

# THE JUNIOR OFFICER CHRONICLES

## SYMPOSIUM EDITION

August 2017



### EDITORS

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The Official JOAG Magazine  
Designed for Junior Officers by Junior Officers



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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & VICE CHAIR

Dear Fellow Junior Officers,

As you may recall from the previous editions of the Junior Officer Chronicles, each issue this year features an introduction from a different member of the JOAG Executive Committee. In the last issue, you heard from the Financial Liaison, LCDR Alice Shumate, who is also the liaison to the Membership and Outreach Committees. Here's one update from each of these committees. The Membership Committee has successfully managed the selection process for the new voting members. An announcement was recently distributed through the JOAG listserv to announce which junior officers will serve on the leadership team next year! The Outreach Committee managed all of the many JOAG events and activities during the USPHS Symposium, including the first-ever pre-conference session entitled "Turbocharge Your Career through JOAG," featuring important and relevant reasons to get involved in JOAG.



Photo by Kun Shen

In this Symposium 2017 Edition, you'll hear from LCDR Kristie Purdy, the JOAG Vice Chair, who is the liaison to the Commissioned Officers Association and Foundation. In addition, she liaises with the Public Health and Community Service Committee, which organizes numerous outreach events throughout the country. One such event took place during the Symposium, which LCDR Purdy describes below. LCDR Purdy is also the liaison to the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Committee, which has strengthened its ties to DCCPR this year. For example, R&R shared findings from an analysis of the Ready Reserve policy as it applies to Epidemic Intelligence Service officers, created a document that compares civil service and PHS service, and shared findings from a retention survey that analyzed the reasons JOs consider separating from PHS. As you can tell, JOAG's many committees are active in enhancing the development of junior officers by providing opportunities to take on leadership roles, increase JOAG visibility, and raise concerns specific to the interests of Junior Officers.

Happy Reading!

In service,  
LCDR Samantha Spindel, Chair



Greetings Junior Officers,

Tucked between the mountains of southeast Tennessee, the city of Chattanooga was host to over 1,000 PHS officers who came together to acquire the latest knowledge on the work of our public health colleagues at the 52<sup>nd</sup> annual Commissioned Officers Foundation's USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. JOAG was an active participant for many events and activities both leading up to and during the Symposium.

Deciding whether or not to attend the Symposium can be tough, especially if you've never had the opportunity to attend previously. There are many factors to consider, such as money, travel, and time away from your agency. However, the benefits of attending can far outweigh the costs associated with it.

Attending the Symposium is a unique chance for officers across multiple agencies to meet in person, attach a face to an email, and reconnect with colleagues. Officers can take time out of their busy day-to-day schedules to focus on the extraordinary work PHS officers are performing to protect and improve the health and safety of our Nation. We can seek learning opportunities we may not otherwise have the chance to outside the walls of our office. The Symposium is an opportunity to integrate into the PHS community by making connections, forming new relationships, and strengthen existing ones in ways that may not happen through an email or teleconference.

JOAG provided many opportunities for junior officers to make connections and become involved in our organization and community. The annual Symposium allows JOAG to hold our only in-person meeting of the year. Junior officers were able to hear from our (Acting) Surgeon General, RADM Trent-Adams, listen to the words of wisdom provided by Chief Professional Officers, learn of the many JOAG activities and accomplishments, and honor outstanding corps members for their contributions. A special session focusing on junior officers who have served as an Aide-de-Camp and served on a special assignment to the Officer of the Surgeon General was highlighted to encourage officers to take and seek opportunities available to them.

During the Awards Luncheon, JOAG Chair Samantha Spindel presented the Junior Officer of the Year Award, JOAG Excellence Award, VADM Richard H. Carmona Inspiration Award, and the inaugural VADM C. Everett Koop Award, highlighting astonishing works and contributions of junior officers.

JOAG offered opportunities for both junior and senior officers alike to make connections at our Uniform Inspection Booth. This booth served as a venue to assist officers with uniform questions and provide inspections on proper uniform wear. JOAG's Junior Officer Career Enhancement Booth (JOCEB), provided information on JOAG Committees and activities such as the Job Shadowing Program and Peer-to-Peer Network. It also served as the official site for the sale of JOAG swag, with proceeds supporting JOAG's ability to fund junior officer scholarships to attend future Symposiums through the C. Everett Koop Living Legacy Fund.





The week of the Symposium allowed JOAG to fulfill some of its goals established through the JOAG Strategic Plan ([https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/JOAG/about\\_governingdocs.aspx](https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/JOAG/about_governingdocs.aspx)) and support priorities of the Surgeon General and National Prevention Strategy. JOAG hosted a community service event at the Chattanooga Community Kitchen and led an early morning walk through the streets of Chattanooga.

To those officers who have yet to attend the Symposium, I encourage you to make the investment. Take advantage of JOAG's Room/Ride Share Program to ease costs associated with hotel and transportation. Explore the Symposium's host city to have a little fun through JOAG's Local Resource Guide which highlights must-see sites and eateries. For officers who had the opportunity to attend the 2017 Symposium, I hope you were able to join JOAG's first ever workshop, featuring ways to turbocharge your career through involvement with the many JOAG Committees (<https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/JOAG/committees.aspx>).

As you read the pages of the Junior Officer Chronicles Symposium Edition, you will find many prospects to become involved with JOAG and the Symposium. Mark your calendars and start making plans for travel to "The Lone Star State" for the 2018 Symposium in Dallas next June!

In service,  
LCDR Kristie Purdy, Vice Chair

**Happy Anniversary to JOAG!**

Submitted by: LCDR Big Nguyen, Outreach Committee Co-Chair

This year JOAG celebrates its 15-year anniversary. One way JOAG chose to celebrate this milestone was to commemorate the special occasion with a new merchandise item. In addition to the product research and selection process, expertly led by LCDR Christine Williams and LT Laura Kennedy of JOAG's Outreach Committee, JOAG enlisted the help of creative officers to come up with a 15-year anniversary slogan. It was a close contest, as we received numerous submissions that creatively captured JOAG's essence.

The winning slogan is "JOAG: 15 Years of Shaping the Future," which was submitted by LT Lauren Brewer. This slogan was engraved on a sleek tumbler. The tumblers were first available in June at the 2017 COF Symposium. JOAG is also pleased to add another new item to our JOAG store this year: the PHS lunch bag. Now you can bring your lunch to work in your very own PHS lunch bag! If you're interested in getting your brand new JOAG tumbler or PHS lunch bag, don't fret – you haven't missed your chance. You can still buy the items on our [online store](#) or, if you're on the FDA White Oak campus, you can arrange an in-person pick up with CDR Bic Nguyen ([bic.nguyen@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:bic.nguyen@fda.hhs.gov)).



JOAG Tumbler  
\$6.00



PHS Lunch Bag  
\$8.00



## MESSAGE FROM PAST CHAIRS

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CAPT Michelle Jordan Garner  
Therapist Category  
Term: 2001-2002

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I have always been the type of person who embraces an opportunity to invoke change that yields a positive effect on people. I enjoy creating and formalizing systems of operation, groups, and processes that increase efficiency and promotes empowerment, even if it means navigating through uncharted territory. In 1999, the Therapist Category selected me to be the junior officer representative to serve on the Junior Officer Ad-Hoc Advisory Group (JOAHAG). I really had no idea about what to expect, but was excited about the chance to work with a dynamic group of junior officers to develop a strategy to assess the needs of PHS junior officers, and present the findings to Commissioned Corps (CC) leadership.



I remember the day when I and other select junior officers met with RADM Blackwell, Chief of Staff, to receive the charge for what we were about to embark on. I looked forward to the meeting, with anticipation and uncertainty at the same time because in my professional career, up to that point, I had not had the opportunity to serve in such a vital role. Much to my surprise RADM Blackwell looked directly at me and asked if I would serve as Chair of JOAHAG and lead the efforts toward achieving the charge given to us. I wonder if my persistent inquiries to RADM Blackwell, about when he was going to convene this group meeting, had anything to do with him selecting **me** to lead the group 😊!

As a group, we wasted no time convening, and persevered through challenges, obstacles, and setbacks. We were committed as a group to fulfill the charge before us, and convince CC leadership that we were a viable and necessary group that warranted permanent versus ad hoc status. The determination to maintain relevance and significance as a group, led to successful development and approval of a Charter made official by VADM Satcher, Surgeon General, in 2001. I continued in my role as Chair, and became the first Chair of JOAG. I was humbled and honored to be chosen, by my peers, to continue in such a fulfilling role that had such a tremendous responsibility. I would not have been successful in fulfilling this role had it not been for a strong, unified group of highly motivated and knowledgeable officers committed to exceeding the expectations of CC leadership.

Here we are so many years later. I am simply amazed at how JOAG has grown, developed, and matured. I feel a sense of great pride and accomplishment to know that I contributed to the foundational beginnings that the JOAG of today stands upon, and I look forward to seeing where JOAG will continue to go. I want to charge JOAG to continue to fulfill the mission and vision to meet the needs of junior officers; take a 'seat' at the decision making 'table'; and know that you are making JOAG a viable, advisory group designed to make a difference and invoke positive change.

**CAPT Jeff Salvon-Harman, MD**

Physician Category

Term: 2002-2003

JOAG was the best experience of my early career and a tremendous growth opportunity. I was never so proud to serve in the Corps and we accomplished some amazing things: gave junior officers a voice with senior leadership, strengthened Esprit de Corps at a critical time, provided policy documents and developed white papers on pivotal subjects for the future well-being of the Corps. The strength and diversity of JOAG leaders has continually impressed me over the years, and the commitment and dedication of junior officers continues to inspire me with hope for the future. Potentes semper!



**Caption:** From left to right: LTJG Jennifer Di Pietra, LT Michelle Colledge, LT Claudine Samanic, LCDR Jeffrey Salvon-Harman, LTJG Carolyn Oyster, LT Jeff Richardson, LT Ricardo Murga.



## CAPT Jeff Richardson

Therapist Category

Term: 2003-2004

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I was fortunate to serve as the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) chair during the 2003-2004 operational year and we had a great Senior Officer advisor, CAPT John Steward and an excellent and supportive Executive Committee. There were 20 very capable junior officers serving as voting members, and we also had about 40 other officers who were volunteering their time to attend the meetings and serve on the various committees. These officers were all extremely talented and capable and together we tackled the challenges of the day.

The work of the JOAG is done within the various organizational and Ad-Hoc committees made up of official voting members and volunteers. An overarching challenge we had was to recruit and interest dynamic and capable junior officers to join JOAG and to volunteer their time in our efforts. Junior officers had the opportunity to be innovative and spearhead efforts within the Public Health Service through the JOAG. We were able to write up and present an award at the Alaska COA meeting in 2004 for the work that the Commissioned Officer Training Academy was doing, for one example.

The largest effort of the 2003-2004 JOAG year was our participation in the "Transformation of the Public Health Service." Transformation was going full speed ahead and the leadership of the Public Health Service recognized that junior officers would be affected by transformation more than any other group of officers and thus we were given seats in the high level discussions. We worked within high level workgroups and focus groups. It was a great challenge and honor to sit with the leadership of the Corps and to lay groundwork and build the Transformation of the Corps.

I enjoyed the Esprit de Corps and the camaraderie I felt working with the other JOAG members from all different categories. I really enjoyed working with these other officers, much more than I anticipated. I am glad to have made such excellent professional and personal friendships.

JOAG gives officers a chance to work on current issues that face the Public Health Service. The biggest personal benefit of my JOAG participation is the expanded opportunities for officership it afforded. I was able to participate in various meetings attended by the Surgeon General and the OSG staff and I was able to meet with the Assistant Secretary for Health in a JOAG meeting. I was able to participate in significant ways even though I was stationed in a remote location at Keams Canyon Service Unit within the IHS on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona.

It is important for junior officers to be involved in JOAG, not only for the individual professional officership benefit, but more importantly for the benefit of the Corps. The entire Corps of the Public Health Service benefits to have junior officers invested in the wellbeing of the organization and intimately involved in helping to shape the future of the Corps. There will continue to be challenges facing the Public Health Service and I see the JOAG continuing as an integral part of the USPHS efforts to overcome those challenges.





### CDR Claudine Samanic

HSA Category

Term: 2005-2006

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I remember calling in to some of the final JOAHAG meetings before JOAG was officially chartered in 2001. It was very exciting to be part of a new endeavor at that time by junior officers, for junior officers! JOAG has grown tremendously since then and I'm extremely proud to have been a part of it. My best to JOAG 2017 and beyond – you will no doubt continue to strengthen and gracefully guide the Commissioned Corps.



### CAPT Thomas Pryor

Nurse Category

Term: 2006-2007

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It was July of 2006 when my term as JOAG Chair began. At that time I was a newly promoted LCDR and had started my second assignment with Indian Health Services as a Public Health Nurse in rural New Mexico. My time with JOAG allowed me the opportunity to network and connect with other junior officers who I would normally not interact with because of the remote location of my duty assignment. Furthermore many of these initial connections have led to career (and most likely lifelong) friendships. During my tenure as Chair, my executive leadership team and the members who actively participated were directly responsible for many exciting initiatives and esprit de corps activities that extended beyond those of JOAG. The development of the Richard H. Carmona Inspirational Award and Core Value challenge coin are just two examples.



I suppose if there was one thing that I was most proud in my service to JOAG was the number of officers who despite the role they filled (executive leadership, committee chair or active member) were passionate about the Corps and had a service ethos. One specific example occurred when I received a request from Office of Surgeon General (OSG) to identify a JOAG representative to serve as a member of each of the various Working and Policy Design Group (WPDGs) that had been established as part of the PHS Transformation Initiative during my tenure. When the request from OSG was made, I had an open solicitation of JOAG members to forward me a statement of interest and CVs for consideration. With hundreds of CVs to review in a short time, I was truly humbled and inspired by the careers and assignments of my colleagues' and breadth of their educational accomplishments as junior officers.



Working with my executive leadership team and specifically my Vice Chair, LCDR Ernie Sullivent (now Captain) we were able to meet the requests of OSG, and in doing so, I also lamented about the number of stellar officers who were unable to be assigned into one of the WPDG member roles. Despite this, many sustained their willingness to serve in other roles within JOAG as either a member of the leadership team or as an active member of a subgroup. So for me, the most memorable experience I had as Chair was to be witness to my colleagues' passion and commitment of serving a greater cause both for JOAG and the Corps as a whole.

If I had one hope for JOAG in the future, it would be to continue to learn from and grow from its past. Inherent to this is the fostering of new officers who put service before self. By fostering a servant leadership ethos, esprit de corps and an emphasis on officership JOAG will be best positioned to provide a foundation on which its members will develop into the senior leaders of tomorrow.

"Fair winds and following seas"

### CDR Aimee Treffiletti

EHO Category

Term: 2007-2008

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My husband still cringes when he hears "JOAG" because of all the hours I spent at night and on weekends working on JOAG projects while I was Chair. My marriage survived, he still proudly wears his JOAG t-shirts, and all of the sacrifices were worth it because JOAG made me a better officer, leader, and mentor. I am beyond proud to part of the JOAG legacy and I am excited to see where the next 15 years takes this amazing organization.



### CAPT Diem-Kieu Ngo

Pharmacist Category

Term: 2009-2010

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I am proud to have served as the JOAG Chair from 2009-2010, following in the footsteps of great leaders before me. I had the opportunity to work closely with many outstanding officers (voting members as well as general members/volunteers) across all the PHS categories, many of whom I continue to keep in touch with and reach out to for cross-category collaborations. Many fond memories were made and lifelong friendships were built as we worked long hours to accomplish JOAG's mission. I recall the hard work and dedication our volunteers put in over months of planning for JOAG activities at the 2010 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium in San Diego, including the JOAG General Meeting (and goody bags for attendees), JOAG Social, merchandise sales for the JOAG Booth, and our long-standing, popular JOAG Uniform Inspection Booth. That year, we were honored to





have all the CPOs attending the Symposium come to the JOAG General Meeting. Like other JOAG Chairs, I continue to reach back to my invaluable JOAG experiences in my work for the PharmPAC and other PHS activities. I encourage all junior officers to get involved with JOAG (as little or as much as you can) since the voting members and Executive Committee cannot lead JOAG through the many upcoming changes to the USPHS Commissioned Corps without your help and support. During my term, we worked closely with the Office of the Surgeon General to ensure a JOAG representative was included in all the high level discussions of new policies and initiatives. On the occasion of JOAG's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is my hope that JOAG continues to lead the Corps for another 15 years and beyond, while ensuring that the junior officer voice is heard at all levels.

**LCDR Tracy Tilghman**  
HSD Category  
Term: 2012-2013

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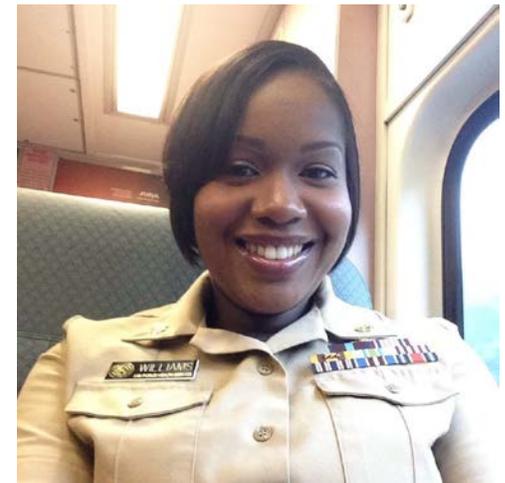
My experience as Chair could best be described as exciting, enlightening, and humbling. It is amazing what junior officers are capable of, and their ability to go above and beyond (and then some) never ceases to astound me. JOAG has come a long way in the past 15 years, and I know this is only the beginning. I'm excited to see what the future holds for this group and very proud to have been able to serve and participate in the journey.



**LCDR Racquel Williams**  
EHO Category  
Term: 2013-2014

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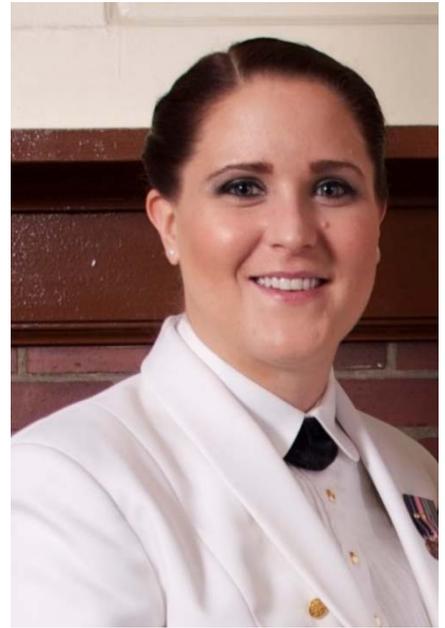
I served as the JOAG Chair during 2013-2014. It was a tremendous experience! Thanks to the passion and energy of junior officers, we provided many professional development and leadership opportunities, served the community, and brought positive visibility to the Commissioned Corps. JOAG's impact may not always be quantifiable, but it is significant. Our organization continues to remain relevant and I'm proud of the continued success of each operational year. Let's make the next 15 years even greater!





CDR Jessica Otto  
EHO Category  
Term: 2014-2015

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As I took the time to reflect on my last week as a junior officer, I couldn't help but feel a little bittersweet that official involvement in JOAG was coming to an end. I joined JOAG as a general member shortly after commissioning in 2004. As a young LTJG just out of undergrad, I had no idea the whirlwind experience I was in for. After serving on several subcommittees, I was asked to take several leadership roles such as subcommittee secretary and eventually non-voting co-chair. With a whole bunch of encouragement I decided to apply for voting membership and served two terms, working my way all the way up to the executive committee before taking a hiatus for my master's degree. A short time later after getting re-engaged, several officers approached me to make a run for chair-elect. While their confidence in me was a great compliment, I never thought I was prepared. However a mentor of mine imparted the following advice that I'd like to pass on for you... "Get uncomfortable." It is imperative that you as an officer take the time throughout your career to take stretch assignments. If you're fully prepared for an experience chances are you are not going to learn much. It is when you embrace your discomfort and seek assignments and volunteer roles you believe you're not quite ready for that you will truly grow. JOAG is in my opinion the best place to do just that. Stretch, grow, and get uncomfortable.

JOAG is a wonderful place to learn, grow, and work on tough issues affecting not only junior officers but the Corps as a whole. I'd encourage you to not only seek out those stretch assignments, but push someone else along the way. I never would have learned the lessons I had without my peers pushing me to get uncomfortable. Below are just a few of the many lessons JOAG has imparted to me:

**It has taught me persistence:** nothing happens overnight, and certainly not without a champion.

**It has taught me compassion:** no two officers have the same career experience and there are many unfair or unwarranted circumstances that JOAG can work on and be an advocate for those without a voice.

**It has taught me courage:** I never imagined (knees knocking) I would brief a room full of admirals on innovative and sometimes hard to swallow issues, much less to have them received with careful consideration, thought, and oftentimes gratitude for bringing it to their attention for action.

**It has also taught me grace:** as we work to shift the culture of our Corps from a "what's in it for me" organization to a truly service-oriented, selfless-service entity representing the ideals we were founded on, I've had to have many difficult and frank discussions with officers about expectations and doing things for the right reasons (hint, it's not recognition).

My time with JOAG in an official capacity may have come to an end, but I will always look back fondly on the lessons I've learned and take those forward with me and strive to continue to make the Corps a better place. I want to thank each of JOAG's members, as none of the lessons I learned would have been possible without each of you. Keep fighting the good fight, and Semper Gumby.





CDR Elizabeth Garza  
 HSO Category  
 Term: 2015-2016



**As JOAG Chair my top two favorite JOAG 'stories':**

- Experiencing the 2016 USPHS Symposium
- Being that 'junior officer voice' on the USPHS Strategic Planning Workgroup

**USPHS Strategic Planning Workgroup co-led by RADM Trent-Adams and RADM Giberson**

I was asked to represent JOAG and the junior officer perspective among a small hand-selected group of very high-ranking officers (several flag level officers across multiple agencies) to develop the first Strategic Framework consisting of a Commissioned Corps Doctrine and this FY 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. It was truly a humbling experience and inspiring to see how officers across agency, category and geographic location came together to pull together these foundational documents for the Corps. It's rare to see so many 'stars aligned' coming together for such a significant initiative and just how dedicated, passionate and driven these officers are. It reignited in me that greater purpose of 'service above self' as I reflected and appreciated how AWESOME it is that we are the only uniformed service for public health designed by law to respond to public health emergencies at home and abroad.

**2016 USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium in Oklahoma City**

- **Sharing the stage with VADM Carmona (Ret.):** For me, the most humbling and awe-inspiring moment was having VADM Carmona by my side to present the JOAG VADM Carmona Inspiration Award to CAPT Paul Jung. I had assumed VADM Carmona wanted to present the award since he'd be there in person. He however told me a few minutes beforehand he wanted JOAG to take the lead and that I should call him up on stage; that he'd be there to support me. So for those of you who saw me trying to hide my nervousness... I kept looking over to see when he wanted to jump in, including giving him the chance to announce the winner... yet he wanted me, a junior officer, to lead and make the announcement. VADM Carmona is a true inspiration, role model and one of the strongest advocates of JOAG that I've ever met. He stopped by our JOAG booth and when we gave him one of our new JOAG deployment themed t-shirts, he mentioned to me how proud he was of JOAG and that he still had one of his old JOAG t-shirts. He sent a note to me afterwards saying "...JOAG continues to inspire me! The Corps and our nation will be in good hands with you and your fellow JOAG officers moving up."
- **JOAG standing room only meeting (>200 officers):** From what I was told, this was the first JOAG meeting where we had the Surgeon General (SG), Deputy Surgeon General (DSG), Director of the Division of Commissioned Corps & Readiness and ALL of our Chief Professional Officers (CPOs) from each of the categories in attendance to address our junior officers. It was impressive to see our leadership at the highest levels so committed to be there to engage with us junior officers and so interested in really hearing from us.
- **In person connections:** Not having been to the annual USPHS Symposium since 2012, it was so refreshing to have a week 100% dedicated to growing as a Corps officer. Being able to place a name with faces I'd worked with for years in the Corps was the best. I also really loved meeting officers outside my agency and geographic location and really seeing the breadth and depth of how we serve our country.





## JOAG EVENTS

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### Good Morning Chattanooga!

By: LCDR Tyann Blessington, LCDR Pamela Ogonowski, and LT Alyssa Fine

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A sunrise walk was the ideal start to a busy day for approximately forty officers who participated in the JOAG Everybody Walk! event in Chattanooga. The three-mile trek led participants to the picturesque Walnut Street Bridge and then around the Tennessee River before returning to the conference. "The walking event was a great way to meet other officers and explore our beautiful host city," explained LT Kelly Owens. Similarly, LCDR Michael J. Reed enjoyed the social aspect that walking encourages, saying it is a "simple way to develop a common bond with fellow officers."

Promoting walking and advocating for walkable communities are priorities of the Office of the Surgeon General. In 2013, the *Every Body Walk!* campaign was initiated and JOAG created a subcommittee to promote walking amongst officers and civilians. This effort was further supported with the 2015 *Step It Up!* initiative. Both programs promote a healthier nation. Exercise promotes both physical and mental health. As CDR Anne Marie Bott explained, it is "refreshing to start the day exercising."

Walking in uniform or while wearing PHS Pride gear is a great way to familiarize the community with the Public Health Service. Walking is also an excellent way to interact with neighbors and demonstrate that healthy living is achievable for all. Because of this, CDR Deborah S. Belsky would like to see more events hosted around workplaces and neighborhoods. Promoting walkable communities can be "simply presenting yourself in the public" and walking as a group, as LT Jennifer Carrera explained.

LT Javonna Stevens implements physical activity at her workplace to promote wellness of staff and patients. "At Gallup Indian Medical Center we have a program in place called 'Just Move It' where we have walking/running events each month during the summer months at different places to promote a healthy lifestyle! I participate and try to encourage employees as well as patients to participate. It's fun and helps people want to be active." LT Trisha Chandler combines physical fitness and community beautification. "In my community we do a neighborhood walk/clean up every few months to keep our desert clean and free of trash," she explained.

We are looking forward to next year's COF JOAG walking event and participants had recommendations to make the event even better. CDR Deborah S. Belsky and LCDR Michael J. Reed suggested we include more ice breakers, social games, and activities. CDR Anne Marie Bott suggested we "spread the word more."

LT Javonna Stevens commented that this event complemented the already established Surgeon General's 5K, saying, "It was nice to walk. I know we have the 5k but you could actually walk and talk which I really enjoyed on top of the views!" Through this event, officers were able to get some physical activity, promote walking, and have fun. LCDR Trisha Chandler explained it best: "I was able to network, see the city sites, and get my heart rate up for a cardio workout. What more could you ask for!"





## Officers Serve Chattanooga Community Kitchen during the 2017 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium

Submitted by: LCDR Toscha Stanley

Homelessness is traumatic. Waking up in unfamiliar territory and not knowing where you will get your next meal is distressing to say the least. While in town to attend the 2017 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium, a group of JOAG members assisted people facing that situation by volunteering on June 6 with the Chattanooga Community Kitchen, an organization that works to ease the struggle and despair of Chattanooga's displaced and homeless community members.

The Chattanooga Community Kitchen first opened its doors in 1982 when seven downtown churches partnered in an effort to help meet the needs of Chattanooga's growing homeless population. Since then, the organization has expanded and, in addition to food, provides showers, clothing, and other services to the city's homeless and needy 365 days a year.



**Caption:** From left to right: LT Stevens, LCDR Elbadawi, LT Riley-Bass, LCDR Dodson, LT Luz, LCDR Tarlton, unidentified officer, CDR Velazquez, LT Merriman, Mr. Appleberry of the Chattanooga Community Kitchen, LCDR Stanley & LT Franklin

Volunteering with the Chattanooga Community Kitchen allowed JOAG members to support the "Healthy Eating" tenet of the Surgeon General's National Prevention Strategy. Officers served a fresh, hot lunch to more than 180 people. The gratitude shown to the officers by every individual served at the facility was very rewarding. We were approached countless times by those who wanted to thank us for being there.

By providing service to the local community, this multidisciplinary group of officers was able to demonstrate in a visible way what public health really stands for! Rather than burdening



organizers with arranging transportation from the Symposium location, the officers paired up and walked the mile to the Community Kitchen. These officers are excellent public servants, and I am grateful to all of those who participated.

### The Junior Officer Career Enhancement Booth

Submitted by: LCDR Sasha Latonis

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The Junior Officer Career Enhancement Booth (JOCEB) was once again a successful part of JOAG's presence at the Symposium this year. This booth, organized and staffed by the Outreach Committee and their volunteers, is a big draw in the exhibit hall for many Symposium attendees. In addition to providing valuable information about how to get involved with JOAG and its many committees, it also sells a variety of JOAG merchandise.

The JOCEB gives junior officers a chance to learn more about JOAG's various committees and some of the opportunities available through JOAG in an informal, conversational atmosphere. It facilitates discussions about career development and ways to get involved. Officers can feel comfortable asking questions and deciding which projects they would be interested in being a part of. In particular, some of the initiatives which were highlighted at the JOCEB during this Symposium included the job shadowing program as well as the mentoring program.

Another draw of the JOCEB is the sale of new and unique JOAG merchandise items, as well as old favorites. This year, new items developed to commemorate JOAG's 15-year anniversary included a lunch bag with the Public Health Service emblem on the front and reusable tumblers. The irregular-shaped JOAG coin and athletic t-shirt were also popular items, with the booth selling out of the coins before the end of the week. One aspect that made the JOCEB booth stand out from other booths at the Symposium was the ability to take credit cards via the Square app, which allowed those without cash to still purchase merchandise. Proceeds from these sales go towards the C. Everett Koop Living Legacy Fund, which provides scholarships to junior officers who want to attend the Symposium.

Volunteering at the JOCEB is also a beneficial endeavor. Officers who staff the booth get the opportunity to meet and interact with a wide range of symposium attendees. They are able to hone their speaking skills as they explain the many services that JOAG provides junior officers, and describe the different committees which may be served on. Several of the volunteers this year were first time Symposium attendees and they enjoyed the ability to support JOAG during the week.

The JOCEB looks forward to returning at next year's Symposium in Dallas!



## The JOAG Uniform Inspection Booth

Submitted by: LCDR Trisha Chandler and LT Kelly Owens

We have seen the JOAG Uniform Inspection Booth (UIB) on Facebook and Instagram, online, and mentioned in JOAG updates, but what once simply lived on social media became a live (and lively!) experience when we had the opportunity to volunteer at the booth during the 2017 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium in Chattanooga, TN.

The UIB at the USPHS Symposium was lead this year by LCDR Beth Wittry and LT Mistin Ray who sought to provide a service to officers who may not be familiar with proper wear of the uniform. Several uniform updates may occur during an officer's career and, given the dispersed nature of our service, it is critical that information, communication, and uniform experts are available to serve USPHS officers. The uniform is a tenet of officership. We wear it with pride and distinction that reflects on the entirety of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.



**Caption:** Officer gets uniform information from LT Kelly Owens (middle) and (then) LT Trisha Chandler (far right).

Officership, pride and distinction, representing the Corps.... the pressure was on for us volunteers! We are not uniform experts, but we wanted to participate with the UIB out of a sense of duty to the uniform. Prior to the conference, volunteers were given many resource materials (regulations, presentations and pictures) to review and an orientation conference call to discuss logistics and the most important information.

We came to the Symposium armed with our FAQs, regulations manual, and a memorized image of the new mil-spec insignia ready to be “uniform police” or at least subject matter experts. There were concerns that the situation might become awkward — imagine telling a senior ranking officer their name tag is crooked or their collar device is wrong — but our fears were assuaged when officers visited the booth with their questions and accepted our constructive criticism with interest.

We met with officers from all ranks who wanted our help! The UIB functioned as a “one stop shop” for uniform questions and a place to discuss some of the intricacies and dress nuances of our uniforms. We had “wrong” uniform set-ups for officers to pinpoint common uniform mistakes and offered device measurement and verification of ribbon and name tag placement. Officer head shot photographs were conducted adjacent to the booth so UIB volunteers were able to provide last-minute inspections for those important pictures.

The UIB had over 140 visitors during the entire Symposium and over 30 officers visited during our volunteer shift. Speaking with so many officers about the USPHS uniforms instilled great esprit de corps. As first-time attendees of the USPHS Symposium, it was inspiring for us to see so many officers in uniform in one place looking sharp because of the JOAG’s UIB assistance and service.





## “How to Get the Most Out of JOAG” Presentation

Submitted by: LCDR Griff Miller, Outreach Committee Co-Chair

How would you like to hear – in less than an hour – all the ways JOAG can help turbocharge your career? Well, you were in luck if you were at Symposium this year and noticed the new JOAG initiative, “How to Get the Most out of JOAG,” which occurred during the reception following RADM Trent-Adams’ plenary Tuesday evening. If you missed it, don’t fret – it will likely become a standard part of JOAG’s Symposium activities, so there’s always next year!

This new presentation focuses on what JOAG can do for *you* – from professional development opportunities to a resource for all things “junior officer;” from developing leadership skills to expanding your network. But more than that, this presentation gives attendees specific examples on how every JOAG committee has something unique that can benefit your career, such as the ability of Awards Committee members to see the career paths and accomplishments of top-notch junior officers during the awards review process, which can give the reviewers ideas for how to give their own careers a boost.

This first year for the new presentation went well, with around 30 junior officers attending. Attendees got a quick overview of JOAG and what it does, then we moved into summaries of each of the JOAG committees, which focused on the unique ways participation in each committee can help junior officers’ careers. For subject-matter expertise, the committee summaries were primarily given by Voting Members – either a Co-Chair or the Executive Committee Liaison for each committee. Following the summaries, we opened the floor to any JOAG members who wanted to



share how JOAG has helped their own careers, provided time for questions from the audience, then turned the final piece of the program over to CAPT Sara Newman, JOAG’s Senior Advisor, for a senior officer’s perspective on how JOAG can be an integral initial step toward a fulfilling career in the Commissioned Corps, and how JOAG can give you a set of tools, networks, and friendships that may even last a lifetime.

We hope that the presentation was of benefit to those who attended its inaugural run, and we’ve already received some great feedback that will help us improve it. Plus, since JOAG’s always coming up with new ways to support junior officers and move the Corps forward, this presentation is intended to be a living document that reflects current JOAG initiatives. As a result, we’re already working to incorporate some new ideas, so look for us next time in Dallas to find out what JOAG can do for you! Of course, if you can’t wait that long, you’re always welcome to contact us, the Outreach Committee Co-Chairs, the JOAG Chair, or any Voting Member – we’d love to discuss all things JOAG with you.



## JOAG AWARDS

Submitted by: LCDR Sara Azimi-Bolourian and LCDR Jonathan Whitehart, Awards Committee Chairs

The JOAG Awards Committee provides advice and consultation to the Surgeon General for new awards and other methods of recognition for Junior Officers. It is the mission of the Awards Committee to facilitate the awards process and recognize junior officers for their accomplishments and commitment to the mission of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS).

During the COA Awards Luncheon in Chattanooga, TN, on June 9, 2017, all of the 2017 JOAG awards recipients were recognized and awarded for their exceptional performance and contributions to the USPHS and public health field in general.

### JOAG Excellence Award

The JOAG Excellence Award recognizes a junior officer for demonstrating outstanding, dedicated effort, leadership ability, and commitment to JOAG through active committee participation. Below are some highlights from the award nomination:

- This year's recipient currently serves as the JOAG liaison to the Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Advisory Group. In addition, she is a Secretary of the Awards Committee.
- Since commissioning, she has served the following committees: Communications and Publications, Policy and Procedures, Readiness and Deployment, and Recruitment and Retention.
- She also supports junior officers through such roles as Commissioned Corps Awards Board representative for her Center. She serves the CDC Commissioned Corps Professional Advisory Committee and is a mentor for the Scientist category.

This year's JOAG Excellence Award recipient, **LCDR Zewditu Demissie**, serves as a Senior Research Scientist in the Division of Adolescent and School Health within the CDC.



**Caption:** From right to left: LCDR Samantha Spindel (JOAG Chair), LCDR Zewditu Demissie (JOAG Excellence Award Winner), & LCDR Sara Azimi-Bolourian (JOAG Awards Co-Chair)



## Junior Officer of the Year Award

The Junior Officer of the Year (JOY) Award recognizes an active duty junior officer who has made a significant contribution to the mission of the USPHS. This year's recipient demonstrates commitment to the core values of our service, shows leadership within his field, and serves his agency by making a unique contribution.

Below are some highlights from the award nomination:

- During the Zika outbreak in Puerto Rico, this year's recipient responded as the Epidemiology and Case Surveillance Team Lead and was responsible for maintaining case detection and reporting. He analyzed epidemiologic trends, identified newly or adversely affected populations, and investigated atypical cases. Through his leadership, the CDC partnered with the Puerto Rico Department of Health to modify the surveillance system.
- He also worked with Cuban health officials to establish scientific partnerships to conduct Zika research and design public health interventions.

The 2017 Junior Officer of the Year, **LCDR Tyler Sharp**, currently serves as the Epidemiology Team Lead at the CDC. He is the principal investigator of the Sentinel Enhanced Dengue Surveillance System. He serves on his Center's PHS Awards Board and in 2015, he re-founded the Puerto Rico Commissioned Officers' Association.



**Caption:** From right to left: LCDR Samantha Spindel (JOAG Chair), LCDR Tyler Sharpe (JOY Award Winner), & LCDR Sara Azimi-Bolourian (JOAG Awards Co-Chair)



## VADM C. Everett Koop Junior Officer Award

The legacy of VADM C. Everett Koop is realized through his contributions that culminated in changes in national policy and healthcare reform. Dr. Koop's life and legacy are most notable for the following: issuing a warning on the dangers of smoking, taking an aggressive stance on AIDS, and advocating for the rights of children with special needs.

To acknowledge and encourage outstanding service and exemplary leadership, this award recognizes junior officers who emulate the commitment, contributions, and character of the 13th Surgeon General of the United States, VADM Koop.

This year's **inaugural** award was presented to an officer who demonstrates exceptional leadership and outstanding capability by undertaking highly visible special assignments.

Below are some highlights from the award nomination:

- She focused on policy and programmatic initiatives with global impact spanning areas like the Western Hemisphere by addressing public health issues such as malaria and viral hepatitis.
- Managed \$2.5 million to implement activities for a commission that involved the Secretaries of Health for both the United States and Mexico by addressing border priorities including the development of tuberculosis policy and disaster risk reduction for indigenous populations.
- Through her leadership in this position, a new unit in CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis was created to address the needs of people who inject drugs.

The 2017 VADM C. Everett Koop Junior Officer of the Year was presented to **LCDR Alyson Rose-Wood**.



**Caption:** From left to right: LCDR Samantha Spindel (JOAG Chair), LCDR Alyson Rose-Wood (Koop Award Winner), & LCDR Sara Azimi-Bolourian (JOAG Awards Co-Chair)



## VADM Richard Carmona Inspiration Award

During his tenure as Surgeon General, VADM Carmona exemplified qualities that junior officers throughout the Commissioned Corps have come to admire. These qualities include outstanding leadership by example, mentorship of junior officers, and overall inspiration to the PHS community. This award recognizes a senior officer in the Commissioned Corps who exhibits the qualities ascribed to VADM Carmona. Nominations for this award may only be submitted by junior officers.

Below are some highlights from the award nomination:

- He received an Outstanding Service Medal for sustained high level leadership and innovation as the assistant chief pharmacist at the largest Native American Health Center in Oklahoma.
- During his career, he has served as the chief inpatient pharmacist of a 58 bed hospital. He also served as the director of pharmacy of a comprehensive health care center and led a Remote Area Medical group that delivered healthcare to 770 underserved patients.
- He also initiated pharmacy based hypertension and diabetes management clinics.

This year's recipient currently serves IHS as the Southeast Region Commissioned Corps Liaison. Over his 19-year career, he has held a variety of positions, beginning as a JRCOSTEP with the Bureau of Prisons to serving as the Director of Pharmacy at IHS.

This year's recipient serves as the team commander for a 120-officer Tier I response team. He is a member of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation and serves as the Senior Advisor to the Minority Officers Liaison Council and the American Indian/Alaska Native Commissioned Officer Advisory Committee.

The 2017 VADM Richard Carmona Inspiration Award was presented to **CAPT Brandon Taylor**. In addition to the plaque, Dr. Carmona provided his coin and a personalized letter to the award recipient.



**Caption:** From left to right: Lcdr Sara Azimi-Bolourian (JOAG Awards Co-Chair), Capt Brandon Taylor (Carmona Award Winner), & Lcdr Samantha Spindel (JOAG Chair)



## OTHER SYMPOSIUM EVENTS

### Get Ready for Deployment: Deployment, Readiness, and Clinical Skills Training

Submitted by LCDR Matthew Duff

“Are you ready for deployment?” That was the tag line for the Pre-conference Deployment Readiness and Clinical Skills Training offered at this year’s USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium. Now, I’m not sure if this applies to you but I have never been deployed. It’s definitely on my Corps bucket list but I’ve always been categorized as mission critical by my respective duty stations. So I’ve often wondered if I am ready for deployment or not. When the opportunity presented itself to volunteer for the deployment skills training I was definitely interested but I wasn’t sure if the organizers would want someone with zero deployment experience. Luckily, CDR Matthew Dionne welcomed me to his team.

Our team consisted of 7 pharmacists from the FDA and IHS lead by CDR Dione and with oversight by CAPT William Pierce. We were tasked with designing and presenting one of 13 Deployment Readiness and Clinical Skills Training sessions. This preconference deployment skills training has been offered during previous years at the Symposium but this was the first year offering an inter-disciplinary combination workshop. Multiple categories including nursing, dieticians, health service officers, engineers, and of course pharmacists, presented on a variety of topics including Basic Triage, Immunizations, Emergency Wound Care Dressing, and Pre-deployment preparation, just to name just a few. The workshop lasted for 4 hours and attendees chose 4 of the 13 one hour sessions to attend.

For the pharmacy team, our goals included providing insight into the skill sets pharmacists bring to the healthcare team as well as hands-on real world clinical application. The session included a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation entitled “Clinical Pharmacy Deployment: Effective Medication Utilization” that covered a wide variety of subjects related to the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of pharmacists on deployment including determining the location and layout of a pharmacy in a field medical station (FMS), participation on code teams, pharmacy involvement with immunization administration, therapeutic and generic drug substitution, record keeping, medication reconciliation, and discharge assistance. Following the presentation, each session attendee was paired with a member of our team to learn how to use the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) for order entry, changing current orders, discontinuation of medication orders, and documenting administration of medications. For the hands-on portion our team developed 12 unique and challenging patient case scenarios that participants could use to practice their EMR skills.

For someone like myself who has not deployed, this volunteer opportunity was an excellent way to meet and network with fellow officers who have a wealth of deployment experience. I was able to learn the ins and outs of the current EMR that is used on deployment and get a better idea of what



**Caption:** From left to right: CAPT William Pierce, CDR Kimberly Rains, CDR Keith Olin, CDR Matthew Dionne, CDR Randy Steers, CDR Su-Lin Sun & LCDR Matthew Duff



is expected of pharmacy officers on deployment. In the end, although I didn't participate as an attendee in the workshop, I did feel more ready for deployment. If you plan to attend the Symposium in Dallas next year and have any interest in acquiring or refreshing your deployment skills, then I'd highly recommend attending or volunteering to participate in the pre-conference Deployment, Readiness, and Clinical Skills Training.

### Credentialing for Health Educators and Public Health Generalists

Submitted by: CDR Matthew Weinburke and LCDR Charlotte Kabore

On June 6-7, 2017 at the 2017 Scientific and Training Symposium in Chattanooga, Tennessee, CDR Matthew Weinburke and LCDR Charlotte Kaboré presented a poster entitled "*Value in Credentialing for Health Educators and Public Health Generalists.*" We represented the HSO category and the chartered Public Health Professional Advisory Group to provide information about these credentials for public health generalists. During the poster session, several officers from different categories (e.g. Engineer, Nursing, and Scientist) stated that they should also provide this type of information for their profession. The purpose of the poster presentation was to educate officers about the benefits of becoming a Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES<sup>®</sup>), Master Certified Health Education Specialist (MCHES<sup>®</sup>) and Certified in Public Health (CPH). The CHES/MCHES certifications were developed by National Commission for Health Education Credentialing, Inc. and provide a standard for health professional practice. The CPH is the only recognized credential for public health certified by the National Board of Public Health Examiners. The CHES/MCHES and CPH are general credentialing and officers from other categories may be eligible to obtain these certifications.

The poster presentation aligned with the Symposium's theme *Mobilizing a Culture of Health - Successes and Challenges* and Track six-*Readiness and Deployment* to ensure that officers have appropriate credentials needed for a deployment. There were many questions from those who viewed the poster such as, "What is the difference between CHES/MCHES and CPH?" The presenters shared that the CHES<sup>®</sup> and MCHES<sup>®</sup> certifications demonstrate an individual's possession, application and interpretation of knowledge in the 7 Areas of Responsibility for Health Education Specialists. Also shared was that CHES<sup>®</sup> and MCHES<sup>®</sup> are registered trademarks with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Moreover, the CPH certification demonstrates mastery of the core disciplines of public health and the commitment to stay up-to-date on emerging and established public health issues through continuing education. During the session, the presenters also discussed the exams eligibility, information, and exam preparation resources. The poster session was well attended by many officers and guests which included 50 officers and 4 local health department employees from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Poster authors were CDR Matthew Weinburke, MPH, REHS, CHES<sup>®</sup>; LCDR Charlotte Kaboré, MS, MPH, MCHES<sup>®</sup>; and LCDR Jennifer Clements, MPH, MCHES<sup>®</sup>, CPH.



**Caption:** Left to right: CDR Matthew Weinburke (presenter); CAPT Jeanean Willis Marsh (Chief Health Services Officer), and LT Charlotte Kaboré (presenter)



## Remote Area Medical Mission

Submitted by: LCDR Trisha Chandler

In late 2016, the USPHS Commissioned Corps and Remote Area Medical (RAM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share resources and information as well as provide direct clinical care. With this partnership at RAM events, we are able to provide free medical, dental, and vision care to any individual in need on a first come, first served basis. This MOU also provides an opportunity for more Corps officers to receive training in a field environment.

The first RAM event under this MOU was held on June 3-4 at Red Bank High School in Chattanooga, TN the weekend prior to the 2017 Symposium. A total of 115 USPHS Commissioned Corps officers, including 64 junior officers, participated in this event. Officers worked with RAM volunteers to provide 641 patients from eight states care over the two day period. Of these 641 patients, 410 received dental care, 127



**Caption:** Acting Surgeon General, RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams, addresses the team at the conclusion of the mission.

medical care, and 260 vision evaluations. Some received more than one service. Dental services included 526 tooth extractions, 171 fillings, and 204 cleanings. The onsite mobile lab created 272 pairs of eyeglasses.

In addition to the typical scope of care provided by RAM (i.e. dental, medical, and vision), Commissioned Corps officers provided 39 physical and occupational therapy consults, 42 pharmacy consults, and 70 behavioral and mental health consults. Stress management resources were distributed to 190 dental patients in a large group setting, and health education in areas other than mental health and substance abuse were given to 383 patients. Written health education materials were provided in both English and Spanish and were provided by agencies such as CDC, SAMSHA, and FDA.

The event was highly successful and RAM was pleased with the work completed by our officers. About half of the officers that volunteered for this event had never deployed before. It was a very good learning experience for junior officers. Junior officers filled many roles including pharmacist, dentist, dental hygienist, physician, nurse, optometrist, preventive medicine, physical and occupations therapist, nurse, mental health therapist, medical records specialist, health educator, logistician, planner, safety officer, and many more!

It was an honor to serve on this mission, and I would highly encourage junior officers to participate in future RAM events to not only to gain deployment experience but to serve those in need and support the mission of the Public Health Service. There will be additional RAM volunteer opportunities with the Commissioned Corps in the future. Keep an eye out for ways you can participate and get involved!



## Melodic Mission: Three Perspectives on USPHS Music Ensemble Service during the 2017 Symposium

Submitted by: LCDR Iman K. Martin

U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Officers are familiar with our four Core Values: Leadership, Service, Integrity, and Excellence. They are our *staff*; foundational lines upon which each of us place the *notes* (our actions) composing a harmony of collective service. For 17 years, the Surgeon General's Own USPHS Music Ensemble has performed at the Symposium.

As a junior officer and Ensemble member yet to participate in a Symposium, I sought perspectives of Ensemble members who reflect the breadth of talent within the USPHS and the excellence that was portrayed at this year's Ensemble performance. I interviewed fellow members who attended, and their responses were an inspirational dose of *esprit de corps*.

LTJG Rachel Forche (EHO/FDA) was commissioned into the USPHS in April 2017 and immediately volunteered for the Ceremonial Band. For her, USPHS provides an opportunity to serve populations in need while maintaining dual responsibilities of scientific regulatory service and emergency response. Having played with one of the best marching bands in the country at the University of Michigan, she graciously displayed her flute skills this year at the Symposium. "I am proud to be in [the] Corps, and everyone loves music. Why not use it as an opportunity to spread happiness in communities that hear us and teach people about what we do?" As this was her first attendance at the Symposium,



**Caption:** LTJG Rachel Forche with then-Acting Surgeon General RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams



**Caption:** The Surgeon General's Music Ensemble at the 2017 Symposium with Acting Surgeon General RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams (center).



she was heartened by the warmth and camaraderie the performance inspired; rank and respect gave way to dancing and bubble blowing.

LCDR Eric Jamoom (SCI/CDC), Deputy Field Band Lead, has enjoyed playing as a part of the unit, using the universal appeal of music. He referenced 'Semper Gumby' in our conversation about his role as a new Conductor at this year's Symposium. Always flexible, he traded his trombone for a sequined conductor's glove for his first conducting performance. Affectionately recalling the occasional beach ball bouncing off a musician during audience enjoyment, LCDR Jamoom said of this year's performance, "I loved the willingness to honor the past," while allowing a modern musical journey complete with an audio-visual experience for the officers.



Photo by Kun Shen

**Caption:** Photo: LCDR Jamoom with sequined glove: 2017 Symposium

LCDR Molly Rutledge (Therapist/IHS), based at the Alaska Native Medical Center, performed in only her second Ensemble performance at the Symposium. Like many members outside of major metro areas, she prepared using MP3 files, and was "amazed at how it all came together." A deep love of music, creative ingenuity, and leadership earned her the 2017 Music Ensemble Founder's Award. Her contributions to collaborative communications tool development will make Ensemble participation easier nationwide and heighten the visibility of this USPHS asset.

Each Ensemble performance requires willingness to prepare and perform. The perspectives and experiences of LTJG Forche, LCDR Jamoom, and LCDR Rutledge illustrate musically inspired loyalty matched with vision that is *leadership*; compassion for the Corps and broader community to dedicate one's musical *service*, an *integrity* to rise to the occasion, and joyful dance-inspiring performance that attests to the *excellence* of the USPHS Music Ensemble – Dallas 2018 here we come! To find out more about the USPHS Music Ensemble, please visit us at <http://dcp.psc.gov/osg/ensemble/>.



## OFFICER EXPERIENCES

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### P "aide" it Forward

Submitted by: LCDR Josh Valgardson

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Three years ago at my first USPHS Symposium I volunteered to serve as an aide-de-camp. I wasn't really sure what an aide did but I had studied the PowerPoint and went to the meeting for further instructions. I then received my assignment to serve as aide for ret. VADM Richard Carmona. Not only did I not know what I was doing, I was going to be an aide for a retired surgeon general! No pressure, right?

What I didn't anticipate was access to other aides during the event. They provided a calming influence and helped me have an incredible experience. One aide in particular was most helpful and coached me through the event.

Fast forward to the 2017 COA Symposium; I had signed up to be an aide again, feeling much more confident and prepared this time. As I was passing the aiguillette off to another aide I saw angst on her face. This was her first opportunity to serve as aide and I quickly realized an opportunity to be *her* calming influence. She later thanked me and expressed how much our interaction helped her through the experience. My favorite part of this story happened later the next day when I ran into my calming aide from years ago. She remembered that night but didn't realize the impact it would have for years to come.

As a junior officer, serving as an aide-de-camp is a great opportunity to observe the impact a flag officer can have. You get to see the 'behind the scenes' action. Through these experiences, I have been able to see the leadership, passion and confidence that flag officers possess. I especially appreciate their ability to motivate and encourage junior officers. They realize that the strength of the Corps requires strong junior officers.

If you choose to be an aide-de-camp, you will meet new people who will often influence your career for years to come. You will be asked to act quickly, which can help build your confidence in stressful situations. In addition, at most events you have a safety net of multiple aides, allowing you to help one another and develop friendships.

A few things you can do to prepare to serve as an aide-de-camp include:

- Review preparatory tools available and talk to those who have done this before. But realize that something unexpected will likely happen.
- Be calm. Flag officers are great mentors and want to get to know you as much as they need your help. As I learned at OBC, just display "competent confidence" and you will do fine.
- Smile and be yourself.
- Talk when appropriate.
- Listen carefully and learn as much as you can.

Being an aide can be difficult work, but can be such a rewarding and enjoyable experience.





## A Highly Recommended Experience

Submitted by: LCDR Gustavo Miranda

This was my first time attending Symposium since I joined the USPHS in 2012 and I must say that I can't wait to attend again next year. Camaraderie, building networks, getting to meet new people and talking to people that I have only communicated with via email or phone made a big difference. I totally recommend it to anyone that has never attended the Symposium. Financial reasons had made me hesitant to attend previously, but I decided to not let that be an excuse this year for me. I paid for everything out of pocket and I have no regrets. If I am granted leave again next year, I will definitely attend again.

Every day was full of information and inspiration. I started Monday by volunteering as a Basic Life Support Instructor and was able to help officers get certified. On Tuesday I was able to attend the USPHS-Rx for Change: Tobacco Cessation Intervention Training Program, which highlighted the ways we can help co-workers, family and the public to quit smoking. Wednesday was Category day, which highlighted the many great things we are doing for public health. I also got to meet our leaders and attended a 15-20 minute mentorship session.

Wednesday continued to be busy as I attended the Anchor & Caduceus Dinner. We were all dressed to impress. I got to take pictures and talk with our Acting Surgeon General RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams and my Chief Nurse Officer, RADM Susan Orsega.

Thursday, I volunteered with the Minority Officers Liaison Council (MOLC) awards as an usher. The awardees are definitely a great example to follow as leaders. Thursday night was the pharmacy social and I had heard that they like to throw a good party. Now I know it's true! The best part was being able to see a lot of our leaders hitting the floor and dancing to the beat of different types of music.

Friday was the Surgeon General's 5K run. After only sleeping about 5 hours I was still motivated to get up and go for a run with my fellow officers. The Enterprise South Nature Park in Chattanooga where the run was held was a beautiful place and I hope to return some day and bring my family. That evening I left to go back to San Diego, CA. I left inspired with ways to continue making a difference as a leader and with ideas that I would like to start in my community to help build a better community!





## Commissioned Corps Weight Management Program

Submitted by: LT Lusi Martin-Braswell

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During the 2017 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium, Acting Surgeon General RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams announced upcoming changes for the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (the Corps), including implementation of height and weight compliance standards for all officers using the body mass index (BMI). The plan calls for the height and weight standard to be included as a condition for basic readiness and promotion in the next 18 months. This new condition for readiness encourages officers to strive to manage a healthy weight. It is imperative that Corps officers are healthy and meet basic readiness standards as we are looked upon as leaders to support public health emergencies both nationally and abroad.

The announcement made by the Acting Surgeon General generated much interest and carried over to one of the concurrent track sessions at the 2017 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium titled **“Commissioned Corps Online Weight Management Program”** co-presented by LCDR Brian Hunter and LT Lusi Martin-Braswell. During the question and answer portion of the session, officers expressed their opinions on whether the Corps should be enforcing height and weight standards and/or whether weight should be a condition for retention in the Corps. We have heard updates from the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) about this standard, which was approved July 10, 2017. Corps officers are encouraged to prepare earlier rather than later for the implementation the height and weight compliance standards.

The Commissioned Corps Weight Management Program is designed for Corp officers and members of the public seeking general information and guidance on obtaining and maintaining a healthy body weight. The online weight management program can be an important resource for officers at no cost. It was developed by a group of Registered Dietitians serving on the Corps’ Dietitian Professional Advisory Committee’s (PAC) Wellness Subcommittee. The online weight management program consists of six modules presented in lecture format and includes narration, handouts, and PowerPoint slides. Each module is self-paced to ensure participants are comfortable with that module’s content before moving on to the next session. Participants should allow one to three weeks to view and implement lifestyle changes after viewing each session before proceeding to the next topic. Each module builds on the previous session, therefore, it is important to complete the program in the order it is presented. Each module will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

As officers in the Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service, we have a great responsibility to be the face of public health. The Commissioned Corps Weight Management Program were featured in the March 2017 Issue of the Commissioned Corps e-bulletin. If you have not had a chance to explore the Commissioned Corps Weight Management Program, please take some time to review it, and share with others who may be interested.





## Reflections of a New Officer

Submitted by: LT Matthew Kozler

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It was only five months ago when I commissioned, so needless to say, PHS culture is new to me. Attending the USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium was one of the best professional and social experiences I have been lucky enough to be part of. I hope this small reflection will inspire junior officers as well as senior officers who have yet to attend the Symposium to do so, immediately! My reflection is themed on three major areas: networking, continuing education, and inspiration.

First, attending a gathering where you can network with your colleagues is an incredible opportunity. You will have a unique experience to build lasting relationships with officers across agencies, categories, and professions who often share similar personal and professional goals. It was a privilege to personally meet leaders working in high impact positions. Further, I learned about career paths I had no idea existed.

Category day is one of the best experiences you will have because you will continue to leverage the networking aspect described above within your Professional Advisory Committee (PAC). My personal experience is directly related to the Environmental Health PAC, but I am confident new officers from all PACs have had similar experiences. On category day, I learned about the variety of projects my colleagues are actively leading and participating in. The sessions were diverse and offered me insight to career and involvement opportunities within my category relating to my professional interests.

Lastly, the Symposium organizes two and a half days of seminars on a variety of public health topics. Every officer is able to match multiple sessions with their specific interests. Through these breakout sessions, you will learn about the perspectives, challenges, and advancements directly from experts regarding various national and global public health issues.

In my final thoughts, I believe it is important to attempt to put into words the sense of pride I felt being at the Symposium. I was inspired to pursue my new career with PHS at full force and be the best officer I can be. I was motivated to continue to serve our communities and exceed their expectations. And lastly, I was truly humbled to be part of a service with such compassionate, intelligent, and motivated leaders. The camaraderie factor cannot be overstated. I am certain every officer, especially junior officers, would feel similarly and owe it to themselves to take part in the USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium.





## How to Be a Good Mentor/Mentee

Submitted by: LCDR Lauren Brewer

I originally struggled to decide if I should come one day early to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Pre-Conference Leadership Workshop on Mentoring. I am so glad that I did; it was worth the extra money and time for me! I enjoyed hearing about the mentoring journeys of some of our top officers including RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams (Surgeon General), RADM Susan Orsega (Nursing CPO), and CAPT Mercedes Benitez-McCrary (Therapist CPO), among others.

The main portion of the day was spent with Dr. W. Brad Johnson. He is a professor and researcher at the US Naval Academy. He has been researching cross-race, cross-ethnicity, cross-gender, and cross-sexual orientation mentoring relationships. His advice to mentors was profound to me: (paraphrased) "If you look at all your mentees and they all look the same/have the same background, then you have some more work to do." He went into much more depth on how males can be good mentors to women. His book, *Athena Rising*, is all about this topic and I look forward to reading it.

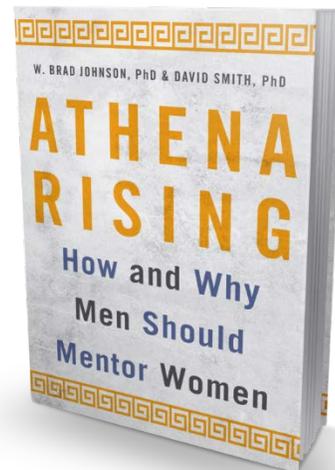
The major takeaway for junior officers was his list about what excellent mentees do which I have recorded below:

- Be Proactive (visible)
- Fight Introversion and Imposter Syndrome
- Clarify Goals/Dreams
- Reinforce your Mentor
- Accept Increasing Challenges & Autonomy
- Admit Imperfection
- Consider Mentors Goals
- Keep Expectations Reasonable
- Be Responsive to Feedback or Suggestions
- Keep Commitments
- Preserve your Humor
- Remain Loyal

If you are searching for a mentor please reach out to you PAC for more information as "To have a mentor is to be among the blessed. Not to have a mentor is to be damned to eternal oblivion or at least mid-level status" (Halcomb, 1980). I know I do not want to be mediocre! We all need shoulders to stand on to make a difference in this world!

### Reference:

Halcomb, R. (1980). Mentors and the successful women. *Across the Board*, 17(2), 13-18.





## Do Great Things

Submitted by: LT Abby Bacon

As a junior officer, I think each of us is trying to find a balance between learning what to take on and learning what can wait; professional development is no different. So when the opportunity came up to attend the symposium, I tried to weigh the pros and cons of attending. My personal financial commitment as well as my time away from work were the factors that were making me most reluctant to attend. Eventually I found someone to room share with me to take some of the burden off the cost of the hotel room. I also received the junior officer scholarship for my registration fee, and I was able to get caught up at work enough to be away – all making my decision to attend easier. Overall, the theme of my experience was that every time I felt reluctant to step out of my comfort zone, I pushed through only to have an amazing experience.

Since registering, I had been turning down volunteer opportunities for the symposium, making me feel uneasy that I wasn't contributing. Because I didn't know the schedule or timing for the week, it made it difficult to want to commit. A week before the event, I got an email asking if I'd be an Aide-de-Camp, and even though I didn't truly know what I was getting into, I replied back that I would be available. This opportunity turned out to be one of the most amazing experiences that week! I was able to have open and honest discussion with many of today's PHS leaders, getting advice on career, balance, relocation, etc. The admiral that I was assigned to was an absolute role model for leadership, professionalism, and compassion. It was so easy to work with her that it has put me at ease about my future interactions with high-level leadership. She also pushed me to get out of my comfort zone by introducing me to leaders that I otherwise would have felt like I was inconveniencing. Overall, everyone was quite welcoming and personable.

Other opportunities that I had were meeting and working with fellow nurse colleagues; even though I had seen their names over the last 2 years, having met face-to-face will make it that much easier to engage and appreciate our regular interactions. And to finish off the week, I boarded the plane to leave Tennessee only to see that I was sitting right next to Rear Admiral (Retired) Boris Lushniak. I was able to have 60 minutes of uninterrupted, sincere conversation about career, family, travel, and deployments. This was truly an inspiring moment of what the leadership in PHS exemplifies and what I will continue to work toward.

I will never forget what he said to me as I was leaving the jet bridge. In a casual but affirming way, he said, "Do great things, Lieutenant Bacon." And that is exactly what I hope to be able to do in my career with the US Public Health Service.



**Caption:** RADM Kerry Nesslerer (left) and LT Abby Bacon (right). Abby was assigned as RADM Nesslerer's Aide-de-Camp for Nurse Category day at the symposium.





## From Alaska to Chattanooga

Submitted by: LCDR Catherine Arnatt

In June 2017, this junior officer left the cool summer of Alaska to travel to the hot humidity of Chattanooga, TN to attend her first ever USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. I expected to hear some interesting things, learn some new skills, network with other officers, and what I found was an experience that surpassed all of my expectations!

Being stationed with the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Anchorage, AK, sometimes one does feel removed from the hub of the PHS world and wonder what the officers of the "lower 48" are up to. The Symposium was a great opportunity hear what other agencies and sites were doing, learn from their scope of clinical practice, get updates on new policies and procedures, meet the acting Surgeon General and Chief Professional Officers (CPOs), and also let your hair down and socialize!



**Figure 1:** PHS Pharmacists from the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, AK from Left to Right: CDR Brittany Keener, CDR Anne Marie Bott, CDR Judy Thompson, LT Kristin Allmaras, LT Catherine Arnatt

As a first time attendee, I wanted to take advantage of as many of the opportunities the Symposium offered as I could. I started the conference with some pre-conference workshops, attending the full day Leadership Seminar on Monday and the Deployment Clinical Skills Training on Tuesday. Between these two activities, I was able to learn from experienced officers on topics of leadership, deployment skills, officership in different settings, career development, participate in one-on-one mentoring with a CPO, and meet RADM Sylvia Trent-Adams, our acting Surgeon General! The opportunity to network and speak to senior officers on a personal level was invaluable time and a chance I may not have been able to have in far-away Alaska.

Besides participating in workshops and spending a day with officers from my own category for Pharmacy Category Day, the Symposium also offered opportunities to volunteer. I was able to help staff the JOAG Uniform Inspection Booth, which gave me the chance to give back by helping other officers get "squared away," and volunteer with the American Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment for the USPHS Opioid Education Booth.

Being able to chat with other officers and meet face-to-face with voices I had heard over JOAG, PharmPAC, APAOC, and various other conference calls was fun and thoroughly enjoyable! Also, the Symposium is the only occasion to attend JOAG's only in-person meeting of the year, and of course, a great chance to pick up some great JOAG/USPHS swag (apparel, coins, magnets, bags, etc.). There were many opportunities to socialize and network during the conference between plenary sessions, at after hour social events, and the various athletic events organized, like the Surgeon General's 5K.

Attending the USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium was a rewarding experience and one I would highly encourage other officers to participate in in the future. The next Symposium 2018 is in Dallas, TX; maybe I'll see you there!





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Submitted by: Communications & Publications Committee

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### Comments & Future Contributions

Submitted by: Editors

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Send editorial comments or concerns to CPC Co-Chairs, [LCDR Katie Bante](#) and [LCDR Beth Osterink](#).

To contribute to future editions, submit articles electronically to [joagcpcsubmissions@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:joagcpcsubmissions@fda.hhs.gov)

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