

USPHS Officers Attend Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery



Waiting patiently for the Ceremony to begin

by LTJG Benjamin Kleskovic, PE, MBA,
LEED GA

On Saturday, 11 November 2023, USPHS officers attended the Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Among the officers present were Rear Admiral Richard Schobitz, Director CCHQ along with his family; Captain Juliette Taylor; Commander James Gooch, the Chair of the COA Board of Directors and his family; Lieutenant Jamla Rizek; Lieutenant Benjamin Kleskovic; Lieutenant Commander Abigail; and her handler Lieutenant Commander Dan Johnson.

As is usual for the DC metro area, the weather was cold, however the spirit

of ceremony kept all attending in good cheer. The ceremony had patriotic musical performances by the United States Air Force Band and the Singing Sergeants. Speeches were made by President Joseph Biden; Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dennis McDonough; Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera, Executive Director Office of Army Cemeteries; and others. In President Biden's speech, two Executive Orders were announced; the first of which pertained to childcare and long-term care for Americans including military and veteran families, and to support family caregivers, especially those who care for our veterans. The second Executive Order



Rear Admiral Schobitz and Commander Gooch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

see **VETERANS DAY** on page 22

from the
Executive
Director



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

Take Part to Create Connection

By the time you read this we will be almost half-way through winter. You will know the winner of the LVIII Super Bowl and will be anxiously waiting for the first buds of spring as temperatures warm. I am always happy to see the days get longer and see nature come back to life. We will also be planning to see old friends, and make new ones, at the 57th annual USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium, June 23-27, 2024, in Jacksonville, Florida.

At COA headquarters we are busy preparing for the next application cycle of volunteer openings. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" One feature that sets U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps officers apart is your generous spirit. Whether volunteering for multiple deployments, contributing beyond what is expected in your "day" job, serving on a committee, or generously giving to the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation, no one does it better. Have you

see **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** on page 30

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



Legislative Update

by CAPT (Ret) Alan Echt, Chair, COA Legislative Affairs Committee

Happy New Year. I haven't taken the time to write this column for the past few months because there hasn't been much to report about advocacy in the First Session of the 118th Congress. As the Associated Press noted, "With just 27 bills and resolutions signed into law, not counting a few board appointments, it's among the most do-nothing sessions of Congress in recent times." The FY 2024 NDAA included a few wins for the uniformed services, in addition to a 5.2% active duty pay raise. For example, Section 635 expanded the qualifying events for reimbursement of spousal relicensing or business costs due to a service member's relocation. Unfortunately, while the bill provided parental leave parity for certain members of the reserve component of the Armed Forces, the USPHS Commissioned Corps remains the only uniformed service not entitled to Title 10 Chapter 40 parental leave. COA will continue to advocate with Congress on this issue.

As you know, Senator Tammy Duckworth (D, IL) introduced a bill, S.2297 - Parity for Public Health Service Ready Reserve Act, that would correct the disparities between the reserve components of the armed forces and the USPHS Ready Reserve. To date, the Duckworth bill still only has one Senate cosponsor. COA learned that Rep. Blunt Rochester (D, DE-at large) is planning to introduce a House version of Sen. Duckworth's bill because of advocacy by a COA member in Delaware. I encourage you all to continue contacting your senators and representatives about S. 2297.

Deputy Director Corrigan is engaged with groups of members working on state level issues. In Massachusetts, COA joined with COA members in a virtual meeting with the Secretary of the Executive Office of Veterans Services, and we have been following up with his Policy Advisor to advance legislation in Massachusetts to give Commissioned Corps officers in Massachusetts parity in veterans' benefits in the Commonwealth. In South Carolina, COA is working with two members to expand that state's retirement pay income tax exemption to include USPHS and NOAA retirees. COA is also working with a group of members in Virginia to change a recently enacted retirement pay income tax exemption to include USPHS and NOAA retirees.

COA recently began using New Mode advocacy software to generate calls to action to enable you to easily contact your elected representatives to advocate for legislative action. We have already used the software to enable you to contact your United States senators to ask them to cosponsor Senator Duckworth's Parity for Public Health Service Ready Reserve Act. Using your membership information, the software automatically identifies your elected representatives at the federal and state levels. The software enables you to personalize, sign, and send a COA-crafted issue message to the appropriate office. If you receive an email from COA with a call to action, know that it is legitimate and please use the opportunity to amplify your voice and communicate directly with decision makers. In the meantime, please go to the COA website and verify your membership





Board of Directors

Forged in Resilience

by LCDR Christopher Mendoza-Truong, Pharm.D., CCHP
COA Board Treasurer

In the mêlée of challenges that define our era, the officers of the USPHS stand as sentinels of resilience. As we embark upon the uncharted territories of 2024, we carry the torch of a legacy forged in the crucible of public health crises. By drawing compelling parallels between history and the contemporary landscape faced by USPHS officers, we explore how COA stands as a beacon of support in their noble mission.

The Echoes of Resilience of the Uniformed Services

History whispers the tales of battles fought, campaigns waged, and resilience tested in the face of adversity. From the ancient Spartans at Thermopylae to the Allied Forces storming the beaches of Normandy, each campaign of the uniformed services echoes the essence of resilience. The ability to face adversity head-on, adapt to unforeseen challenges, and emerge stronger is a hallmark of our history. Similarly, officers of the USPHS navigate a dynamic landscape of public health challenges, where resilience is not just a quality, but a necessity. The COVID-19 pandemic, a modern battleground, underscores the importance of staying resilient in the face of an invisible enemy. The lessons of adaptability, strategic thinking, and solidarity are paramount and were inevitably learned.

Officership in the Trenches of Public Health

Officership is a mantle that transcends time and domain. Drawing inspiration from military leadership, officers of the USPHS exemplify the principles of command and responsibility. Take, for instance, the leadership exhibited by General Douglas MacArthur during the Philippines campaign in World War II. His unwavering commitment, strategic acumen, and ability to rally his troops parallel the challenges faced by officers of the USPHS in leading the charge against public health crises. Officership demands not only the technical expertise but also the courage to make difficult decisions in the interest of the greater good. As officers

navigate the complexities of healthcare challenges, the spirit of commanders from history serves as a guide. From the tactical brilliance of Sun Tzu to the compassionate leadership of Florence Nightingale, officers of the USPHS find inspiration in the annals of military and healthcare stories alike.

COA: A Stronghold of Unity and Support

In the vast landscape of officership, COA emerges as a beacon of support and advocacy. Locally and nationally, COA staff and Board of Directors tirelessly work to represent the interests of officers of the USPHS. In a manner reminiscent of military alliances formed for a common cause, COA fosters unity among officers, providing a platform for collaboration and collective resilience. COA's initiatives mirror the strategic planning seen in joint maritime campaigns. Whether addressing the needs of officers at the grassroots level, or advocating for a systemic change nationally, COA exemplifies the principles of officership by putting the welfare of its members at the forefront. In times of crisis, COA stands as a united front, much like a well-coordinated maritime campaign.

Navigating Uncharted Territories

The lessons from history and the contemporary efforts of COA converge. The battlefield may have shifted from traditional warfare to the realms of public health, but the essence of resilience remains constant. Officership, as demonstrated by historical leaders of the uniformed services, is not confined to the pages of history, but lives on through the dedicated officers of the USPHS.

As the officers of the USPHS march forward, the past serves not as a relic but as a guide. COA, with its contemporary initiatives and relentless commitment, exemplifies the enduring spirit of resilience. Together, officership, resilience, and the efforts of COA form a symbolic relationship that fortifies the collective strength of the USPHS. The journey ahead may be uncertain, but armed with the resiliency, officers are poised to navigate the challenges of 2024 with valor and purpose.

Don't forget to reserve your seat!

at the
A & C GALA

On the opening night of the Symposium
at the conclusion of Training Day



Featuring Vijay Gupta as the
evening's Keynote Speaker

Violinist

Ted Talk speaker

Humanitarian

Philanthropist

Monday, June 24th, 2024

Reception at 1800 hrs. Dinner at 1900 hrs
followed by Dancing and Celebrating

see you there!

Healing Our Planet: Uniting for Climate and Health Equity Action

by LT Christine Nappa, LCSW, BCD

On October 19, 2023, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) National Park Service (NPS) Office of Public Health and the University of New Mexico Project ECHO hosted a pivotal event—“Healing Our Planet: A Call to Action on Climate and Health Inequity”—in the historic Stewart Lee Udall Building in Washington, D.C. The gathering aimed to empower public health professionals and stakeholders to actively engage in climate and health equity initiatives within their communities and workplaces, particularly as emergency responders.

The event was a launch opportunity for the newly established Climate Action, Readiness, Equity (CARE) Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) Chartered Advisory Group (CAG), emphasizing the need for a coordinated effort to enhance the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps’ ability to address climate action, disaster response readiness, and the health and equity impacts of climate change.

The event’s highlight was a screening of excerpts from *Invisible Corps*, a PBS documentary that covers the history and role of the USPHS Commissioned Corps, accompanied by insights from filmmaker Chris Schueler, and the film’s narrator, Golden Globe Award-winning actress, Ali MacGraw. The film showcased the historical significance of the USPHS Commissioned Corps in tackling major public health crises throughout history.

The formal program opened with remarks from the DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary, Sarah Greenberger, and a video from the Assistant Secretary for Health, ADM Rachel Levine, welcoming guests and recognizing the 100-year partnership between NPS and the USPHS Commissioned Corps. The event featured a panel discussion titled “Healing Our Planet: A Call to Action on Climate and Health Inequities.” The panel, moderated by RADM Michael



Participants, volunteers, and attendees gathered at the U.S. Dept. of the Interior Stewart Lee Udall Building in Washington, D.C. for the “Healing Our Planet” event.

lademarco, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Medicine in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH), included prominent figures such as Deputy U.S. Surgeon General RADM Denise Hinton, Dr. John Balbus, Director of the OASH Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OCCHE) and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Climate Change and Health Equity, Dr. Georges Benjamin, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association (APHA), Dr. Jenny Powers, co-lead of the NPS One Health Program, and Dr. Bethany Carlos, a D.C. pediatrician and 2021 Climate and Health Equity Fellow for the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health.

In addition to the panel, the event included the participation of 12 organizations addressing climate-related prevention and health consequences with information tables to showcase their work before and after the formal presentations. Participants included: the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH), APHA, University of New Mexico’s Project ECHO, Climate Mental Health Network, George Mason University’s Center for Climate and Health Equity, Climate Reality,

Empower DC, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE), American Lung Association, National Environmental Health Association, OASH’s OCCHE, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

VIPs in attendance were treated to a tour of the historic Stewart Lee Udall DOI Building, enriching the experience with insights into the history of the building and the Department via a selection of more than 40 New Deal-era painted murals, plus photographic murals by Ansel Adams.

This event marked a crucial step towards fostering collaboration and driving actionable solutions in the face of the climate crisis and health inequities. By bringing together diverse perspectives, organizations, and leaders, “Healing Our Planet” offered a platform to inspire collective efforts in safeguarding the planet and promoting health equity for all.

The event was led by members of CARE, with LCDR Karen Lumbu Kinard serving as the principal event coordinator. The District of Columbia

see **PLANET** on page 6

Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

by LCDR Alena Korbut, PharmD, CDR Linzi Allen, PharmD LCDR Leah Weiss, PharmD, LCDR Joshua Satlak, PharmD

Every year, Commissioned Officers Association (COA) members await the annual USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. This event helps unite active-duty, reserve, and retired officers and students in a unique atmosphere focused on promoting esprit de corps. Often, officers outside of the planning committee may not know what it takes to make this event happen and how many hours spent behind the scenes to make the event operate as smooth as possible.

As a member of planning committee for Pharmacy Category Day, I received a lot of insight of what is required to organize Category Day. For this one day, there were 75 officers involved behind the scenes in roles such as presenter, planner, moderator, or flag officer. Additionally, the Social Chairs worked very hard to find a unique place for the Pharmacy Social to happen that would allow as many officers as possible to attend and encourage esprit de corps. This year's social accommodated more than 300 officers in one building.

This past year, the USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium was held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, providing many unique opportunities to the local Green Country COA members. A couple of local Green Country COA members assisted guests of honor with transportation during the Symposium. LCDR Joey Cookson met Surgeon General Vivek Murthy at the airport and transported him to his hotel. LCDR Alena Korbut met a keynote speaker, Dr. Katelyn Jetelina, and escorted her to the Anchor and Caduceus Dinner.

LCDR Joshua Satlak and LCDR Leah Weiss were selected to serve as aides-de-camp for RADM Travis Watts and RDML Kelly Battese. LCDR Joshua Satlak stated, "It was an exceptional honor to serve as an aide-de-camp at the 2023 Scientific and Training Symposium for the esteemed RDML Battese and RADM Watts. Assisting the distinguished guests and facilitating transitions between their scheduled events allowed me to witness firsthand the exchange of groundbreaking ideas and foster meaningful connections among prominent leaders. This experience will undoubtedly remain a cherished highlight in my professional



LCDR Joshua Satlak, LCDR Leah Weiss, LCDR Alena Korbut, Cherokee Nation Director of Pharmacy CDR Clayton Myers, and CDR Linzi Allen at Pharmacy Category Day.

career." LCDR Leah Weiss stated, "Being selected to serve as an aide-de-camp at the 2023 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium was an immense honor. Within this humbling role, I served as support for RDML Kelly Battese and RADM Travis Watts and had the privilege of witnessing the exchange of innovative ideas shared among prominent guests. As an aide-de-camp, junior officers are provided with an invaluable opportunity to assist our leadership. Aides allow our senior leaders to focus on the job they are assigned as they remove the challenges presented by coordinating the details of their commitments seamlessly. I was grateful to be selected for this role and would encourage junior officers to serve in this capacity if the opportunity presents itself."

The USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium is a great event, and every officer should attend often if their duty station will support them. The Symposium allows for time to meet with fellow officers, receive updates from the leadership, learn information to bring back to one's duty station, have fun, and recharge. Most importantly, this is the time to also volunteer, meet leadership and learn from them.

PLANET from page 5

branch of the Commissioned Officers Association (D.C. COA) was pivotal in supporting this event. D.C. COA leadership would like to acknowledge the following USPHS officers for volunteering their time to this event, demonstrating exceptional commitment to the mission and core values of the USPHS Commissioned Corps: CAPT Juliette Taylor (D.C. COA President), CDR Vandna Kishore (D.C. COA President-elect), CAPT Sara Newman (DOI NPS Lead), CAPT Deborah Dee, CAPT Zanethia Eubanks, CAPT

Brian Lewis, CAPT Karen Munoz, CAPT Mimi Phan, CAPT Maria Said, CDR Kelly Fath, CDR Dipti Kalra, CDR Javier Muniz, CDR Yi Zhang, LCDR Samora Casimir, LCDR Uyen Chu, LCDR Israel Cross, LCDR Adeyemo Folaremi, LCDR Maggie Kemp, LCDR Lusi Martin-Braswell, LCDR Melina Rodriguez Upton, LCDR Scott Steffen, LCDR Sophia Yang, LT Chiemena Anyanwu, LT Johanna Paillet-Growl, and LT Kesia Purcell.

Dinner with RDML Schobitz

by LT Folarin Ojowa, PharmD, CCHP and CDR Sudhir Perakathu

With the leadership of the South Texas Commissioned Officers Association (COA) President (CDR Sudhir Perakathu) and Secretary (LT Folarin Ojowa), South Texas COA were excited and honored to welcome and host the Director of Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) RDML Richard Schobitz and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Liaisons CAPT Beverly Dandridge and CAPT Michelle Dawson for a dinner on Tuesday, October 17, 2023. We had a total of 21 people in attendance.

RDML Richard Schobitz shared his and U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) goals and answered questions on recruitment and training of officers including the improvement of the Junior and Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Externship Program (JRCOSTEP and SRCOSTEP).

RDML Richard Schobitz encouraged the officers to continue to contribute to Surgeon General initiatives, including social connection, mental health initiatives, workplace well-being, and reducing health worker burnout.



LCDR Ngozi Mezu-Patel and LT Florian Ojowa with RDML Richard Schobitz

Officers also shared initiatives implemented by their local workplace, agency, and organization that contribute to USPHS and CCHQ goals. RDML Richard Schobitz encouraged officers to continue to be instrumental to achieving these goals.

After the dinner, officers were encouraged and reinforced to stay focused on meeting the goal of the USPHS.

In the Service of Others: A Non-Clinical HSO's Experience on a Remote Area Mission (RAM)

by CDR Margaret Caulk, MPH, MS, COR II

On November 10, 2023, CDR Caulk reported to Prince George's Community College to begin three days of service at her first-ever Remote Area Medical (RAM) clinic. Founded in 1985, RAM is a non-profit provider of pop-up clinics, delivering free dental, vision, and medical services to underserved, uninsured and/or underinsured individuals.

CDR Caulk applied and was selected to serve alongside 55 U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) officers, most whom were clinicians. At first, CDR Caulk was nervous about finding a fit for her skills as she did not have a clinical background. She soon learned that her skills would be valuable. The first day started at 9 a.m. and included clinic set up (unpacking gear, treatment tent assembly, ventilation connections). By the end of the first day, the dental clinic, medical clinic, vision clinic, triage area, and patient registration area were set up.

Clinical services began on the second day, with patients waiting in their cars in the parking lot, some since 12:30 a.m. They

were there to receive new eyeglasses, eye pressure exams, medical checks, flu vaccinations, and dental procedures (cleanings, fillings, and extractions). By 2 p.m., the clinics were full and patients were told to return the next day.

CDR Caulk began her service in the Patient Registration and Triage areas, translating for patients who only spoke Spanish. CDR Caulk assisted the nurses with medical translation to help them obtain patients' family histories of glaucoma, high blood pressure, diabetes, and vaccine records. When more translators arrived, CDR Caulk moved to the medical clinic, translating for providers and assuring patients received women's health services and physical examinations. Towards the end of the day, CDR Caulk was at the dental clinic translating for a dentist recreating half a woman's tooth so she could eat meat again (she had not been able to for over a year). The dentist did an amazing job, protecting the root of the tooth and protecting other teeth from erosion. The patient broke down in tears of thanks afterwards, wishing the team blessings

and thanking them for the work they did. Through these experiences, CDR Caulk realized the immensity of the services provided at the RAM clinic and how much it bettered the lives of patients.

The last day began with patients returning from the previous day to wait in line to register for other treatment services. CDR Caulk served at the vision clinic. She assisted with obtaining prescription lenses for patients. She helped providers, by providing medical translation, counsel patients at risk for or who had glaucoma seek urgent care.

She established the initial contacts for obtaining free health insurance. When operations concluded, CDR Caulk assisted with clinic tear down and loading the tractor trailer and box truck, leaving the college campus like it had been 72 hours before. The RAM event had lasting impact on the community. The mission was successful, treating 417 patients and providing over \$160,000 in services. Undoubtedly, CDR Caulk would gladly serve on another RAM mission.

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION MEMBER-ONLY EVENT

RETIRED OFFICER VIRTUAL GATHERING



PRESENTERS

Featuring:

- RDML (Ret) Sven Rodenbeck
Retired Officers Committee
- CAPT (Ret) Holly Williams
Retired Officers Committee
- CAPT (Ret) Jacqueline Rychnovsky
COA Executive Director

Your Hosts:

- COA Retired Officer Committee



JOIN US

Learn about:

- Updates on retired officer ID cards
- COA Survivor's Benefits Checklist
- COA General Updates



DATE

TUESDAY
MARCH 19, 2024

TIME

11:00 AM (EST)

REGISTER

**[surveymonkey.com/r/
march19retiree](https://surveymonkey.com/r/march19retiree)**



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



Community Outreach during Christmas Break

by LCDR Samora Casimir, OTD, OTR/L

During the holidays, I fly down to Fort Lauderdale, Florida and spend time with my family. Of course, Christmas time can sometimes become chaotic with overplanning, spending too much money, and getting lost and forgetting the true meaning of what family time during the holidays is supposed to be about. But this year, I was more strategic and planned ahead of time. I thought “How can I help others in need during this Christmas season?” and “How can I include my family, specifically, my niece and nephew? How can I be a role model?”

On December 27th, 2023, I brought my 17-year-old nephew Jaden, and 13-year-old niece Janelle to volunteer with me at a community enhancement food distribution center in Broward County. We served over 60 boxes of food filled with various produce, dry canned goods, coffee, rice, beans, milk, and eggs. We started at 8am, and by 10am, a long line of cars waited their turn to pick up the boxes. Each car represented different shelters for the unhoused, senior citizen day care centers, nursing homes, and group homes within the south Florida area. Each car called ahead of time for their pickup and requested how many boxes of food they needed. We also distributed boxes of assorted hygiene products. For example, over 30 boxes were filled with shampoo and conditioner, toothpastes and toothbrushes, body soap, sunscreen, feminine hygiene products, generic over-the-counter medications, and toilet paper. We loaded each vehicle with their food pantry box, crates of milk, and hygiene box. Although this volunteer event took place after the Christmas holiday, the community enhancement food distribution center was extremely busy and overwhelmed with the many donations they received since the beginning of the fall season. We inspected and examined all the donations to ensure none of the refrigerated items, produce, canned goods, meats, and hygiene products were expired, spoiled, nor spilled, and were still in good condition to be issued.

As U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps officers, we all can do good for others and transform someone's life for the better. We possess the skills necessary to serve those in need. That's why we should use every opportunity, even during the holidays, to encourage and help others. I was able to set and



LCDR Samora Casimir (middle), her nephew Jaden (left), and her niece Janelle (right) while distributing over 60 boxes of food in Broward County, Florida.

be a positive example for my niece and nephew while helping to build a healthy community. Doing good for others opens the door for encouraging conversations. I met a retired Coast Guard veteran, and I was able to talk to him about USPHS, our mission, values, and why I chose this activity to do with my family. He also talked to me about his career in the Coast Guard and his love for volunteering in the Miami/Fort Lauderdale area. We were able to have a long dialogue about our love for helping people in the community, our love for our family, and our goals for the new year.

Serving and helping those in need is a form of kindness and love. All of us can do good for those in need through our special abilities, talents, money, time in public service and/or through communication. When we take the time out of our busy schedules, even during the holidays, to help someone in need, we are being intentional, proactive in making positive changes for the better, improving ourselves, and setting an example for those whom you wouldn't even think are watching your every move.

COF Announces 2024 Scholarships and Fellowship Opportunities

by Dave Corrigan, COA Deputy Director

The PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF) is pleased to announce the following funding opportunities for 2024:

Family Member Scholarships – Application Period from March 11 to May 5, 2024.

Scholarships are given to high school, undergraduate, and graduate students. They are funded by active-duty and retired USPHS members, local COA branches, and others. Applicants are scored based on their career aspirations, extracurricular school and community activities, honors/awards, and academic performance. For more information: <https://www.phscof.org/scholarships/family-member-scholarships/>

Additionally, keep an eye out in the coming months for the RADM Jerrold M. Michael Fellowship and the RDML Helena O. Mishoe Scholarship. The RADM Jerrold M. Michael Fellowship award provides continuing education for junior officers serving in the USPHS Commissioned Corps. The program is currently limited to

certificate programs offered by the University of Maryland School of Public Health. The RDML Helena O. Mishoe Scholarship is available to high school seniors who are the family members of COA members.

The Foundation relies on a team of COA members to evaluate submissions for the various awards. Each volunteer officer is assigned to score 5-10 applications, using the evaluation criteria to rate each submission and provide comments using a scoring rubric for each award. Depending on the award type, the time commitment varies, but is not usually more than 10 hours. Reviews are typically done during the month following the award cycle. The number of reviewers needed for each program is dependent on the number of submissions.

If you are interested in volunteering to serve as a reviewer, please send an email with “Award Reviewer” in the subject line by February 20 to Lynn Abrahamson, Grants Manager at labrahamson@coausphs.org.

**Guarantee that
health
is a human right for
everyone.**

It's your desire and ours ...

Prevent disease

Promote healthy lifestyles

Improve health outcomes

Join us and unleash the public health **hero** in you!

Online, on-campus and blended format degrees



HIGHEST RANKED

public health college in Florida

USNWR, 2022-2023



College of Public Health
our practice is our passion

2024 Symposium Site Visit

by Dave Corrigan, COA Deputy Director

A few weeks ago, the Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health (COF), COA's sister foundation, met at the Hyatt Jacksonville Riverfront to conduct its initial strategic planning session for the next five years. COF planned this session at this specific Hyatt so board members and staff had the opportunity to double the session as a site survey for the 57th Annual Scientific and Training Symposium that will be taking place June 24 to 27, 2024.

I was able to take a self-guided tour, eat at the restaurants, use the gym, and walk the neighborhood to get a feel for how our experience will be in June. First, there are plenty of places to eat within walking distance from the hotel. Additionally, if you like running, there are great trails along the river adjacent to the hotel. You can also run across the bridge by the hotel that spans the St. Johns River. In fact, the Surgeon General's 5k race will take participants along the river, across the bridge, and back to complete the 5k run. The sites were enjoyable in January so I can just about guarantee it will be beautiful this coming June.

Inside the hotel, there is a Morton's Steakhouse, a hotel restaurant, convenience store, and 24-hour market for a meal or snack any time of the day. There is also a Starbucks coffee shop for those of you who are like me and need their caffeine throughout the day. The second and third floors of the hotel hold the meeting rooms where Symposium events will be taking place. If you have a sleeping room booked in the Hyatt, you will not have to leave the hotel to attend any events. The hotel gym is on the top floor and has all of the equipment you will need for exercising throughout the week. Outside of the gym is a rooftop pool and hot tub jacuzzi. From the hot tub and pool, the view of the St John's River and John T. Alsop Jr Bridge are unforgettable. According to the hotel staff, the rooftop pool comes standard with a rooftop bar in the summertime.

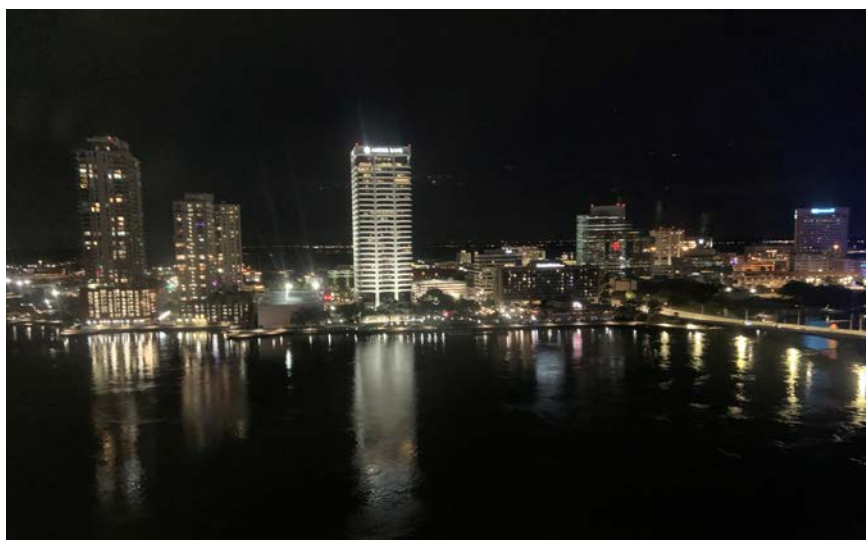
The staff at COA is confident your time in Jacksonville for the 57th Symposium will provide you with memories for years to come. Registration is now open. Visit phscof.org/symposium for more information. We look forward to seeing you in June.



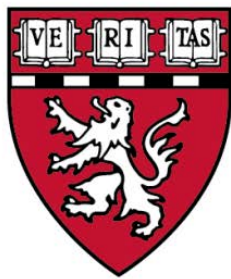
The rooftop pool at the Hyatt in Jacksonville where the Symposium will take place.



Relax in the rooftop hot tub at the end of a long day of being on your feet at the Symposium



Enjoy the view of the St. John's River at the hotel gym or rooftop pool. This photo was taken while sitting in the hot tub.



HARVARD

MEDICAL SCHOOL

Research Study of Moral Injury, Moral Distress and Spirituality Among Public Health Emergency Responders

If you are a public health emergency responder (i.e. a person who provides public health and medical services during public health emergencies) you may be eligible to participate

We are interested in learning about your unique experiences!

We are assessing factors which may help improve job satisfaction and job retention by mitigating moral injury and moral distress. This study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will take part in an anonymous single online approximately 30-minute survey. The online survey will have all personal identifiers removed. **There is no compensation for participating in this research study.**

This is an independent study through Harvard Medical School Center for Bioethics. This project and any publications as a result of this project are not endorsed/supported by HHS. All responses will remain anonymous. HHS/ASPR/NDMS team members can voluntarily choose to participate in their personal capacities during their own time. However, they may not share non-public information while participating if they choose to participate.

Are you eligible?

- You are eligible if you are a public health emergency responder.
- You are eligible if you have been a public health emergency responder for at least 3 years.
- You are at least 18 years old.

Enrollment period: 11/06/2023 to 03/31/2024

TO PARTICIPATE:

Click here:

https://hms.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ehcmiGcMhn5TWHc

Or scan this QR Code:



Please contact the project PI if you have any questions:

Dwight Ferguson, PhD

MS Bioethics Student

Harvard Medical School, Center for Bioethics

dwight_ferguson@hms.harvard.edu

*This study has been approved by the Harvard Medical School
IRB: IRB#23-1070-02; Approval Date: 10/31/2023*

Advocating for Parity: A Call to Action for Tax Exemption in Arizona

by CAPT Kimberly Langley, PharmD, MBA, BCPS and LCDR
Jaqueline Kouadio, BS

The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps has been at the forefront of safeguarding the health and safety of our communities, providing vital services that range from responding to public health emergencies to promoting disease prevention. Our officers work tirelessly to ensure the well-being of the nation, often in challenging and high-stakes environments. Our most recent heroic contribution to the nation's health is our contribution to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite our significant contributions, there exists a disparity in state tax exemptions when compared to the armed forces.

Currently, members of the armed forces enjoy state tax exemptions that recognize their commitment and sacrifice for the greater good of the nation. Many states laws are written to extend this benefit to "armed forces" and not "uniformed services," thus excluding USPHS. This discrepancy not only undermines the recognition of the critical role played by USPHS officers but also creates financial challenges for those serving our communities. Some officers have even mistakenly filed taxes as "exempt" under the belief that USPHS officers were automatically included in the military tax exemption of their state. As a result, many officers have found themselves owing years of back taxes. Achieving tax parity for state exemptions would not only acknowledge the sacrifices of our officers but also provide them with the financial support they deserve, aligning our benefits with the value of all uniformed services.

Not only does tax exemption parity alleviate financial challenges, but the Commissioned Corps relies on recruiting and retaining top-tier professionals to maintain a high standard of public health. Achieving state tax exemption parity would make our service more attractive to potential officers and improve retention rates by demonstrating a commitment to their well-being.

In the past ten years, the dedicated officers in Arizona have made several attempts to address this disparity and bring this issue to the attention of advocates and lawmakers. With support from the Commissioned Officers Association (COA), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), and state legislators, legislation has been introduced again this year to pass a bill that would acknowledge the sacrifice and service of USPHS officers to bring our recognition in line with that of the armed forces.

In our commitment to public health, let us also commit to advocating for the recognition and benefits that our dedicated officers deserve. Together, we can amplify our collective voice and bring about the change needed to achieve state tax exemption parity with the armed forces. Seek out your Arizona state representatives and let them know that USPHS officers need parity treatment on state income taxes. This is a call to action for USPHS officers of Arizona to stay abreast of the progress of this legislation and stand ready to have your voice heard in the Arizona State Legislature.

If you do not live in Arizona, we encourage you to seek out changes in your state to ensure the USPHS has parity with the uniformed services.



Law Offices of
David P. Sheldon, PLLC

We take care of you because you take care of us!

Addressing the Unique Needs of Commissioned Corps Officers

Allegations of AWOL • COER Rebuttals and Appeals

The Complaint and Redress Process • Correction of Records

Education and Civilian Career Credit • EEO Complaints

Fitness for Duty • Letters of Counseling • Letters of Reprimand

The Medical Board Process • Readiness • Retirement

USPHSDefense.com

202-546-9575





57th Annual USPHS Symposium Training Day

Monday, June 24, 2024



REGISTRATION



[Register Now](#)



AGENDA



[Training Day Agenda](#)



HOTEL RESERVATIONS



[Hyatt Regency Jacksonville
Riverfront](#)



FOR MORE DETAILS



LEADERSHIP



INCLUSIVITY & INCLUSION



EMOTIONAL WELLNESS, WELL-BEING &
SELF CARE



PROMOTION PACKET TIPS



CORE COMPETENCIES AND/OR SKILLS
MAINTENANCE



ABSTRACT & PRESENTATION WRITTING



BASIC LIFE SUPPORT / ADVANCED CARDIAC
LIFE SUPPORT



NALOXONE TRAINING
[PHS COF Homepage](#)



[PHS COF Homepage](#)



[Scholarships](#)



COA Participation at the "Trunk or Treat" Event in Crownpoint, New Mexico

by LCDR Gail L Surrena, RN, clinical informaticist

Halloween fell on a Tuesday this past year and the Commissioned Officers Association (COA) of the Continental Divide Branch of Crownpoint, New Mexico wanted to participate. The Division of Public Health sent out a notification to all Crownpoint Healthcare Facility of the upcoming Trunk-or-Treat event and asked for participants. LCDR Gail Surrena sent out an email to the COA members here at Crownpoint and asked them each to bring a large bag of Halloween candy, if they wanted to participate. LCDR Surrena collected about 1500 pieces of candy and treats and bagged them all up to give at the Trunk-or-Treat event. Treats were donated by LCDR Surrena, CDR Erik Cala, CDR Daryl Dineyahze-Toya, LT Shoghi Agbortoko, Lt Clarissa Wu, LT Amber Willis, and CDR Kip Christensen. LCDR Surrena set up the treats in the 'trunk' of her vehicle at the Crownpoint Flea Market. Others from Crownpoint Hospital were New Horizons and members of the Division of Public Health, including Public Health Nursing from Crownpoint Hospital who provided COVID-19 and Influenza vaccines to community members.

COA gave out about 200 treat bags and a brochure to the first 100 Trunk or Treater's which explained a little bit about the COA: Who we are? What do we do? Where will you find us, along with what kind of positions the officers hold within the facility from Therapist to CEO to Nurse to Pharmacist and to Industrial Hygienist.

Those who came out to help included: LCDR Gail Surrena, Patricia Thomas (for CAPT Detsoi (ret)), LT Amber Willis, Rethania Yazzie (DoPH: for CDR Dineyahze-Toya), CDR Erik Cala, and LT Shoghi Agbortoko. LT Clarissa Wu was scheduled to help, but worked the nightshift and was unable to attend. Ms Yazzie, LT Willis, and LT Agbortoko helped to double up the treats in the bags. Thank you to everyone who donated treats and helped to hand them out. All in all, it was a successful event. COA officers and their



Lt Amber Willis, RN, Supervising Nurse, ED, & LCDR Gail Surrena, RN, Informaticist

participation were also recognized in the Crownpoint Healthcare Facility NEWS.

As our COA Continental Divide Branch is just restarting, it is hoped that we will be more involved in our community over the next year. The new elected officials include: CDR Cala (President), LT Willis (Vice President), LT Wu (Secretary), LT Agbortoko (Treasurer).

LEGISLATIVE from page 2

status and your contact information. It is especially important to verify that your personal email address and the home mailing address associated with your account are correct.

The latest edition of COA's guide to state income taxes on retirement pay is now available for download on the COA website. You can find it under the Advocacy tab. While I did my best to ensure that it was up to date, please send an email to advocacy@coausphs.org if you find any errors.

I recently heard from a member based in a state in the Southern Great Plains that officers there felt that COA's advocacy was focused on issues that primarily impact officers stationed on the east and west coasts. Frankly, I don't understand how parity for parental leave and improving Tricare dental and pharmacy coverage are regional issues. However, if you feel that way, please take a few minutes

to review COA's goals at <https://www.coausphs.org/COA/COA/Advocacy/Priorities.aspx> and send an email to advocacy@coausphs.org with your ideas. In the next few months, the Legislative Advocacy Committee will be revising COA's advocacy goals to prepare for the 119th Congress and the next Administration in January 2025. We value your input.

Finally, would you like to help advocate for COA's legislative goals and the USPHS Ready Reserve? First, you can call your legislators and ask them to support the Ready Reserve or visit COA's call-to-action page. Then, consider writing an OPED for your local newspaper discussing the importance of the Ready Reserve to the health and safety of our nation. Visit [Visit here to learn more about writing an OPED](#).

USPHS Commissioned Corps – The Path to Visibility

by RDML (Ret.) Pam Schweitzer, PharmD

By now, most of us have heard about or seen Invisible Corps, a powerful PBS documentary directed by Emmy Award Winner Chris Schueler about our nation's public health heroes (you!), which originally premiered at the PHS COF Symposium in May 2023 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

If you haven't seen this one-hour documentary, it is available to stream on PBS's website and at, invisiblecorps.com.

There are several reasons why many of us got involved with this documentary. For me, it was realizing the importance of using media to tell a story to a wide variety of audiences. That is why the 25 short videos are an invaluable timeless tool for us to use.

A catalyst for the documentary was encountering public health graduate students unfamiliar with the USPHS Commissioned Corps. This, along with years of trying to explain succinctly to just about everyone who we are and what we do for our country. It became apparent that our narrative needed a broader platform. Since the film's release, emphasis has been placed on engaging both the general public and students, our next generation of public health leaders.

"The inspiring and often unseen history of the United States Public Health Service and its Commissioned Corps unfolds in this remarkable film. A must-watch for those in the public health pathway, it offers invaluable insights and engages viewers with its informative and captivating storytelling."

Laura Magaña, PhD
President & CEO, Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH)

I wanted to share a little bit about what we have been doing since the film was released, some which is on the PHS COF website.

Invisible Corps has received recognition and accolades on the film festival circuit. What has made it even more special is having USPHS officers attend screenings and share with the audience about their role and career as an officer. The audiences have been very engaged with a newfound appreciation for the vital role of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

Special shout-out to the following officers who participated in the film festivals:

LCDR Maria Apodaca, CAPT (retired) Dan Beck, CDR Nicole Bell, CDR Rachael Cook, CAPT (retired) Nina Dozoretz, LCDR Brendan Eberenz, CAPT Tom Faber, CDR Marie Johnston, CAPT David Lau, CAPT Jennifer Lind, LCDR Kathryn McNamara, LCDR Rumany Penn, LT Leigh Ellyn Preston, LCDR Briana Rider, RADM (retired) Steve Solomon, CAPT (retired) Ed Stein, CAPT (retired) Astrid Szeto.

Film Festival – Official Selection (** Denotes Awards Received)

Albuquerque Film and Music Experience, New Mexico

Better Cities Film Festival, Detroit, Michigan

Cinematic Arts Redemptive Entertainment (CARE) Awards, West Virginia - ***Best Science Film***

Docs Without Borders Film Festival, Delaware - ***Best of Show/Health***

Freedom Festival International, South Carolina - ***Best Producer***

Las Vegas International Film and Screenwriting Festival, Nevada

SoCal Film Awards, Huntington Beach, California

Old Town Film Festival, Orange, California - ***Best Documentary Feature***

Oniros Film Awards, New York

LA Documentary Film Festival, Los Angeles, California – ***Best Social Issue Documentary***

Love and Hope International Film Festival, Barcelona Spain ***Special Invitation***

Green Jack International Film Festival, California

Louisville's International Festival of Film, Kentucky

Mesa International Film Festival, Arizona

International Film Arts and Hearts Film Festival, Los Angeles

Here is a video summary of some of the comments about the film and the USPHS Commissioned Corps made by attendees of the Los Angeles Film Festival.

PBS Markets

Invisible Corps has been shown in large and small markets throughout the country. A special thank-you to all the people who sent a letter to their respective PBS stations that has resulted in the documentary being shown in your area:

Jennifer Harlos, LCDR Erin Nilsson-Green, CDR Brittany Keener, LCDR Ashley Frost, CAPT (ret) David Apgar, LCDR Kinbo Lee, CDR David Shih, CAPT (retired) Daniel Kavanaugh, LT Tia McClelland, John DiMaggio, CAPT (retired) Susan Muza, CAPT (retired) Rick Davis, Skip Collins, CDR Wade Keckler.

PBS Markets the Film has been shown (as of 12/08 2023):

KNME, Albuquerque (2)	WKNO, Memphis, TN
KNMD, Albuquerque	WUEN, Salt Lake City (2)
KENW, Albuquerque (2)	WMVT, Milwaukee, WI
KRWG, El Paso	KAKM, Anchorage
WBGU, Lima (2)	KMXT, Anchorage
WFWA, Ft Wayne	KTOO, Juneau AK
KVCR, Los Angeles (4)	KYUK, Alaska
KVIE, Sacramento	WNPT, Nashville
WNMU, Marquette	WABE, Atlanta
KUAS, Tucson	WTCL, Chattanooga

see **VISIBILITY** on page 17

VISIBILITY from page 16

KUAT, Tucson	KTCA, Minneapolis, MN
WFPT, Washington	WYES, New Orleans
WMPT, Baltimore	WPBT, Miami (7)
WCPB, Salisbury	WJCT, Jacksonville (3)
WNSC, Charlotte	KAMU, Waco-Temple-Bryan (1)
WNEH, Greenville-Spartan	WCFE, Burlington
WNTV, Greenville-Spartan	KPBT, Odessa-Midland (2)
WRET, Greenville-Spartan	WGCU, Ft Myers-Naples
WRLK, Columbia, SC	WGVK, Grand Rapids (2)
WRJA, Columbia, SC	WKNO, Memphis (2)
WJWJ, Savannah	WSRE, Mobile-Pensacola
WITV, Charleston, SC	KLRN, San Antonio
WHMC, Myrtle Beach	KOZJ, Joplin-Pittsburg
WJPM, Myrtle Beach	KOZK, Springfield, MO
WEBA, Augusta	WWIZ, Cleveland
KUEN, Salt Lake City, UT (2)	WCTE, Nashville
	WQED, Pittsburgh

The number in the parenthesis is the number of times shown by station.

Libraries

Invisible Corps is included in Alexander Street collection, the world's leading provider of academic streaming media to libraries and is available to over 3000 colleges and university libraries across the country.

Screenings

There have been dozens of screenings held throughout the country at universities, organization meetings and special events. There are a variety of ways the film is being used to have conversations about public health and the USPHS Commissioned Corps. The most impactful for a "new" audience is seeing the entire 56-minute film followed by a panel discussion. What makes it "real" is having officers in uniform to share their stories about their career path and the work they do. The passion of PHS officers is memorable and impactful. In cases where there is limited time, showing some of the short clips followed by a panel discussion is very effective and engaging. Below is a list of previous screenings:

Pacific University & Aurora Borealis COA, Alaska

Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, New York

American Public Health Association (APHA) Convention, Georgia

Emory University & ACOA, Georgia

Grand Canyon Historical Society, Arizona

George Washington University, Washington DC

Purdue University, Indiana

Central Louisiana COA

Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Convention, Texas

Joint Federal Pharmacy Seminar, Dallas

Long Island University College of Pharmacy

Savannah Technical College, Georgia

University of Arizona, Tucson

University of Maryland, Maryland

University of New Mexico, New Mexico

University of the Pacific, California

University of California, San Francisco

University of Kentucky, Lexington

Special events

Capitol Hill Briefing

VAUSA Gala

American Pharmacist Association

Department of Interior

How can you help?

- Review the website invisiblecorps.com and all the resources that can be shared to promote the film.
- Leverage your relationships and connections within your family, neighborhood, and community to share the film and the short videos, which can lead to a discussion about public health.
- Professional organizations – see if your category professional organizations will incorporate the film or short videos into an upcoming program.
- Schools – use your relationship with schools to incorporate the film or short videos into the curriculum or host a screening followed by a discussion of public health.

If you have some "good connections" and would like more ideas on what can be done with the film, please don't hesitate to contact me at pamela.schweitzer926@gmail.com

USPHS Officers Volunteer with Access Housing, Inc. to Support Local Veterans

by LCDR Jamillah Bynum, MSW, LCSW, BCD, LCDR Velisa Jackson, MHA, cBM, COR and LT Frantishka McCrimmon, MSW, LCSW, BCD

In a heartwarming display of solidarity, the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps partnered with Washington D.C.'s Access Housing, Inc., to hold a local veteran's boot drive event that captured the essence of community support for those who have served in the military. The Social Work Professional Advisory Group (SWPAG), the Veterans and Military Outreach (VMO) subcommittees of the District of Columbia (D.C.) and Montgomery County (MoCo) branches of the Commissioned Officers Association (COA), and Access Housing, Inc. participated in the 2023 Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down event, coordinated and hosted by the Washington DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center (DC VAMC).

The Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down is an annual, all-day event which was held at the DC VAMC campus, free for local veterans. The event saw an outpouring of generosity from community members and displayed a sense of commitment to supporting local veterans. The initiative's leadership team consisted of event leads LCDR Jamillah Bynum and LCDR Velisa Jackson, Administrative Officer, LT Christine Nappa, and Volunteer Lead CDR Carla Burch. This collaborative effort contributed to approximately 282 veterans receiving support.

The event consisted of over 70 participating federal, state, and community agencies providing employment and education support, haircuts, housing and housing counseling, boots/shoes and warm clothing distribution, financial counseling, transportation assistance, health screenings, psychosocial services, food, and more to veterans in attendance at this year's event. PHS officers set up physical collection points and an online donation site, where individuals could donate new boots and socks for military men and women veterans in need. 274 pairs of boots were donated to the boot drive, and seven PHS officers helped with distribution.

LCDRs Jamillah Bynum and Velisa Jackson shared their experiences as leads of the 2023 Stand Down. LCDR Bynum stated, "I always enjoy participating in the Stand Down and partnering with the DC VAMC. These collaborations allow PHS officers to contribute to the resources provided at this event that are needed and appreciated by our veterans, facilitates esprit de corps, and increases positive visibility for PHS. It lifts veterans and active-duty officers' spirits to witness the continued support of the community. Community agencies and their staff, such as Mr. Walter Elmore and Access Housing, Inc., work diligently to ensure the needs of homeless veterans in this community are met. This event wouldn't have been a success without them."

LCDR Jackson stated, "The success of a boot drive relies on the rallying of community support. It is important to recognize that veterans transitioning to civilian life may face various challenges like securing employment, mental health challenges, finding stable housing, or having their basic needs met. Through donations like these, the community helps meet the basic needs of our



USPHS officers after a long day volunteering at the Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down

veterans, which gives them a sense of stability and support. It also demonstrates our appreciation for the service and sacrifices of those who have dedicated their lives to serving our country. We are thankful to our partnering organizations who recognize this importance and encourage continued support in these efforts."

LT Frantishka McCrimmon volunteered at the Stand Down and describes her experience: "I learned of this event and participated in 2022 and 2023 and plan to volunteer annually. I was happy to see the increase in veterans served and overwhelming community support. It was a great day filled with music, fun and necessities for veterans. Veterans were vocal in their need for shoes, coats and overall winter gear and expressed feeling grateful for this event each year. The organizers planned a successful event that I will continue to support."

Access Housing, Inc.

Access Housing, Inc. is a non-profit, community-based organization established in 1985 to provide housing, employment services, and skill development training to homeless veterans. It was the first program of its kind in the D.C. area. Today, Access Housing, Inc. operates two facilities in Southeast D.C.: the Southeast Veterans Service Center (SEVSC) and the Chesapeake Veterans House. Notably in 2000, SEVSC became home to one of four DC VAMC Community Based Outpatient Clinics, enabling the Center to provide a full range of services to hundreds of veterans residing at Access Housing, Inc. and throughout the community.

Commissioned Officers Association's Veterans and Military Outreach Subcommittee

The VMO subcommittee provides volunteers, support, and service to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and non-governmental military and veteran service organizations. The vision of the VMO subcommittee is to achieve a USPHS presence throughout the Washington D.C. area in support of veteran and military families. Events promote USPHS visibility, USPHS leadership capabilities, and collaboration with the VA and non-governmental organizations.

Officers interested in supporting DMV-area VMO events or establishing a VMO subcommittee within their local COA branch are encouraged to reach out to LCDR Jamillah Bynum (jamillah.bynum@hhs.gov) and LCDR Velisa Jackson (VJackson@hrs.gov) for more information.

USPHS Regional Deployment Role Training for Public Health Service Officers

by LCDR Carla Chase, CCC-SLP.D.

We are living in a world in which we are confronted with a wide range of threats of uncertain and unknown origins. RDML Cedric Guyton, Deputy Director for Commissioned Corps Services, recognized the need to ramp up preparedness trainings to support deployment efforts. Under the leadership and guidance of RDML Guyton, the Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ) Readiness and Deployment Branch and Training Branch joined forces to provide specialized skills training for U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) officers and United States National Guard officers who wanted to advance their deployment leadership or safety officer skills. The USPHS Regional Deployment Role Training aimed to provide relevant, mission-focused resources and trainings critical for readiness and preparation to respond to future public health emergencies or threats. Space was limited, but any USPHS or National Guard officer meeting criteria could have applied and attended this training. It provided excellent opportunities to deliberate tactical, technical, physical, and leadership development for emergency preparedness and response, public health career enhancement, and beyond.

LT Gernise Dixon, a COTA Instructional Officer in the CCHQ Training Branch, coordinated with AFC Development, a private company that focuses on training solutions, to organize the training. This five-day training was strategically designed to build upon current USPHS and National Guard officers' skills and provide a sustainable training delivery model that improves efficiency and performance of all USPHS officers and their partners to respond to public health, medical emergencies, urgent public health needs, and special national security events. USPHS and National Guard officers were afforded the opportunities to learn or enhance advanced level of skill sets required to prepare for leadership and coordination, while managing resources and incident support of multiple complexities. USPHS and National Guard officers were coached to function as Group Supervisors, Strike Team Leads, or Task Force Leaders in hazard incidents or public health events.

Day one was power-packed with several great speakers discussing the importance of the alliance with the United States National Guard, strategies to design successful deployments, operation security, a review of incident command systems, and building resilient teams.

Days two to four were led by CDR Rudolph Francin, Deployment Team Lead. The training topics included:

1. Leadership roles and responsibilities, critical thinking, and problem solving to ensure USPHS officers understand the importance of having necessary equipment, knowing where to go, and how to keep themselves and others safe during a range of emergencies.
2. Enhancing team dynamics, improving communication, and collaboration.



USPHS and National Guard officers after a long day of training.

3. Augmenting program infrastructure, considering regulatory issues, and conducting after-action reviews.

Day five ended with a lively, competitive deployment training review presented in Jeopardy game show format, a wonderful presentation by the Region 4 Regional Health Administrator Dr. John Gilford that focused on utilization of collaborations at the regional levels and operation of strategic resources to build preparedness and response for all types of public health issues, and a stop-the-bleed training session. The training concluded with a question and answer session by panelists with multiple deployment experiences. Finally, we had the privilege and honor to hear closing remarks from RDML Guyton. He spoke about his vision of equipping USPHS officers as leaders during any type of deployment.

The quality of the topics presented by each speaker, including the moderators and panelists, were brilliantly orchestrated and superbly conducted. There is no doubt about tremendous amount of work that was put into the planning the USPHS Regional Deployment Role Training. The CCHQ Training Branch and CCHQ Readiness and Deployment Branch worked tirelessly, so we could participant in a memorable training course to learn about important issues impacting the public's health.

This training emphasized holistic, collaborative, and cooperative approaches to improve preparedness, response, and recovery. I cannot speak for all USPHS and National Guard officers who participated in this training, but I was certainly enlightened with the diverse and transversal information dealing with matters of local, regional, and national importance. This proved to be a significant opportunity to share experiences, best practices, build bridges, and develop sets of responses. We learned about great resources, strengthened our knowledge, and improved deployment preparedness. This training should be required at least once for any USPHS officer who is in a leadership role during a deployment, as well as those who have never deployed.

North County Veterans Stand Down - Vista, CA.

By LCDR Sandra Duncan, RN, BSN

On October 20th through the 22nd, 2023, USPHS officers CDR Kari Harris, LCDR Sandra Duncan, and CDR Kim Bellama volunteered as medical support for the annual North County Veterans Stand Down (NCVSD) 3-day event. The event provided services to homeless veterans in the area. The veterans received a variety of services that included meals, dental and eye exams, clothing, mental health care, and medical care. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event had shut down for three years and resumed operations in 2023. USPHS officers helped NCVSD set up a medical tent a day prior to the event and provided medical services to over 80 veterans at the Green Oak Ranch in Vista, CA, a large rehabilitation facility on 140 acres



(L to R) CDR Kari Harris, LCDR Sandra Duncan and CDR Kim Bellama

of safe, friendly, drug-free, and secure land. The veterans appreciated the medical services provided. It was a great experience being able to give back to our homeless veterans to protect, promote, and advance the public health of an underserved community.

CDR Kim Bellama and LCDR Sandra Duncan helped set up patient triage rooms and organized medical supplies at the North County Veteran Stand Down's medical tent.



**NEW YORK MEDICAL COLLEGE**
A MEMBER OF Touro University
School of Health Sciences and Practice

Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) Generalist Degree

M.P.H. Generalist students may use elective credits to acquire a certificate in the following areas:

. Global Health	. Industrial Hygiene
. Health Care Administration	. Emergency Management
. Environmental Health	. Health Education

50% TUITION DISCOUNT*

Contact (914) 594-4510 or visit nymc.edu/shsp

*For active-duty service members including USPHS Commissioned Corps officers and U.S. Department of Health and Human Service employees.

APPLY NOW

[WWW.SOPHAS.ORG](https://www.sophas.org)



Intersection of United States Public Health Service & Command General Staff Officer Course

by LCDR Nivedita Das, PharmD, M.S.

The Command General Staff Officer Course (CGSOC) is one of the nation's oldest military leadership training programs. CGSOC's objective is to "educate and train field grade leaders to serve as staff officers and commanders with the ability to build teams, lead organizations and integrate Unified Land Operations with Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational partners in complex and uncertain environments." I was selected to attend CGSOC at Fort Belvoir, VA for the 2023 summer session. At that time, I had very little knowledge or expectations about CGSOC. My aspiration was that I would gain a greater understanding of uniformed services system and the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps role within this system.

Within the first few days, it became apparent that I had underestimated the curriculum's rigor. CGSOC is a graduate-level program of nine instructional blocks. The course concluded with an oral board and written exam, called X100, which tested our proficiency of these instructional blocks. I focused on ensuring that I understood the concepts and their application to Commissioned Corps.

My Commissioned Corps career commenced with the Indian Health Service at Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility. Leading the Chinle Service Unit COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Task Force provided a preview into a large-scale operation that significantly and adversely impacted a socio-economically underserved population. At this time, I began reexamining my role as an officer.

Our topic for the X100 oral exam element was "Select a recent historical event or current area of concern with respect to national security and describe the environment, including the models, theories, and frameworks you used to make sense of it, then discuss how the joint and multinational forces should operate in the near term and more distant future." At CGSOC's completion, we had learned 120+ models, theories, and frameworks.

The concept of evaluating events, historical or otherwise, through the lens of national security and the threat framework, was daunting. However, to discuss this in terms of operations that consisted of both joint and multinational forces, now and in the future, within the context of the role of the Commissioned Corps, seemed incomprehensible.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic illustrated, transnational threats are devastating in lost lives and severe economic damage to our national interests. According to the 2022 National Security Strategy, "The pandemic has made clear the need for international leadership and action to create stronger, more equitable, and more resilient health systems—so that we can prevent or prepare for the next pandemic or health emergency before it starts." The Biden-Harris Administration completed a 360-degree review of the U.S. national bio-preparedness and determined that 'mission control' is an essential component for future biodefense and pandemic preparedness.

With this information, my eureka moment revealed itself: The Commission Corps would be a 'natural fit' for this task. Several agencies within HHS play a vital role in enhancing "the health and well-being of all Americans." However, no dedicated entity has 'mission control' for preparing our nation's biodefense. The Commissioned Corps, within the continental and outside the continental U.S., may serve and fulfill this mandate. A specific Commission Corps directorate, serving as 'mission control' to avert and ameliorate our nation's next health emergency, can be established. Similar to the Joint Concept of Competition Continuum, this directorate would engage in campaigning activities that are sequenced and linked to achieve specific objectives.

My oral X100 exam clarified the concepts and their applicability for the Commissioned Corps, encouraging me to ask how to enhance our service's contribution, as our sister uniformed services prepare for future Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO). Alternatively, how best may Commission



Students review course work during the Students of the Command and General Staff Officer Course aboard Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Corps officers be integrated and unified with our sister services to meet our nation's acute needs, as we prepare for LSCO?

CGSOC provided a precise understanding of national security, the role of our unarmed and armed uniformed services, and what it takes to protect our nation, from physical and biological threats. Our country has robust and multi-tiered defense capabilities that protect our population from external threats. The COVID-19 Pandemic demonstrated the devastating impact of biological threats across the world. Unless we take bold and decisive steps to prepare for future biological threats, we will not be ready. "Unless we make transformative investments in pandemic preparedness and response now, we will remain ill prepared." Our nation's continued investments in the Commission Corps and its sister uniformed services are the envy of the world, having proven their outstanding, premier line-of-defense proficiency for our nation and the world.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/8-November-Combined-PDF-for-Upload.pdf>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/American-Pandemic-Preparedness-Transforming-Our-Capabilities-Final-For-Web.pdf>

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/index.html>

<https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2022/9/19/the-time-to-prepare-for-next-pandemic-is-upon-us>

VETERANS DAY from page 1
established dealt with economic security for military care givers, and to increase training and employment opportunities for military spouses. President Biden also announced the First Lady's "Joining Forces Initiative," which further supports military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors. The ceremony concluded



USPHS Flag Detail being Photobombed by a member of the Polish Legion of American Veterans

with a parade of flags, where the USPHS Commissioned Corps and the Commissioned Officer Association flags were presented.

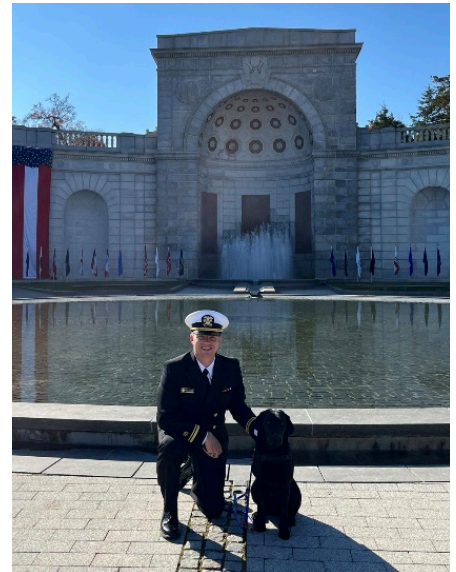


OBC Class 145/RR18 Representing! Classmates LT Jonathan Corriea and LTJG Benjamin Kleskovic served on the flag detail for COA and USPHS at the Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

Following the ceremony, wreaths were laid at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Rear Admiral Schobitz and Commander Gooch had the honor of presenting a wreath on behalf of the Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS. The laying of wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a special event wherein only members organizations of the Veterans Day National Committee

are invited. There are twenty-five Veteran Service Organizations which make up the Veterans Day National Committee, of which the Commissioned Officers Association is a member.

The USPHS officers were invited to a luncheon held at the Military Women's Memorial. The food was delicious and helped fend off the cold November chill. Even Lieutenant Commander Abigail was invited.



Lieutenant Junior Grade Benjamin Kleskovic and Lieutenant Commander Abigail in front of the Military Women's Memorial



LAW OFFICE OF SHANNON JAMES PLLC



Focused
on
USPHS
Commissioned Corps

Personal / Responsive / Focused

The Law Office of Shannon James, PLLC

COER Rebuttals and Appeals
EEO Complaints
PHS Board for Corrections
Medical Review Boards
Complaints & Requests for Redress
Allegations of AWOL

Correction of Records
Education and Civilian Credit
Fitness for Duty
Letters of Counseling
Readiness
Retirement

Call for a free consultation (202) 508-1446

www.shannonlawyer.com



** Every case is different – Results are not guaranteed*

Good Crafternoon

by LCDR Yekaterina Manyoky and CDR Michael Bakker

In the face of the global healthcare crisis, healthcare workers have emerged as frontline heroes, tirelessly working to combat the challenges posed by the pandemic. The relentless demands of the job have taken a toll on their mental and physical well-being, leading to a surge in healthcare worker burnout. This is why job satisfaction and worker burnout are priorities of the Surgeon General.

Encouraging healthcare workers to prioritize self-care is crucial. Establishing clear boundaries between work and personal life, ensuring adequate rest, and engaging in activities that bring joy can help alleviate stress. Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) has initiated a novel and distinctive program to combat healthcare worker burnout and foster resilience. The program is called “Crafternoon” and is available for both the day and night shift

employees. Sessions offered painting wood rounds, creating holiday ornaments, and small crafts. ANMC employees enjoyed bonding with fellow colleagues, holiday music, delicious snacks and all-around fun. Service animals along with audio-visual displays allowed those with disabilities to participate. Typically, sessions are very well attended, over 200 employees, and strive to be culturally appropriate. Alaska Native culture has an important place for crafts and fellowship. Multiple COA officers volunteered for these events to ensure success.

Healthcare worker burnout poses a significant threat to the well-being of those on the frontlines of the global healthcare crisis. Implementing effective stress management strategies are crucial steps toward supporting the mental and physical health of these dedicated professionals. As we continue to navigate these challenging times, prioritizing the



From left to right: LCDR Yekaterina Manyoky and CDR Michael Bakker with the emotional support dog during Crafternoon.

well-being of healthcare workers is not only morally imperative but also essential for sustaining a resilient healthcare system. Events such as Crafternoon that allow employees to socialize, collaborate and relieve stress will improve the health and safety of our nation.

Wreaths Across America – NY Perspective

by CDR Jerry Zee and CDR Kari Schlessinger

Wreaths Across America (<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/>) is a non-profit organization focused on “remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generation the value of freedom.” This year, National Wreaths Across America Day was held on Saturday, December 16, 2023. More than two million volunteers gathered to Remember, Honor and Teach at more than 4,000 participating locations in all 50 states and abroad.

USPHS Commissioned Corps officers: CDR Jerry Zee, CDR Kari Schlessinger, LCDR Adena Yau, LT Muhammad Altaf, and LTJG Rahat Chowdhury represented the Corps and participated in the annual Wreaths Across America event at Long Island National Cemetery located in Farmingdale, New York. It was the first time these five officers participated in this event at this site. These Corps officers were joined by both active and retired veterans from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and National Guard. Hundreds of participants across all walks of life (small children all the way to elderly citizens) were there to assist in laying down the wreaths on the sites of thousands of fallen members in this cemetery. The ceremony kicked off at 12pm with the present to arms by a local honor guard, followed by the Star Spangled Banner. Blue Star Families who lost their loved ones in the various wars then spoke and shared the names of the fallen. This was touching to all in attendance. All volunteers were asked to speak each fallen members’ name as the wreaths were placed on each site. There



(Left to right): LTJG Rahat Chowdhury, LT Muhammad Altaf, LCDR Adena Yau, CDR Kari Schlessinger, and CDR Jerry Zee

were fallen members all the way from the World War I era, to the very present.

It was a honor and a privilege to represent the Corps in such a meaningful event during the holiday season. We hope to continue to represent the Corps in this event in future years.

On a separate note, as commissioned officers of the USPHS, we (and our spouses) are also qualified to rest one day in a Veterans Administration national cemetery. For more information, please go to: <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/>

2022 RDML Mishoe Scholarship Recipient Update

Scholarship Committee:

I hope that my message finds you well, and Happy New Year! I want to once again sincerely thank you and show my appreciation for your support in my education at the University of Pennsylvania through the Mishoe Diversity “Believe” Scholarship. Your scholarship is helping me take steps toward my dream career as a physician saving lives, and my education would not have been possible without the help of programs and donors like yourselves. This winter break, I took a great deal of time to reflect on my college experience thus far and I thought sending an update to you would be a great thing to do. My freshman year at Penn was everything that I could have wished for and more- academically, socially, and emotionally. Reflecting back, I felt like I experienced an intellectual awakening last year. I’m constantly surrounded by wonderful professors, friends, and mentors who have supported and are continuing to support my educational journey at Penn. I think that this is my favorite part of college thus far: Getting to meet people who push me to be my best self and help me learn about so many interdisciplinary topics has been the most rewarding.

My first semester of college was certainly a time of adjustment, but I was able to successfully find my footing in my classes and extracurriculars. My favorite class was probably General Chemistry I as I took my first deeper dive into quantum mechanics/quantum chemistry which was super interesting! I also participated as a violinist in the Penn Med Symphony Orchestra and Penn Baroque Ensemble, and even joined the Penn Glee Club as an alto singer for some time. I began volunteering for the Penn American Red Cross (PARC) Club and was part of the Penn Pre-Dental Society board as co-community service chair.

During my second semester, I decided to add on Introduction to Brain and Behavior (neuroscience) as an elective to my coursework because I was curious about the field. Taking the course inspired me to pursue research in the field of neurology this summer and I applied and was accepted to the Penn Undergraduate Research Mentorship (PURM) program, a competitive research program (with stipend) established to help students get into academic research for the first time. My research this summer studied the mechanisms of Dravet Syndrome, a severe childhood neurological disorder, and I ran behavior experiments and brain imaging sessions on mice. I presented my first research poster at the annual undergraduate Fall Research

Expo at Penn, and am continuing to work in my research lab on a different project investigating seizure initiation in Dravet Syndrome.

I was also accepted into the four-year Penn Civic Scholars Program and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Paideia Program, both of which focus on civic and community engagement through academic coursework and interdisciplinary dialogue. Though ultimately I had to choose just one to participate in, I will be taking courses within the Paideia Program to explore my interests in the intersection of bioengineering, healthcare, and community service. I am excited to continue my work in the community at Penn. I am continuing my involvement in PARC as volunteer coordinator, where I have been helping to organize monthly cooking events for the patients at the Penn Transplant House, and am planning to lead volunteer excursions at the Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance (MANNA). I am also helping to mentor seven freshmen (Class of 2027) as an Orientation Peer Advisor (OPA) for the School of Engineering. I had the privilege of being a Teaching Assistant for MATH 2400 (Penn’s Linear Algebra and Differential Equations course) this Fall, where I developed my public speaking abilities and helped students gain a deeper understanding of the course material. As I am reevaluating what went well so far and what I could do better for the upcoming semester, I am deciding to focus more of my efforts toward a volunteer initiative I have been wanting to start for some time now called Penn MINHUET—Music in Nursing Homes & Hospitals Using Entertainment as Therapy. Through this volunteer organization, I will be helping to coordinate live musical performances for residents of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and local nursing homes. I will additionally be expanding my involvement at my church by volunteering as a youth group leader for Tenth Presbyterian Church’s middle and high school students.

Thank you once again for your financial support in helping to make my studies and activities possible for me. I finished my latest semester maintaining my 4.0 GPA, though it has been the most difficult semester so far. I hope that the rest of my time at Penn will be as successful and rewarding as it has been!

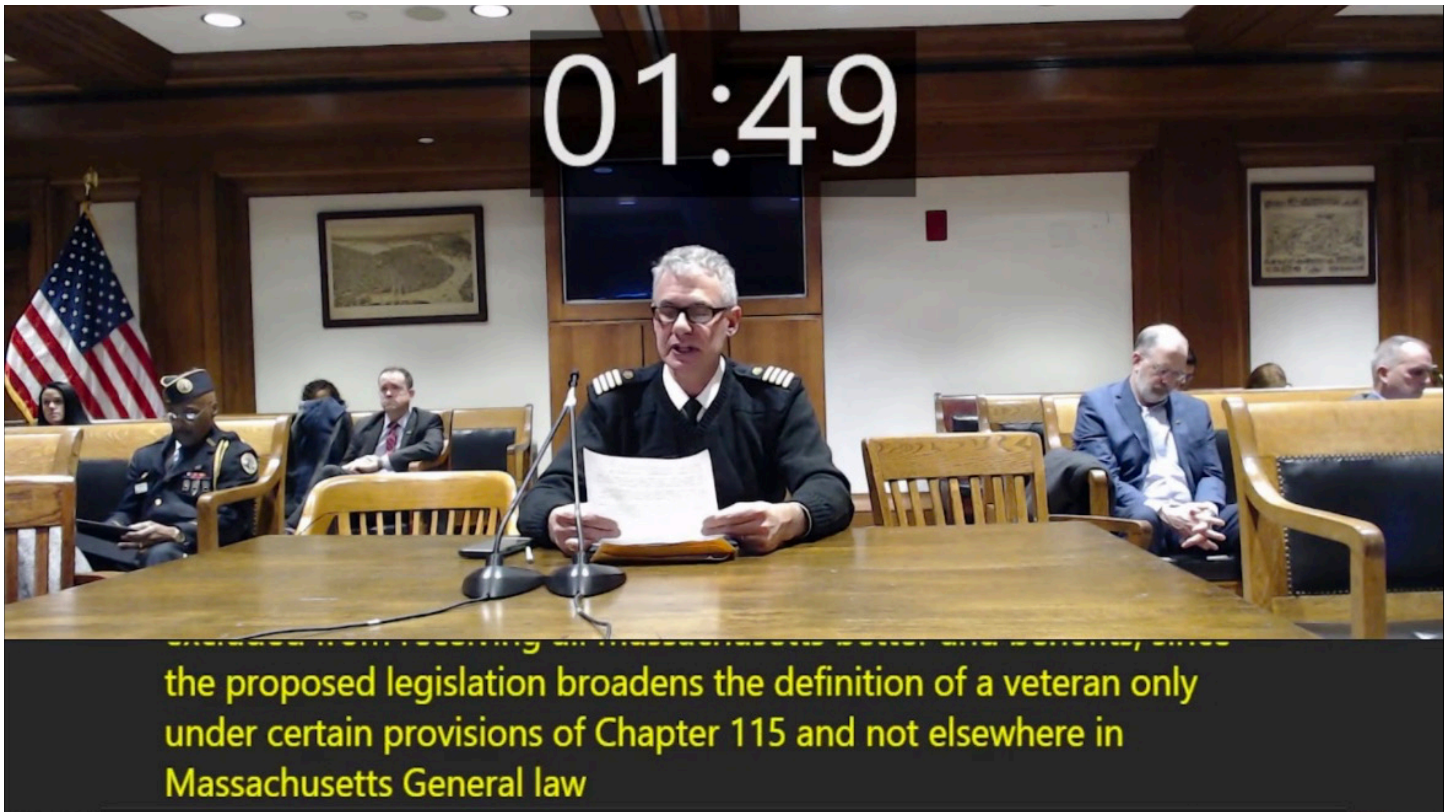
With much gratitude,

Yerahm Hong

University of Pennsylvania Class of 2026

Bioengineering || School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

State of Massachusetts Proposes Expanding Veterans Benefits and Definition of Veteran to include USPHS Commissioned Corps Officers



CAPT (Ret) Michael Stover testifies in front of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Veterans Affairs on January 23, 2024 in support of amending a current veterans bill to include USPHS in the Massachusetts definition of Veteran.

by CAPT (Ret) Michael Stover, P.E.

"A veteran is a veteran is a veteran." This key statement was spoken by Senator John Velis, Chair of the State of Massachusetts Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, in his opening comments during a January 23, 2024 hearing at the Massachusetts State House on a proposed bill filed by Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey in support of expanding state-provided veteran benefits. The name of the bill is *"An Act Honoring, Empowering and Recognizing Our Servicemembers and Veterans,"* or "HERO Act" for short.

This proposed legislation, House No. 4172, was filed on November 9, 2023, approximately one month after retired USPHS Commissioned Corps officers including CAPT (Ret) Carl Chancey, RPh., MPH; CAPT (Ret) Michael Stover, P.E., R.S., M.S.; CDR (Ret) Karim Dhanji, MD; COA Executive Director Jacqueline Rychnovsky; COA Deputy Director David Corrigan; and COA Legislative Affairs Committee Chair CAPT (Ret) Alan Echt met with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans Services Secretary Jon Santiago. On October 11, 2023, we met with Secretary Santiago to express concerns that the current definition of veteran in Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L. ch.4, s.7, cl.43) does not

recognize the USPHS Commissioned Corps, NOAA Corps or U.S. Space Force.

The HERO Act proposes to expand services to veterans by providing 17 spending and policy initiatives, tax credits, and statute changes as well as aligning the Massachusetts definition of veteran to the federal definition of veteran, thereby including USPHS Commissioned Corps, NOAA Corps, and the U.S. Space Force. However, the bill as written would apply only to those programs and benefits managed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veteran Services (EOVS). The bill does not provide for USPHS, NOAA, and U.S. Space Force veterans to receive eligibility for state veteran homes, tuition waiver for state colleges and universities, property tax exemption for disabled veterans, preference for state employment including disabled veterans, and pretrial diversion of veterans charged with a crime. These benefits are defined in different Chapters of Massachusetts General Laws where the definition of veteran does not include USPHS Commissioned Corps, NOAA Corps, and U.S. Space Force.

To assure inclusivity for all honorably discharged veterans residing in Massachusetts, CAPT Chancey, CAPT Stover, CDR

see **VETERANS BENEFITS** on page 29

OBITUARIES

RADM (Ret) James Dickson – Life Member

Provincetown, Massachusetts - James F. Dickson III, M.D., age 99, died on August 12, 2023 following a brief illness. Dr. Dickson was born in Boston, MA on May 4, 1924 to James F. Dickson Jr and Mary E. (Rich) Dickson. He graduated from Dartmouth College and Harvard Medical School in 1947.



He was trained as a general and thoracic surgeon on the Harvard Surgical Service at the Boston City Hospital and was a Fellow at the Thorndike Memorial Laboratory. During the Korean War he was Chief of Surgery at the 8055 Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in Korea.

Dr. Dickson is survived by his loving wife of 45 years, Vivian, his daughters: Lesley Silk of Silver Spring, MD and Alison Jones (Gavin) of East Sandwich, MA, his son James of Newburyport MA, and his sister-in-law Patricia Hoffman and her son Joshua. In addition he is survived by six grandchildren: James Silk, John Silk, Sarah Silk, Brian Jones, Gavin Jones, and Christopher Jones and three great grandchildren. He will be deeply missed by family, friends, and all who knew him.

CAPT (Ret) Dale Johnson – Life Member

Billings, Montana - Dale Johnson, aged 91, Montana, passed away on August 12, 2023.

He was born on December 24, 1931, to Louise and William Johnson in New Underwood, South Dakota.



Dale spent a brief stint with the U.S. Navy from 1951 to 1952, then enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps until his discharge in 1955. Dale was commissioned into the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) in 1960 and was assigned to the Indian Health Service.

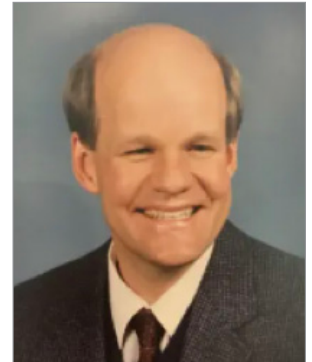
During this period, he received the prestigious title of "Diplomate" by the American Academy of Sanitarians.

In his retirement years, loved to hunt and fish, achieved notable skills in woodworking, started raising earthworms for prospective commercial buyers, received his private pilot's license, used his Marine Corps skills to earn a ham radio general operations license, and became an avid golfer.

Dale is survived by his wife, Clarabeth; sons Michael (Becky), Patrick, Timothy (Brenda) and Earl; and daughters Kelly (John Sveen) and Heather (James Viano).

CDR (Ret) Newlin Morgan

Chevy Chase, Maryland - Newlin Thomas Morgan was born on October 2, 1947 in Laramie, Wyoming. He died Sunday, September 17, 2023 at home in Bethesda, Maryland.



After college, Newlin accepted a Commission as an Officer in the U.S. Public Health Service, one of the Uniformed Services of the United States, and was assigned to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland. While there, he completed his Master of Science Degree in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Maryland.

His biomedical engineering work at NIH focused on the design and operation of sophisticated instrumentation technologies in support of various NIH Laboratories.

Newlin retired from the USPHS in 2001 after 30 years with the rank equivalent of a Navy Commander. At retirement he converted to civilian (Civil Service) status, while retaining his Laboratory position, and served for a time as the Director of the Technical Service Branch. He retired from the Civil Service in 2015.

Newlin is survived by his wife, Robin, and his two living daughters: Sarah Morgan Rogers (Joel) and Larua Morgan, and his brothers Evan Morgan and William Morgan.

CAPT (Ret) Michael Musachio – Life Member

Ridgely, Maryland - Michael Ben Musachio was born December 30, 1931 and passed away on 24 August 2023 at the age of 91.



His interest in poultry and agriculture prompted him to attend the Long Island Agricultural and Technical Institute.

He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict and then commissioned as an officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). At his first post at the PHS Indian Hospital in Shiprock, NM, he met the love of his life, Anne Garron.

He retired from the USPHS in 1980 and moved to Ridgely, where he fulfilled a dream of owning a small farm. He enjoyed selling a variety of fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets in the

see **OBITUARIES** on page 27

OBITUARIES from page 26

Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia area. His other passion was racing homing pigeons.

He is survived by his loving children and their spouses Michael (Diane), Marie (Emil), John (Sue), 10 grandchildren, 6 great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife, Anne, and son, Robert.

CAPT Paul Schmidt – Life Member

Tampa, Florida - Dr. Paul J. Schmidt passed away peacefully while under the care of Hospice on September 19th, 2023. Paul was born in New York City on October 22nd, 1925.

Paul served in the US Army during WWII and was honorably discharged. Paul received his Doctor of Medicine from New York University in 1953. During his course of schooling, he met his wife Louise Kern Fredericks.

Dr. Paul J. Schmidt had joined the U.S. Public Health Service and retired as a Captain. During his tenure, he was the Director of the Clinical Center at NIH.

Paul was preceded in death by his loving wife Louise, his son(s) Matthew and Thomas and daughter Maria and his grandson Edward.



LCDR (Ret) Jeffrey Severn

Cut Bank, Montana - LCDR Jeffrey Richard Severn, 54, passed away unexpectedly at his home on October 6, 2023.

He was born in Portsmouth, Va. on Oct. 22, 1968, and was a graduate of Western Branch High School, Tidewater Community. He obtained his BS from Old Dominion University and joined the Public Health Service in 2000. He was assigned as an Environmental Health Officer within the Indian Health Service (IHS). He earned his national certification as Certified Infection Control rating. He retired from the United States Public Health Service in 2021.

He enjoyed spending his time outdoors hunting, fishing, camping, skiing, white-water rafting in Glacier National Park with his family and friends.

Jeff is survived by his parents, Thomas and Gayle Severn, his wife, Anne Severn; two sons, Dillon Thomas Severn and Trevor Dennis



Severn; daughter, Charlotte Dianna Severn. He was predeceased by his brother, Lawrence Thomas Severn.

CAPT (Ret) Corwin Strong – Life Member

New Bern, North Carolina - Corwin "Bud" D. Strong, age 96, passed away on Friday, January 5, 2024. He was born Mary 24, 1927, to the late Alvia and Elsie Strong.

He is survived by his son, Wallace Strong (Bonnie); daughters, Corinne Dennis (Rich), Melinda Strong-Alexander (Ken), and Jenna Robinson; step-son, Bobby McCoy; 7 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren; and many loving family members and close friends.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Adrian "Peg" Strong; brother, Vergil Strong; sister, Pearl Strong; step-son, Steven McCoy; and son-in-law, David Robinson.



Inclusivity and Innovation at the 57th Annual USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium

by CDR Kimberly Calvery, LCSW, BCD,
CCHP, LCDR Ana Sandee, PT, DPT, and
LT Christine Nappa, LCSW, BCD

As the countdown begins for the much anticipated 57th Annual U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Scientific & Training Symposium, USPHS officers from across the nation are gearing up for an enriching experience at the Hyatt Jacksonville Riverfront in Jacksonville, Florida from June 24-27, 2024. This year's theme, "Inclusivity + Innovation: Reducing Disparities in the Service of Health," promises a dynamic exploration of cutting-edge ideas and practices that foster health equity.

Highlights from Last Year: A Glimpse into Excellence

The 2023 symposium set the bar high with engaging workshops, insightful lectures, the world premiere of the PBS documentary *Invisible Corps*, the introduction of LCDR Abigail, the USPHS Commissioned Corps' first official mascot, and a vibrant atmosphere of knowledge exchange. Attendees benefited from diverse perspectives, fostering collaboration and advancement in public health. This year, the event is poised to build upon the success of last year's symposium, offering an even more comprehensive and enriching experience, focusing on its theme of Inclusivity + Innovation.

Why Register? Unparalleled Learning Opportunities Await

For USPHS officers to stay at the forefront of advancements in public health, the USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium is a must-attend event. With a diverse agenda covering everything from training workshops and seminars to exclusive exhibit hall time featuring poster presentations, scientific track sessions, and Category Day. Category Day caters to special interests within your profession to include continuing education units and numerous social events. Attendees can



ADM Rachel Levine greets LCDR Abigail, the first official mascot of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

tailor their experience to their specific interests and professional goals.

What to Look Forward To: A Glimpse at the Agenda

Monday, June 24 – Training Day Workshops and Anchor & Caduceus Gala

The symposium starts with a full day of training workshops and a retirement seminar. In the evening, attendees can don their Dinner Dress Blues to enjoy the Anchor & Caduceus Gala—a celebration of achievements in public health with

notable guest speakers, dinner, and libations amongst fellow Public Health Service officers. The gala is an excellent opportunity to network and meet officers from all over the country.

Tuesday, June 25-SG5K, Opening Ceremony, Leadership Session, and SG's Ensemble Performance

Start the day with physical activity by completing your Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) and the Surgeon General's 5K Run/Walk. The day unfolds with an

see **SYMPOSIUM** on page 29



USPHS Officers take part in the SG 5k race on Tuesday morning during the 56th Annual Symposium in Tulsa, Oklahoma in May 2023.

SYMPOSIUM from page 28

opening ceremony, a keynote Luther Terry Lecture, exhibit hall time, track sessions, and remarks from USPHS Commissioned Corps Senior Leadership: ADM Rachel Levine, Assistant Secretary for Health; VADM Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General; RADM Denise Hinton, Deputy U.S. Surgeon General; and RDML Richard Schobitz, Director of Commissioned Corps Headquarters. It concludes with the inspirational Surgeon General's Ensemble Concert you cannot miss! The PHS Music Ensemble is an all-volunteer group of Public Health Service officers comprised of a ceremonial band, a strings ensemble, and a choral ensemble, and they always put on a fantastic show. Last year's concert included a cameo from our Assistant Secretary for Health, ADM Rachel Levine! It was a night to remember.

Wednesday, June 26 – Category Day and Exhibit Hall Time

Dive deep into specialized categories during the Category Day sessions and exclusive exhibit hall time. The day is designed for in-depth exploration and networking within specific fields.

Thursday, June 27 – MOLC, JOAG, and Scientific Track Sessions

The symposium concludes with the Minority Officers Liaison Council (MOLC) Awards Breakfast, sessions on advocacy and promoting USPHS Commissioned Corps visibility, the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) Membership Meeting, Awards, and Lunch, and a full day of scientific track sessions—a fitting end to an intellectually stimulating event.

VETERANS BENEFITS from page 25

Dhanji, and Dave Corrigan prepared a Call to Action (CTA) letter recommending amendments to the proposed legislation. CDR Sean Marcisin, President, New England COA Chapter, sent the CTA letter to all chapter members requesting their support by submitting the letter as formal testimony to the MA Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs on or before the scheduled hearing date of January 23, 2024.

CAPT Stover provided verbal testimony at the January 23, 2024 hearing proposing the recommended amendments to assure



VADM Vivek Murthy gives remarks during Opening Ceremonies at the 2023 USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium.

Don't Miss Out: How to Register

Ensure your spot at this premier public health event. Join us in Jacksonville for an unforgettable experience at the 57th Annual USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium—where Inclusivity + Innovation converge to shape the future of public health. Junior officers: don't forget to take advantage of the Junior Officer Scholarship for a chance to secure free registration to the symposium. Registration is now open at <https://www.phscof.org/symposium> and closes April 8th. We look forward to seeing you there!

inclusivity of all eight uniformed services in the Massachusetts definition of veteran, and ending his testimony with “a veteran is a veteran is a veteran” to echo the Chair's opening statement and to drive home the importance of recognizing USPHS Commissioned Corps, NOAA Corps, and U.S. Space Force as veterans in the State of Massachusetts.

To view a newscast about the HERO Act hearing, see: <https://www.wvlp.com/news/state-politics/hero-act-will-address-issues-facing-veterans-in-massachusetts/>

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR from page 1

thought how you might contribute to your uniformed service membership organization, the Commissioned Officers Association (COA), in the upcoming year? Might you join or increase involvement in your local branch? Are you interested in serving on a national committee or being a scholarship or grant reviewer? Have you thought about moderating a session at the annual symposium or being a Sponsor Concierge? Will you be a part of shaping COA's next round of leaders by thoughtfully voting in the COA Board of Directors election?

Many opportunities exist, specifically:

- There are six openings for the 2024-2027 COA Board of Directors (Dental, EHO, Engineer, Field Representative, Retired officer, and Scientist). Self-nominations for this opportunity closed on February 2nd. Please cast your vote now for the most qualified candidates to lead your membership organization. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2024COAElection>
- Openings exist to serve on all seven COA National Committees (Awards, Communications & Public Relations, Constitution & Bylaws, Legislative Affairs, Local Branch, Outreach, and Retired Officer). To learn more, including how to apply, visit the Committees Page on the COA website. The application to serve on a COA committee for the 2024-2025 term will open in March.
- Reviewers are needed to assist with scoring applications for the Family Member Scholarships, RDML Helena Mishoe "Believe" scholarship, and RADM Jerry Michael Fellowship applications. To find out if your skill set is a good match for our needs, please reach out directly to Annette Beadle, Commissioned Officers Foundation Grants Manager, at abeadle@coausphs.org.
- Three openings on the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) are available for the 2024-2027 term. To learn more about the role and the self-nomination process, please reach out to COF Board of Trustees President CAPT Gene Migliaccio

at genomigliaccio@gmail.com, or President-elect RADM Kerry Nessler, kerrynesseler@yahoo.com.

- Multiple openings may exist at your local branch level, whether it's serving on the Executive Board or various committees or special projects. If you think this opportunity might be right for you reach out to your local branch President. Unsure of who your local branch President is? You can easily find contact information by clicking on the local branch tab of the COA website. You must be logged in to view the current local branch listings.
- Write a Frontline column or feature story for an upcoming edition. There's no shortage of things that our readers want to hear about! Popular topics are local branch events, community service, mentoring, career development, deployment experiences, and USPHS history. Be creative, and don't forget to add a picture or two.
- Consider serving on one of the many 2025 USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium planning subcommittees. A pre-requisite is to attend a symposium, so please keep this opportunity in mind if you think it might be of interest. Applications to serve on the 2025 planning committee will open this summer.
- Volunteer to be a Sponsor Concierge at the 2024 USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium. Concierges are assigned to one individual symposium sponsor who is supporting the meeting at the Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum level. This is a fun and easy way to volunteer at the symposium and to make a lasting impression on those who so generously support our meeting. To learn more, please email me at jrychnovsky@coausphs.org

I hope you find one of these opportunities right for you this year. Don't forget, the best part of my day is when I hear from a COA member. If you have a question, comment or if I can help with anything at all, please reach out at (619) 889-8545 or jrychnovsky@coausphs.org.

COA Donations

Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS Donations Received
December 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024

Friend (Under \$100) CAPT Brenda Murray

We Welcome New Members of COA, December 1 - January 31, 2024

LTJG Anthony Baker, TX
CDR Michael Bakker, AK
LT Katharine Chan, WA
LTJG Reginald Clyburn, MD
CDR Jason Crownholm, WA

LT Timothy DeVita, GA
LT Megan Dorris, GA
LCDR George Indest, FL
LCDR Sarah Kim, CA
RDML Matthew Kleiman, VA
LT Taneshia, Knight, GA

LCDR Samuel Motto, MD
LCDR Steven Oversby, DC
LCDR James, Pierson, AK
CAPT Raul Romaguera, GA
LT Caridad Williams, FL

PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation

Donations Received, December 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024

President's Society (\$5,000)

CAPT Eugene Migliaccio

Platinum (\$1,000)

Atlanta COA
VADM Richard Carmona
Anonymous Donor
RADM Randall Gardner
RADM Van Hubbard
Ms GERALYN Johnson
CAPT Deborah Levy
RADM Boris Lushniak
RADM Thomas McGinnis
CAPT Charles McPherson
CAPT Astrid Szeto
CAPT Kelly Valente
RADM Richard Walling
LTJG Evan Williams

Gold (\$500)

Combined Federal Campaign
RADM Leonard Bachman
CDR Dianna Carroll
Mr. John DiMaggio
RADM James Graham
CAPT Gale Heavner
CAPT J. Terrell Hoffeld
CAPT John Iskander
CAPT Paul Jung
RADM Newton Kendig
CAPT Douglas Lowy
CAPT Hugh Mainzer
CAPT Mehran Massoudi
CAPT Daniel McElroy
RADM Robert Mecklenburg
RDML Helena Mishoe
RADM Kerry Nessler
RDML Sven Rodenbeck
CAPT Wallace Smith
CAPT John Sundell
CAPT Lisa Tonrey
CDR Quynh-Van Tran
CAPT Charles Weber
RADM Robert Whitney

Silver (\$250)

CAPT Timothy Ames
RADM Ronald Banks
Mrs. Joughra Chelikowsky
CAPT Raymond Clark
CAPT Bruce Furness
CAPT Laurencia Liebmann
CAPT Patricia Mail
CAPT David Royston
CAPT Robert Taylor
CAPT Steven Wolf

Bronze (\$100)

CAPT Michael Ahmadi
CAPT Anton Allen
CAPT David Alton
Mr. Joseph Baker
CDR Katie Bante
CAPT Alfred Bartlett
CAPT William Beck
CAPT Ira Berkower
CAPT Gary Blache
RADM Susan Blumenthal
RADM Richard Bohrer
CAPT Ezio Borchini
CAPT Steven Breithaupt
CAPT David Brown
CAPT Mark Bryant
CAPT Pamela Brye
CDR Gustavo Ceinos
CAPT Robert Dick
CAPT James Dickens
CAPT Gayle Dolecek
RDML Michelle Dunwoody
CAPT Michael Engelgau
CAPT James Felsen
CAPT Jerome Fleg
CAPT Harry Freeman
CAPT Mitchell Gail
CAPT Stephen Garza
Ms. Michele Gora
CAPT Michelle Hall
CAPT James Hardin
CAPT Donald Hill
CAPT Walter Hunter
RADM Ward Hurlburt
CAPT Sonja Hutchins

CAPT James Justice
CAPT Joseph Kaczmarczyk
CAPT Simleen Kaur
CAPT Arthur Kawatachi
CAPT Robert Leedham
CAPT Bette Lemperle
CAPT Carol Lewis
CAPT Robert Lloyd
CAPT Gary Logsdon
CAPT William Lotz
CAPT Charles Mann
CAPT Craig McCormack
CAPT Janet McDonald
CAPT Jules Meisler
CAPT James Mills
CAPT James Moore
CAPT Winsor Morrison
CAPT John Motter
CAPT Sara Mewman
RADM Audrey Nora
CAPT Diedre Presley
CAPT Scott Presson
CAPT Hernan Reyes
CAPT David Robbins
CAPT Michael Roberts
CAPT Gerald Rosenblatt
CAPT Mary Rossi-Coajou
CAPT Walter Schaffer
CAPT Burton Scheib
CAPT Walter Sekiya
CAPT J. Gary Sirmons
CAPT Michael Smith
CAPT Jeffrey Smith
CAPT Richard Smith
CDR Martin Stephens
CAPT Laurence Sykes
CAPT Sally Thompson
CAPT Richard Truitt
LCDR A. VanNostrand
CAPT Edwin Vazquez
CAPT Eric Wassermann
CAPT Charles Westley
CAPT Judith Whitecrane
CDR Anne Whitis
CAPT Lynne Wilcox
Mr. John Wilkens
CAPT Diahann Williams
CAPT Wynon Woolf

RADM Dawn Wyllie
CAPT Jane Zucker

Friends (Under \$100)

CAPT Eugenia Adams
CAPT Eugenia Adams
CAPT Mark Anderson
CAPT David Arday
CAPT Bruce Baum
CAPT Alicia Blessington
CAPT Clifford Brown
CAPT Jon Casamento
CAPT Lawrence Chaitkin
Mrs. Carol Dellapenna
Mr. Stephen Deming
CAPT Raymond Farkas
CAPT Ronald Fried
CAPT Barbara Grajewski
CAPT George Grimes
CAPT Robert Gunn
CDR Harlem Gunness
CAPT Margaret Hoeft
RADM Timothy Holtz
LCDR George Indest
CDR Kurt Kesteloot
CAPT Craig Kluger
CAPT George Leiby
CAPT Jon May
CDR Joseph Matthews
CAPT Richard Melton
CAPT Charles Nauman
CAPT Lewis Patrie
CAPT Johnny Peebles
CAPT Michelle Pelkey
CAPT Arthur Plumstead
CAPT Linda Pottern
Mrs. Jodi Sawyer
CAPT Edgar Seagle
CAPT Jonathan Smith
CAPT Marilyn Vander Ven
CDR Julie VanLeuven
CAPT Ray Walchle
CAPT Roleen Walgenbach
CDR Emily Watchman



Donation Levels

Leadership Society. . . \$10,000
President's Society. . . \$5,000
Founder's Society. . . \$2,500
Platinum. \$1,000
Gold. \$500
Silver. \$250
Bronze. \$100

Visit
phscof.org/giving
to donate online today!

The COA *Frontline* (ISSN 10937161) is published monthly except a combined issue in January/February and June/July by the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service, 8201 Corporate Drive, Suite 615, Landover, MD 20785, (301) 731-9080; Fax: (301) 731-9084; Periodicals Postage Paid at Hyattsville, MD and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PO Box 189, Cheltenham, MD 20623. A report of timely information concerning activities of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. Distributed exclusively to Association Members.

Executive Director

Jacqueline Rychnovsky,
jrychnovsky@coausphs.org

Deputy Director

David Corrigan
dcorrigan@coausphs.org

Chief Financial Officer

Teresa Hayden Foley
thayden@coausphs.org

Director of Administration

Erica Robinson
erobinson@coausphs.org

Membership Coordinator

Donna Sparrow
dsparrow@coausphs.org

Grants Manager

Annette Beadle
Contractor
abeadle@coausphs.org

Producer

Curveball Media, Victor Perea

Leading Edge Conferences

Tim O'Neill
symposium@phscof.org

Group Insurance - AGIA

(888) 633-6459

**COA**

PO Box 189

Cheltenham, MD 20623