available to high school, undergraduate, and graduate students sponsored by a current Commissioned Officers Association (COA) member. The scholarships are funded by active duty and retired U.S. Public Health Service members, Local Branches of the COA and others.

## ELIGIBILITY

- Biological, step, adopted children/grandchildren and spouses of current COA members
- High school senior, undergraduate, or graduate student with applicable school transcripts
- Personal statement describing academic/career goals related to public health
- Extracurricular involvement and community service
- Two letters of recommendation

## DEADLINE

The application period will be **March 13, 2023 - May 5, 2023**.  
The recipients of the scholarship will be announced in June 2023.

## APPLY

Find more information at:

<https://www.phscof.org/scholarships/family-member-scholarships/>





# D.C. COA Wants You to “Relax, Reconnect, and Restore” with Other Officers

by CDR Cathleen Davies and LCDR Doan Singh, D.C. COA Recreation and Networking Subcommittee Chairs

The past few years have been challenging. COVID-19 restrictions and multiple deployments have limited officers' ability to gather and simply enjoy each other's company. The District of Columbia branch of the Commissioned Officers Association (D.C. COA) Recreation and Networking Subcommittee has made a conscious effort to provide opportunities for officers, active and retired, to reconnect.

On Wednesday, February 15th, the D.C. COA hosted a happy hour event at Mi Rancho Restaurant in Silver Spring, MD. Besides fantastic food and drinks, this venue offered a large, covered patio where 14 officers could relax, eat, and watch soccer on the large screen. The D.C. COA Merchandise Subcommittee also provided a wide variety of U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) apparel and trinkets for purchase.

Conversations covered topics ranging from agencies in which officers serve, deployments they have been on, and favorite Mexican dishes. Retired officers who attended shared “nuggets of wisdom” for anyone preparing for a future once they take off the uniform. One officer offered that “Human beings are social creatures. Building meaningful and productive relationships is more effective face-to-face.”

Be on the lookout for more opportunities from the D.C. COA to gather with other USPHS officers to “Relax, Reconnect, and Restore.”



*D.C. COA officers take a break from their busy schedules to unwind and enjoy dinner in each other's company.*

# PHS COF Coin Contest Winner

The PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF) is proud to announce the winner of the 2023 Symposium Coin Contest. The coin, designed by LCDR Michael McSherry, a Health Services Officer (HSO) serving as the Digital Communications Team Lead with the Phoenix Indian Medical Center, incorporated the USPHS seal and this year's symposium theme In Service of Health: Boots on the Ground for a Healthy Nation. When you see LCDR McSherry at the symposium, congratulate him on his talented work. These coins will be on sale at the 56th Annual Scientific and Training Symposium in Tulsa, OK from May 8th to May 11th. We look forward to all the unique designs for next year's symposium.



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# Samaritan's Purse - Serving with a Smile

by LCDR Marie Jeoboam, MD, MS, FAAFP

Samaritan's Purse, a Christian Organization was founded in 1970 by Bob Pierce. Samaritan's Purse has helped meet the needs of people who are victims of war, poverty, natural disasters, disease, and famine. In the summer of 1973, Bob Pierce met his successor, an adventurous young student named Franklin Graham, who still serves as head of Samaritan's Purse with the same passion of its founder. Of the many areas this organization contributes, I want to take this opportunity to talk about Operation Christmas Child. This mission helps to demonstrate the love God has for his children in a tangible way. Samaritan's Purse partners with churches worldwide to provide shoeboxes filled with gifts built locally and online. These shoeboxes then travel to some of the hardest-to-reach places of the world, bringing smiles to children during Christmas time. Since 1993, over 198 million children have received a shoebox gift worldwide.

I have been passionate about "Operation Christmas Child" for over 10 years, donating multiple shoeboxes every year which were personally filled by my daughter and me. During the COVID-19 pandemic shoebox gifting transitioned online. On February 4th, I packed gifts for three hours at the Samaritan's Purse Fulfillment Center in Charlotte, NC. I worked alongside some amazing like-minded people who traveled from near and far for a common goal – volunteering for a good cause. I was part of an assembly team comprised of about 20 people to fill, verify, tape, and cartoon the shoeboxes for children around the world. Being at the fulfillment center was an entirely different experience and seeing staff and volunteers come together to take part in this mission was humbling. During the three hours of volunteer service, our group completed over 28,000 shoeboxes, which was a great feat.

When I think about service, it does not require a huge sacrifice and a little bit of your time goes a long way. Volunteering provides an individual with many benefits both mental and physical. Volunteering gives you a sense of purpose and boosts your self-esteem and life satisfaction. It also helps counter the effects of stress, loneliness, and anxiety. It helps you connect with your community, and gives opportunity to forge new friendships. Other valuable skills gained by volunteering include improving interpersonal communication, improving time management, working well with others, and problem-solving.

Now that the pandemic has wound down, it is a perfect opportunity to get back to volunteering. If you are looking for a meaningful way to give back to your community and have a little time to spare, you can serve with Operation Christmas Child wherever you are, since Samaritan's Purse have local area volunteer teams in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. If this mission doesn't speak to you, you can partner with your favorite organization and make a difference by volunteering.

To find a Samaritan's Purse location near you, visit <https://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/volunteer/>



LCDR Marie Jeoboam MD, MS, FAAFP at shoebox taping station



Forging new friendships with Samaritan's Purse Staff

## TRICARE from page 3

- Ask your PCM for a referral if you need specialty care. This will help you avoid point-of-service fees.

Visit Emergency Care to learn more about covered emergency services, including care for psychiatric emergencies.

### Urgent Care

Urgent care is for medical conditions that aren't emergencies but still need professional attention within 24 hours. Your rules for getting urgent care depend on your health plan and your beneficiary category. In the U.S., most types of beneficiaries can get urgent care without a referral and from any network provider or TRICARE-authorized (network or non-network) urgent care center. However, certain rules apply if you're an active-duty service member or enrolled in a TRICARE overseas plan.

If you aren't sure if you need urgent care or need help finding urgent care near you, contact the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line. If you live overseas, you can also contact your TRICARE Overseas Program Regional Call Center for help.

To learn more about urgent care, visit Urgent Care and How To Get Urgent Care Under Your TRICARE Health Plan.

### Routine Care

Routine care is also known as primary care. You receive routine care when you go to your primary care manager (PCM) or primary care provider (PCP) with health problems that don't need emergency care. These providers can diagnose and treat a variety of common medical conditions and illnesses. They may also provide you with follow-up care or refer you to see a specialist for care.

If your plan doesn't require you to have a PCM or PCP, you can find a doctor with the Find a Doctor tool.

### Specialty Care

Specialty care is care from a medical professional who's trained and licensed in a particular area of medicine. A specialist can diagnose and treat health conditions related to their field of practice. Examples of specialists include cardiologists, neurologists, and dermatologists.

Depending on your TRICARE plan, your beneficiary category, and the type of care

you need, you may need a referral to see a specialist. If you aren't required to have a referral, you can use the Find a Doctor tool to find a specialist.

### Preventive Care

Preventive services diagnose health problems early or prevent problems before they start. Examples of preventive services include cancer screenings, physicals, well-child care, and immunizations (vaccines).

Even if you feel well, getting regular preventive care plays a key role in maintaining your long-term health. TRICARE covers many types of preventive health care exams and screenings. And as outlined in the TRICARE Costs and Fees Fact Sheet, you'll have no out-of-pocket costs for covered preventive services received from a TRICARE network provider.

Being proactive on behalf of your health and your family members' health is vital to staying healthy. Learn more about getting preventive care. And in situations when you need other types of care, know what your TRICARE plan covers.



## N-PAC Community Outreach



### Tulsa Community Outreach Activity

May 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Tulsa, Oklahoma



**Mission:** Provide an opportunity for United States Public Health Service officers, families, and friends to perform community service side by side with local community partners prior to 2023 USPHS Symposium.

**Empowering the community by closing the gap of health disparities!!**



**Community Partners:** Green Country Habitat for Humanity, Iron Gate Tulsa, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tulsa, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, Emergency Infant Services, Tulsa Day Center

- Volunteers must complete registration via SignUp Genius <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A084DAEAC2AA4FD0-2023>
- For Habitat for Humanity you must sign up separately: Press on the link for Volunteer Hub to be redirected Green Country Habitat for Humanity. <https://thfh.volunteerhub.com/userregistrationwizard/usernamepassword#> = Set up a username and password>Join Code leave blank, press Next>Affiliation do not select an option, press Next>Profile, set up your profile, press Next. Select a volunteer location in the Tulsa area.

## **An Open Letter to the Officers of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service**

Thank you for serving so faithfully each and every day on behalf of our nation's health. Every member of the Commissioned Corps deserves to be recognized for their sacrifices. We cannot thank you enough for what you have done-especially during the last couple of years.

In appreciation, our office is working pro bono with Commissioned Officers Association for the USPHS (COA) to remedy disparities faced by active duty Commissioned Corps members when utilizing airline travel. We have reached out to U.S. domestic carriers requesting that Commissioned Corps officers of the U.S. Public Health Service receive the same benefits as their sister military uniformed services. You are on the front lines every day and deserve this recognition.

Lastly, we hope to see you in Tulsa at the 2023 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium from May 8<sup>th</sup> thru May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023. If you have an opportunity, please stop by our booth so we can personally thank you.

Very sincerely,

The staff of the Law Office of Shannon James



LAW OFFICE OF SHANNON JAMES PLLC





# New Pilot Program Allows for Uniformed Service ID Cards To Be Sent By Mail

by Dave Corrigan, COA Deputy Director

In December's 2022 issue of Frontline (page 18), I discussed the new uniformed services ID called the Next Generation Uniformed Services Identification (NGUSID) card and when and how retirees can renew their current ID to receive the NGUSID. However, if you are on active-duty, there is now a process to apply for your Uniformed Service ID Card (USID renewal online and receive the card in the mail. This pilot program just began last month and will be in effect until September 30, 2024, when the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) will decide whether to keep the program running.

This renewal process, which is available for active-duty service members and their dependents, can be found by going to <https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/> and by clicking on "Continue" on the "Family ID Cards" tab. You will log on with your Common Access Card (CAC) to access the ID card renewal. Once logged in, the portal will display an option to renew online if your CAC, or

dependent's ID, is eligible for renewal. If eligible for renewal, you will request a USID card renewal, and a card will be created and sent to your home of record using United States Postal Service. Once the card is shipped, an email will be sent to you to confirm receipt of the card. Once you receive the card in the mail and acknowledge receipt, DMDC will activate your new card and deactivate your old card. You will be asked to return the old ID by mailing it back to DMDC or dropping it off at a Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) office.

Since the program is new, there is no official guidance on how long it should take to receive the new card in the mail. With that said, to be eligible for renewal, your current USID should not expire less than 30 days from the date of your renewal request. Also, please make sure your email address and home address are updated in DEERS to ensure your eligibility and seamless renewal process.

As always, if you have any questions, reach out to me at [dcorrigan@coausphs.org](mailto:dcorrigan@coausphs.org).



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# Training for Deployment - Deep in the Heart of Texas

by LTJG Aaron Chambers, DPM, FACFAS

Recently, several USPHS Ready Reservists and I had the opportunity to participate in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Region 6 deployment training in Dallas, Texas.

Being a city slicker from Los Angeles, I had no idea what to expect. What would the Texas USPHS officers be like? Would they judge me for my preference for Kansas City BBQ or if I didn't know how to lasso a steer or break a bucking broncho?

For the USPHS Ready Reserves, we frequently train using the Federal Emergency Management Agency Incident Command Structure. Up to this point, my participation in exercises had been strictly virtual. This would be the first time I would encounter live scenarios and apply my knowledge in a large in-person setting. Additionally, it would be in the great state of Texas. I pondered, "Should I add spurs to my Public Health Service boots?" I decided to stay within uniform regulations.

I met my fellow reservists at the HHS building while we waited for the training to begin. We were joined by active-duty USPHS officers from around the country. The training began with high-energy speakers, and we could feel the enthusiasm and motivation in the room.

To break the ice, we began with introductions. Working my way around the room, I met many active-duty officers as well as officers on the Public Health Emergency Response Strike Team (PHERST). Officers were from a wide range of ranks and categories, from junior officers to senior, and included nurses, pharmacists, scientists, engineers, and others. Somehow, I was the only podiatrist in attendance. "This never happens," I thought to myself.

The officers shared their experience with previous deployments, including serving in the roles that were being taught during the week. They mentioned their experience as serving as safety officers, incident commanders, and case managers.

Hearing their experiences from deployments for hurricane relief, Africa deployments, and COVID responses helped bring the training into practical, real-world scenarios. Gone were the days that I would be serving in the fungal-nail trenches, and I would soon be expected to branch out from my comfort zone into unfamiliar territory. I began to worry that I was "all hat, and no cattle."

Soon, we were divided into our team tracks. Most of the USPHS Ready Reservists, including myself, were placed in the case management track. The case management track was designed to familiarize us with policies, procedures, and resources available should an incident take place requiring the management of displaced individuals. Thinking back to recent natural disasters and refugee resettlements, the training provided a real-world



*LTJG Aaron Chambers DPM, FACFAS in Downtown Dallas. Not Pictured: Cowboy Hat and Boots.*

glimpse into the difference we could make in others' lives as USPHS officers.

Throughout the week, we discussed and participated in events giving us hands-on experience. The presenters gave us real world scenario exercises involving case management. The exercises guided us to form a plan that could be tailored to individual cases, with respect to personal autonomy, family, and beliefs. The week reminded me of the Oregon Trail, except instead of a grueling pace with barebone rations, it was a steady pace with filling rations. Also, we didn't lose anyone to dysentery.

Hearing cases presented by other USPHS officers increased my awareness of needing to adjust and respond during a deployment. It really brought the spirit of the USPHS Commissioned Corps together and demonstrated the ability to remain flexible on deployment.

George Strait once said, "I'm not here for a long time, I'm here for a good time." This good time was filled with information and high-energy lecturers. I left with a renewed appreciation for the USPHS Commissioned Corps, and Texas.

In Officio Salutis,  
LTJG Chambers

## About to get Electrically Charged

by CDR Katie Jacques, PT, DPT, OCS, CAHA, CPL  
Treasurer, COA Board of Directors

The Commissioned Officers Association (COA) Board of Directors is getting excited to partner and support our Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) Board of Trustees at the 2023 56th Annual USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium. COF's tagline is "Forging Leadership for Future Generations," and this is exactly what the symposium does for officers throughout their entire public health career.

Do you remember your first symposium? Did you have butterflies of nervousness and excitement like I did? The first symposium I attended, after commissioning in November 2012, was in May 2013 in Glendale, Arizona. My mentor, CAPT Francine Barnett, encouraged me to attend. I met CAPT Barnett at Officer Basic Course (OBC) in 2012 and formed an immediate connection with her. CAPT Barnett, then a Lieutenant Commander, exemplified officership. She quickly took me under her wing and provided guidance, outlined progressive and obtainable goals, suggested trainings, and supported me when barriers arose. The opportunity to reconnect with her at the symposium in Glendale was a special time. While there, she continued to show me the ropes and grow my network as a therapist and as an officer. Over time, CAPT Barnett planted seeds of motivation to push me out of my comfort zone which led to presenting during Category Day numerous times and being on a pre-conference junior officer leadership panel. Since that time, I have continued to grow in various leadership roles, including my current role as the treasurer and therapist representative for the COA Board of Directors. Last year I celebrated ten years of service, and it was very special to return to the symposium in person and attend my first Anchor & Caduceus Dinner.

The Symposium is an electrically charging experience, like the Aurora Borealis. There is an abundance of beauty in Alaska and officers stationed here (myself included) definitely take advantage of the outdoors. In March, we start to gain more daylight and are often blessed with the phenomenon of magnificent dancing lights in the sky. The energy I get from viewing the Aurora Borealis is like how I feel attending the symposium. The symposium charges me, for when I come back to my duty station, I am reminded why I joined the USPHS Commissioned Corps and COA.



*CAPT Francine Barnett and CDR Katie Jacques at the 2022 A & C Dinner*



*Aurora Borealis lights in Eagle River, Alaska*

On behalf of COA, we look forward to seeing you all in Tulsa, Oklahoma in May. If you have not registered yet, don't fret, you still have time. Keep your eyes open for exciting announcements on the COA Facebook page and the COF Symposium webpage. To those attending, safe travels.



# Strength In Numbers: COA Joins ROA To Speak With Legislators in Washington D.C.

by Dave Corrigan, COA Deputy Director

Now that the 118th session of Congress is underway and committee assignments have been finalized, COA and our legislative consultants have been busy meeting with legislators, committees, and their staff to advance our legislative and advocacy goals outlined by COA's legislative committee (January/February 2023 edition of Frontline, page 2). Within those advocacy goals, COA aims to advance the benefits, policies, and regulations of the USPHS Ready Reserve force. As you know, in 2020, the Ready Reserve was formed as part of the CARES Act. After a few years of building the USPHS Ready Reserve, there is still more work to be done. The Commissioned Corps Headquarters CCHQ and the USPHS Ready Reserve leadership are recruiting and developing the force. With that said, there are some shortcomings of the USPHS Ready Reserve that need to be changed through advocacy and legislation.

Ready reservists are not covered by TRICARE when staying overnight on their drill weekend or during federal duty unless deployed and on active-duty orders. Additionally, ready reservists are not entitled to TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS), a benefit provided to every other uniformed service's reserve component. Furthermore, while the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) and Post-9/11 GI Bill are available for reservists in the other uniformed services, these benefits are not afforded to the USPHS Ready Reserve. These issues, among others, have the potential to hinder recruitment and retention of the ready reserve force. It is also not fair to those already serving. USPHS Ready Reservists serve and sacrifice and deserve benefits afforded to the other reserve components.

Through other organizations like The Military Coalition (TMC) and others, COA has been able to gain the support of multiple military and veterans service organizations (MSOs/VSOs). Since COA can be more impactful with the support of others, we joined The Reserve Organization of America (ROA) in a jointly-hosted event at ROA headquarters in Washington D.C. to showcase the USPHS Ready Reserve to legislators on Capitol Hill.

On March 9th, COA and ROA hosted an ice cream social at the ROA Minute Man Building across from the Capitol and U.S. Senate office buildings. Legislative staff from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives were invited from the following committees: Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP); Labor, Health, and Human Services (LHHS); and Energy and Commerce (E&C). COA and ROA wrote position papers on each of the reserve topics above and provided them to the staff members who joined us. COA and ROA educated Congressional staff on the issues and how the House and Senate can assist in solving these issues together.



COA staff with OSG representatives during Ice Cream Social at ROA Headquarters.



COA staff with OSG representatives and USPHS Congressional Fellows in front of the Minuteman Statue at ROA Headquarters.

The Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) was represented at the event by the Deputy Surgeon General, RADM Denise Hinton; Senior Advisor to the Surgeon General, RADM Susan Orsega; and Legislative Liaisons CDR Yvonne Santiago and LCDR Zakiya Chambers. OSG was in attendance as guests to educate Congressional Members and staff on the mission the USPHS Ready Reserve and the vision for integration into the total force. Additionally, USPHS' Congressional Fellows – currently serving as fellows at the offices of Senators Hickenlooper, Duckworth, and Wyden - were in attendance.

see **STRENGTH** continued on page 21

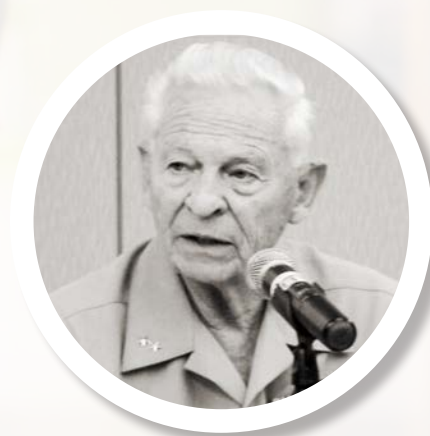
# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: JUNIOR OFFICERS

# 2023 RADM JERROLD

# MICHAEL FELLOWSHIP

## HISTORY

The PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) established the RADM Michael Fellowship to honor the late Rear Admiral Jerrold M. Michael, an engineer officer who was a lifelong advocate for improved public health education. His devotion to the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and academia is legendary. RADM Michael was Dean of the University of Hawaii (UH) School of Public Health from 1972 to 1992. He continued as Professor of Public Health until 1995. He later served as Professor Emeritus at UH and as an Adjunct Professor of Global Health at the Milken Institute of Public Health, George Washington University.



## ELIGIBILITY

- USPHS Commissioned Corps at the rank of 01-04
- Current dues-paying Commissioned Officers Association (COA) member
- Applied/accepted as a non-degree U of MD School of Public Health student
- Able to begin coursework in August 2023 and complete in 12 months

## DEADLINE

The application period will be **March 20, 2023 - May 15, 2023**.  
The recipient(s) of the fellowship will be announced in June 2023.

## APPLY

Find more information at:

**[PHSCOF.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS/RADM-MICHAEL-FELLOWSHIP](https://PHSCOF.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS/RADM-MICHAEL-FELLOWSHIP)**





# 2023 Lunar New Year Celebration – Starting Out the New Year Right!

by LCDR Quynh Anh Tran, PharmD, MPH, CPH

Lunar New Year is one of the most significant holidays in the Asian culture and tradition. In honor of the Asian American tradition and heritage, the Asian Pacific American Officer Committee (APAOC) and the Greater Texas Commissioned Officers Association (GTCOA) collaborated with the Dallas Chinese Community Center (DCCC) to organize a community outreach event at the Richardson Chinatown Plaza on Saturday, January 28, 2023, in Richardson, Texas. The event was conducted as an opportunity to jointly celebrate the 2023 Lunar New Year, as well as a venue to reach the Dallas Asian American community at large.

The community outreach event included consultation about healthy lifestyle techniques and strategies, diet tips, and cooking recipes and dissemination of brochures/handouts about diabetes, dyslipidemia, hypertension. However, the main highlight of our booth was the blood pressure screening and providing explanations of each blood pressure category based on the blood pressure results. All visitors were reminded to visit their healthcare providers for any concerns or follow-ups, and to stay vigilant on their diet, as well as maintain or establish an active lifestyle adjusted to fit their health needs. In addition to blood pressure screenings and health education, we also provided “goodie” bags filled with healthy crackers and reduced fat cheese dips and water bottles to promote smart-choice snack options.

The event was a great success, with a fun-filled lion/dragon dance, and over 20 vendors offering diverse, authentic food and beverage options. The event’s agenda also comprised of various traditional Chinese/Vietnamese performances, including Origami, Chinese Yo-Yo, and Red Envelopes Giveaway. Our USPHS education booth was staffed with six USPHS officers, divvied up into two 3-hour shifts to provide coverage for the event from 10am through 3pm. Our officers assisted a total of 53 visitors, 18 of whom had signed up for blood pressures readings, and 45 of whom were engaged in various ways to obtain health information/cooking resources or had health-related questions. Most of the visitors that had come for the blood pressure screenings were already aware of their medical diagnoses and just wanted to drop in for a random check, while others were just curious of their blood pressure readings and wanted to obtain more health information.

In addition to providing community health outreach at the event, our officers had a great time enjoying the festivities and learning more about the culture. We had various mythical characters visit our booth, in addition to the lion/dragon dancers, with gongs and drums, as a representation of good luck and fortune. All-in-all, we were grateful for an amazing opportunity to immerse ourselves in the pride and heritage of the Asian community, while carrying out our ultimate mission of advancing and promoting public health.



Left to right: LT Kristin Longfellow, LT Elina Lee, LCDR Stephanie Chiang



Left to right: LT Tamika Finch-Hall, LT Robert Brant, LCDR Quynh Tran, LCDR Stephanie Chiang, LT Kristin Longfellow



## OT MONTH from page 5

tenants which are to be promoted within the practice of occupational therapy include continuing with effective treatment (evidence-based, client centered, and cost-effective), taking on leadership roles to make the changes we know are needed in our current healthcare climate, continuing work on collaborative teams to create a holistic approach, and focusing on culturally-responsive and customized services.

We are proud members of USPHS, providing our skilled services and support to government agencies in the care for underserved communities. We will continue utilizing our foundation of expertise in helping people perform the occupations they want and need to support the overall goal of a united healthcare team focused on protecting, promoting, and advancing the health and safety of the nation.



LT Kelsey Buelow OTR/L, CLT, stationed at (Indian Health Services) White Earth Health Center, MN

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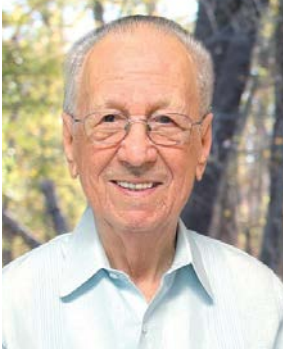
Continuing education including online offerings in leading primary care through preceptorship, KySS mental health fellowship and the SPEACS-2 communication skills training program.



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# OBITUARIES



## **CAPT Alfredo E. Casta-Velez – Life Member**

Potomac Falls, Virginia - Alfredo E. Casta-Velez (Freddy), 93, originally from Puerto Rico and recently living in Potomac Falls, VA, was called by God to join Him in Heaven on July 14, 2022.

Freddy was born on June 3, 1929 to loving parents Alfredo Casta

Martinez and Haydee Velez Seda. Freddy lived his life in service, first with the U.S. Army and then as a Commissioned Officer with the U.S. Public Health Service reaching the rank of captain. His volunteerism was a lifelong core value and his contributions to non-profit organizations in support of local communities spanned 70+ years.

Freddy was a dependable son to his parents; and a loving husband to his wife, father to his children, and “PapaAbuelo” to his grandchildren. His family will miss him greatly.

Freddy is survived by his four children - Alfred (Enid), Heidi (Héctor), Ingrid (Jose), and Gretchen (Matt); and his ten grandchildren.



## **CAPT David Richard Kominz, MD – Life Member**

Weston, Massachusetts – CAPT David Richard Kominz passed away on November 4, 2022. David is survived by his devoted wife of 34 years, Phyllis (Damon) and his three children: Laurence R. Kominz (Toshimi Tanaka), and grandchildren Leo and Maya; Michelle A. Kominz

(Ellen S. Catlin); and Bruce H. Kominz (Susan).

He was born in Rochester, New York, on April 2, 1924, to the late Dr. Jacob S. and Emily (Rosenbloom) Kominz. During early World War II, David enlisted in the Army Specialized Training Program, which allowed him to graduate with an MD at the end of the war.

David began his distinguished career as a medical researcher at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). His research interest was in the study of muscle and protein biochemistry. After retirement from NIH he had a brief second career as a researcher at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

In the late 1980s David met Phyllis Damon. They married and David moved to Weston. Being semi-retired, David jumped right in to help Phyllis with her business.

David believed strongly in public service. He served on the Weston Board of Health and on the Weston Emergency Response Care Team. He and Phyllis could be found working the polls or in their garden.



## **CAPT Eldon Savage – Life Member**

Fort Collins, Colorado - Eldon Paul Savage passed from this life to his heavenly reward on October 7, 2022. He was 96.

Eldon Savage was born in New Market, Iowa on Easter Sunday April 4th, 1926. He enlisted in the US Navy in 1944 and served on the

USS Devilfish during World War II and was honorably discharged in 1946. He attended the University of Kansas for his undergraduate entomology degree on the GI bill. While there he met Ella May.

Upon graduation, he commissioned into the USPHS. He often responded to natural disasters or epidemics to assist with and manage the community's response. He received a Master's Degree from Tulane in 1957, and a doctorate from the University of Oklahoma in 1967.

Upon his retirement from federal service, Eldon taught as a Professor of Environmental Health at Colorado State University and ran an Arabian horse showing business in Colorado.

He was preceded in death by the love of his life, Ella May (Nail); brothers Enos (infant) and Edward; sisters Erma, Elma, and Elaine. Eldon is survived by his two sons Steven (Ballou) and Michael (Georgia) (McLeran) and multiple grandchildren and great grandchildren



## **CAPT Joseph Paul Schock – Life Member**

Matthews, North Carolina - Joseph Paul Schock 93 of Matthews, NC passed away February 16, 2023. Joe was born October 16, 1929 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Joe received his bachelor's degree from Marquette University in 1951 and worked as an engineer for the

Navy until 1955, when he commissioned into the USPHS. He worked on assignments primarily in developing model standards for public health activities for adoption by local and state health departments. Joe also directed the USPHS Vessel Sanitation Program nationwide. Joe received his Master's Degree in Public Health and became director of the USPHS National Park Service environmental health program

## OBITUARIES from page 20

In 1989, Joe retired from the USPHS and started a second career as agency head for environmental health for the state of West Virginia.

He is survived by his wife, Carlene Lamade Schock, three daughters, Eileen Dewey (Bob), Meg Weir (Bruce), and Karen Schock; three step-daughters Laurie Lackey (Steve), Lisa Basinger (David), and Leslie Minarcine (TJ); and multiple grandchildren.



### CAPT Emanuel Stein – Life Member

Norfolk, Virginia - Dr. Emanuel Stein passed peacefully on February 10, 2023. He was known as “The Professor.” After a career in the Public Health Service, he joined Eastern Virginia Medical School and was widely regarded as a brilliant clinician, administrator, author, and

teacher.

Having authored five books in the field of cardiology, he was pleased to see they are still used today and was still asked to autograph his books.

He is survived by his loving wife of 42 years, Shirley Segal; his children, Steven (Cynthia) and Laura Makela (Mike); his grandchildren, Brianna and Meghan Soblotne, Ava and Aliza Stein.



### CAPT Joel J. Vernick – Life Member

Annapolis, Maryland - Joel Vernick, 98, a resident of Annapolis, MD (formerly of Garrett Park, MD), died on Sunday, June 19 at the Atria Manresa retirement community in Annapolis.

Born on June 30, 1923 in Brooklyn,

NY to the late Jack and Anna Vernick, Joel served in the U.S. Army during World War II. After the war, he earned a Master's Degree in social work and began a lengthy career as a child psychologist at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, MD. Joel also worked in the antique clock field. He repaired clocks for the State Department, the White House and thousands of others.

In addition to his parents, Joel was preceded in death by his wife of 64 years, Joan D. Vernick. He is survived by his sons, Kenneth Vernick of Paris, France, Andrew Vernick of Arnold, MD and Lee Vernick of Portland, OR; and his grandchildren, Christopher, Justin, Noah, Meaghan, Gillian, Marina and Paloma. Interment, with military honors, will take place at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

## VA's National Cemetery Administration leads all public and private organizations in 2022 customer satisfaction ratings

Originally published by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs

WASHINGTON — VA's National Cemetery Administration (NCA) — which provides Veterans and their families with burial benefits and memorial services — led all organizations, public or private, in the prestigious American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) for 2022. NCA received a score of 97, the highest score ever achieved by any organization rated by the ACSI. This is the seventh consecutive time NCA has ranked first overall in customer satisfaction.

The ACSI ratings are “the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction available in the United States.” NCA's score for 2022 is based on ACSI's surveys of Veterans and their families.

NCA provides burial and memorial benefits to eligible Veterans, their spouses, and their dependents — at no cost to the family. This includes a gravesite in any of VA's national cemeteries with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone, marker or medallion, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. Some Veterans may also be eligible for burial allowances.

“These ratings show that Veterans and their families trust VA to provide the lasting resting places they deserve,” said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Matt Quinn. “Veterans and their families, not us, are the ultimate judges of our success — and we will always be here for them in the times when they need us most.”

In 2022, NCA laid 145,737 Veterans and family members to rest. NCA is now providing 94% of Veterans with burial sites within 75 miles of their homes. Additionally, NCA manages the Veterans Legacy Memorial, the nation's first digital platform dedicated to the memory of more than 4.5 million Veterans interred in VA's national cemeteries and VA-funded state, territorial, and Tribal Veterans cemeteries. VLM allows family, friends and others to preserve their Veteran's legacy by posting tributes, uploading images and sharing their Veteran's achievements, biographical information, and historical documents.

The ACSI ratings began in 1994, and measure more than 400 companies in 47 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies. ACSI is an index score not a percentage. The objective of the survey is to measure customer satisfaction with a score of 0-100. The federal government average ACSI score was 66.3.



# Phoenix COA Picnic and Donation Drive for Homeless Adults

by LCDR Shayne Gallaway and LCDR Jacqueline Kouadio

February is prime picnic and festival season in Phoenix, Arizona. In that spirit, over 20 officers (active and retired), family members, and friends (including furry ones) came together to socialize, play games, eat good food, and support a worthy cause. The gathering took place in Madison Park, located in Central Phoenix, just adjacent to the Phoenix Indian Medical Center. This event served as an opportunity to foster connections old and new, and meet several loved ones who bear the brunt of family responsibility while officers are deployed or on the front lines at home.

In the spirit of selfless service, the Phoenix COA paired this social activity with a service-oriented, worthy cause. Phoenix COA works closely with the Aris Foundation ([www.arisfoundation.com](http://www.arisfoundation.com)) who provides services for homeless young adults and others who need care in Phoenix. Since 2016, Aris has provided food, clothing, hygiene items, and a connection to loving volunteers who care. They provide additional resources for individuals struggling with substance use disorders.

Direct coordination between LCDR Gallaway (Science Category) and The Aris Foundation leadership identified an immediate need for adult clothing



*Phoenix COA officers gathered in February to gather donations for the homeless population.*

(pants, shirts), linens (bath towels, wash cloths), and personal hygiene items to be provided to homeless adults. The donation drive allowed for Commissioned Corps Officers from the Phoenix area to serve as donation coordinators (to solicit item donations), donate items themselves, and/or assist with inventorying and packing donated items at the central collection point.

Officers independently collected donations during January and February, and then brought all items to the Phoenix COA picnic. Eleven officers and nine family members participated in this event. A

total of 245 individual items (equating to approximately \$1,735) were donated, including over 200 t-shirts, sweatshirts, pairs of pants/shorts, jackets, and shoes and 44 personal hygiene items.

All items were transported to the Aris Foundation on March 4th. Aris leadership was extremely grateful. This is the third event coordinated between LCDR Gallaway and the Aris Foundation. If you are in the Phoenix area and would like to participate in an upcoming event, please contact me (LCDR Gallaway, [shayne\\_gallo@hotmail.com](mailto:shayne_gallo@hotmail.com)).

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## **STRENGTH** from page 15

COA and ROA used this time to discuss how those specific offices can help build these efforts to advance the USPHS Ready Reserve.

COA, persistent in our advocacy efforts, also used this opportunity to discuss other issues with the Congressional staff in attendance. We provided position papers, and discussed with staff, the following issues; extending 12-week parental leave to USPHS; extending U.S. Parks lifetime passes to

USPHS officers and veterans; and increasing the USPHS uniform allowance to match other uniformed services.

Overall, the event was a success and we were able to build a better relationship with a number of legislators' offices. We look forward to continuing these efforts and furthering the mission of COA by supporting and advancing the interests of the Commissioned Corps and its officers.

As always, if you have any questions, please reach out to [dcorrigan@coausphs.org](mailto:dcorrigan@coausphs.org).



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beginning July 1.

**DEADLINE MAY 31, 2023**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2023COAcommittees>



# Making Memories at the COF Symposium

by LCDR Carla Chase, CCC-SLP.D.

When I logged in to register for the 2023 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium last month, I started to reminisce about all the symposiums I participated in over the last decade. I thought about my first training experience in San Diego, CA in 2010. It brought back my excitement to see the former Surgeon General, VADM Regina Benjamin, as I had read about her public health work in rural communities and her initiatives to support women officers, healthy living, and prevention strategies. Then I thought, the Symposium in Raleigh, NC (2014) was the first time I took advantage of the USPHS Junior Officer Advisory Group room share opportunities. There, I reunited with other Commissioned Corps officers I had not seen since relocating, and the TPAC Category Day was memorable and power packed. I was so impressed by the number of leaders who walked around meeting and greeting, engaged with, and encouraged officers of all ranks. This really heightened esprit de corps - I almost didn't want to leave when it was over.

In my opinion, I think the most upbeat, lively Surgeon General's Ensemble concert had to be the one held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2019. They performed classics and jazz mixed with some pop culture music. It was toe-tapping, hands-clapping, head-bobbing brilliance!



*Therapist category officers (from left to right) CDR Kathryn Jacques, LCDR Carla Chase, LCDR Anna Sandee, CAPT Jeff Richardson-CPO, CAPT Francine Barnett, LCDR Krista Marquard, LCDR Melina Rodriguez-Upton, LCDR Candice Todd.*

Overall, the 2022 symposium was the most exciting for me. Being the lead of the Therapist Category Day planning team was a fabulous way to see so much from start to finish. There was an abundance of collaborating and coordinating that happened behind the scenes. After two years of virtual Therapist Category Days, in 2020 and 2021, due to the pandemic, I wanted to attend everything in 2022. I attend the Anchor & Caduceus Dinner, Surgeon General's 5K, career counseling sessions, a poster session, and the social sessions and volunteered at several

booths. When I got home, I needed a vacation.

As I sit back and think about these memories, I smile because I realize they are essential to my mental health, becoming a more informed officer, and learning ways to improve the public's health. These and other symposium memories have strengthened my sense of identity and purpose as a Commissioned Corps officer. Symposium memories have created bonds of camaraderie and, believe it or not, they help me know why our motto is *In Salutes Officio*. These great memories are an important ingredient for the future successes of meeting the USPHS mission to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our nation. So, let me encourage you, if you have not registered or planned to attend, consider registering today, coming to Tulsa, OK, and taking advantage of these opportunities to learn, bond, network, socialize, and make memories. Come and see the benefits of the USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium and find out how you can get involved. The Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) and USPHS have created some wonder memories for so many of us and I am looking forward to what's to come in May.



*LCDR Rachel Forche performs at the 2022 USPHS Music Ensemble Concert in Glendale, Arizona*

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: High School Seniors

## 2023 RDML MISHOE DIVERSITY "BELIEVE" SCHOLARSHIP

### HISTORY

The scholarship is named after **Helena O. Mishoe, PhD, MPH**, retired Rear Admiral of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. This "Believe" Scholarship inspires students to be scholars, serve their community, and achieve their dreams. It also continues RDML Mishoe's legacy as a believer in the dreams of those who have demonstrated tremendous resiliency in overcoming challenges, and who will become visionary change-makers achieving great things to make our world a better place for all.



### ELIGIBILITY

- High school senior with a GPA equal to or greater than 3.0
- Two letters of recommendation
- Personal statement of 500 words or less
- Extracurricular involvement and community service
- Applied/accepted into an accredited college or university for Fall 2023
- Pursuing a degree in the sciences or a health-related field
- U.S. citizen or permanent resident

*NOTE: The scholarship is for students from underrepresented populations in the health sciences and research, or health-related disciplines (such as racial and ethnic minority groups, rural areas, first generation college students, and individuals with disabilities).*

### DEADLINE

The application period is **March 27, 2023 - May 19, 2023**. The recipient(s) of the scholarship will be announced in June 2023.

### APPLY

Visit <https://www.phscof.org/scholarships/mishoe-believe-scholarship/>





# Spiritual Wellness

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

## Tears Are a Language

Did you know that Charles Darwin considered tears “purposeless?” Don’t judge him too harshly. He didn’t have all of the information about tears and physiology that we have now. I recently found an article on tears that had some great information about what messages they can communicate.

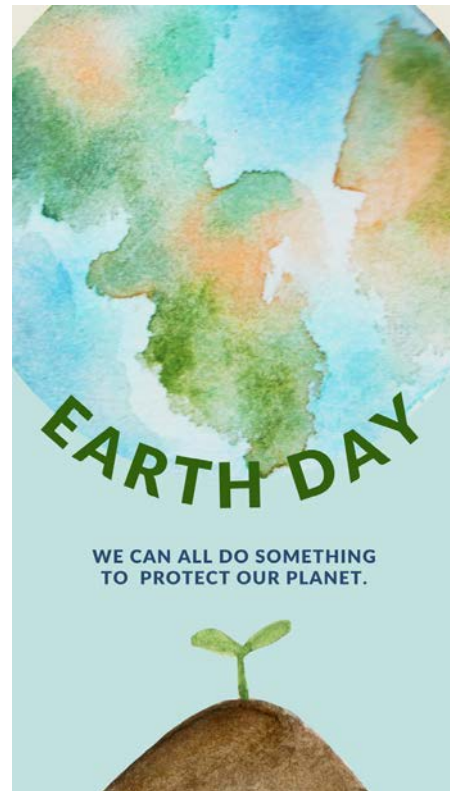
Tears can communicate 6 different messages:

1. The need for help during physical or emotional distress
2. Vulnerability
3. May lessen aggression from others
4. May increase unity and sympathy from others
5. Can increase trust and empathy between individuals
6. An opportunity for emotional bonding, attachment, and sincere authenticity

Beyond the cortisol that is released - which decreases stress - tears are beneficial to both the message sender and the message receiver. It is a very powerful non-verbal communication. I began to think on this a lot. If tears are beneficial, then why do we try so hard to hide them? Are we afraid to connect with others? What is it about this language that is so terrifying to us?

I think that the spiritual answer to these questions is very interesting. You see, when we cry out to a higher power, it is the most personal thing that we can do. It comes from our very core and exposes our innermost being, our soul. When we cry in front of others, our soul is laid bare and unprotected. If we don’t protect it, it could suffer damage beyond repair. So, we fight to keep it safe, but it is in the shared experience of vulnerability that lasting spiritual bonding is found. We have to let go of our instinct to hide and protect our most vulnerable part, and willingly take the risk of revealing it in order to bond with our higher power.

As USPHS officers, we tend to focus more on the body and the mind, but it is the soul within us that led many of us to serve others in need. May we all be open to the language of tears for ourselves and those in need.



### Education: Earth Day

Celebrated on April 22. It is a day to be grateful for the natural resources this planet provides to sustain life. It is also a day to take action to ensure that these are available to future generations.

### Spiritual Exercises

1. An increase in crying can indicate the need to talk with a mental health provider. Seek help if you begin crying non-stop or more frequently than usual.
2. Website: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/naming-the-days/view/10964/earth-day-12-spiritual-practices-to-honor-the-earth>
3. Article: Edwards WD, Gabel WJ, Hosmer FE. On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ. JAMA. 1986;255(11):1455–1463. doi:10.1001/jama.1986.03370110077025.
4. Search your holy text(s) for references to tears or crying. Talk about what you learned with a spiritual leader.

Questions? Comments? Contact me at [khredman@hotmail.com](mailto:khredman@hotmail.com).

# Highlights of the 2022 USPHS Symposium Retirement Seminar

by RDML Brandon Taylor, USPHS

At last year's Symposium in Glendale, my wife, Jennifer, and I had the opportunity to attend the pre-conference retirement seminar sponsored by the Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF). The day was full of great information from subject matter experts from Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), the VA, financial advisors, Navy Mutual, and others. CCHQ experts reviewed the process of retirement, timelines, forms, travel, and other considerations. They reminded me, it's a process and not a mere event. A veteran service officer (VSO) described the VA Disability Claims process and the importance of receiving a proper retirement physical and submission for any disability claims. A key takeaway for me was the importance of beginning that process

within six months of your known retirement date. The financial representative provided insights and considerations each of us should be thinking about with regards to investments, wills, and trusts. Retirement options for TRICARE, dental, and vision coverage were also reviewed. A nice review by Navy Mutual on the Survivor Benefit Program and Thrift Savings Plan was also provided. Having Jennifer attend with me was particularly helpful so she could also learn about the many options, decisions points, and updates to much of the information we had heard before. As time and circumstances permit, it is recommended that an officer and spouse attend at least two retirement seminars in their career, one at the midpoint of the career and the second within a few years of retirement. I appreciate COF making this vital seminar available to USPHS officers and spouses.

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on the USPHS Commissioned Corps (USPHSCC) and highlighted the numerous activities each of you perform every day in service to your country. On the spot, they gave him the military rate, and promised to follow up internally to see if this change could be made for all ASSP members who are serving in the USPHSCC. He was not sure if he would hear back from them, and during an unrelated conversation we were having he asked me if this was something COA would be willing to engage on in the future, if needed. "Of course," I said! "Just say the word."

Well, low and behold, several hours later I received another email from CDR Gifford to give me the good news that ASSP has proactively made the policy change, adding USPHS to the list of eligible uniformed services for the military renewal rate. Bravo Zulu to CDR Gifford! His advocacy and initiative in telling your story of service has resulted in USPHS Engineer and Environmental Health Officers being able to renew at military pricing.

In the past month I have also heard from several pharmacists who brought to my attention that the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) allows Licensure Transfer Applications free of charge to active-duty members of the armed forces, along with providing spouses a 50% discount on fees related to their licensure transfer applications. For years, COA has tried to convince NABP of why their practice needs to extend to all services, albeit unsuccessfully, and we won't give up the fight. Many USPHSCC pharmacists pick up clinical hours in their local communities, which is a benefit to areas experiencing provider shortages. We are hopeful that our ongoing engagement with

NABP will convince them to change their policy. I look forward to engaging their new Executive Director, Lemrey "Al" Carter, MS, PharmD, RPh.

Does your professional association have a reduced military dues option? Is USPHS included, or is it only offered to active-duty officers serving in the armed forces? How might you have influence? Are you willing to call or write their board of directors, executive director, or chief executive officer about this inequity? I hope CDR Gifford's actions have motivated you to take the first step in educating those professional associations you affiliate with to right the wrongs if they exist. COA is always here to assist you in amplifying your message, but nothing speaks more strongly to a board of directors than to hear directly from a dues-paying member.

When I see CDR Gifford in Tulsa in May, he will be receiving one of the first new COA coins to thank him for his advocacy and outreach. I have also reached out to my counterpart at ASSP, Jennifer McNelly, Chief Executive Officer, to thank her and ASSP for their kind consideration.

If your professional association does not extend their "military" discount to USPHSCC officers, drop me a line.

Until next month!

Jacque





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