

JOC

THE JUNIOR OFFICER CHRONICLES

WINTER EDITION
2022



THE OFFICIAL JOAG MAGAZINE
DESIGNED FOR JUNIOR OFFICERS BY JUNIOR OFFICERS



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- ◆ The Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) is an Official Office of Surgeon General Chartered Group whose purpose is to provide advice to other Corps and non-Corps entities on interests and concerns specific to junior officers in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps.
 - ◆ The Junior Officer Chronicles (JOC) is a semi-annual publication produced by the JOAG Communications & Publications Committee (CPC) JOC Subcommittee. The 2022-2023 JOC Co-Leads are: LCDR Noah Buikema and LCDR Janelle Phillip.
 - ◆ To contribute to a future edition, submit articles, and send editorial comments and concerns, please email [LCDR Noah Buikema](#) and [LCDR Janelle Phillip](#)
 - ◆ Any opinions or thoughts presented in The Junior Officer Chronicles are solely those of the author and do not represent the USPHS, United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), or any other government agency.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings fellow Junior Officers,

For many, the start of a new year is an opportunity for reflection, for others it as an opportunity to challenge themselves professionally or personally. As we embark on another year of *serving on the land, air and the sea for humanity*, I want to ask each of you to stop, take a deep breath and assess where you've been and be deliberate about where you go from here. Don't limit your thoughts to just 2023, think about personal realistic goals you would like to accomplish during your time as a Junior Officer (JO), and more importantly as a member of a uniformed service.

Map out all the moves you will need to make in order to achieve these goals, then execute. Immerse yourself in activities that support attaining your goals. Be willing and ready to pivot and switch directions if needed. Remember that only certain things are in your control. Finally, be kind by implementing self-care as well as setting personal boundaries along the way.

From my experience when it comes to setting out to achieve something as a JO, you will find yourself being asked to be involved in additional opportunities, your network will expand, and you will grow as a leader. For example, when I started volunteering in the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG), my goals were to learn more about our service and promote *esprit de corps*. Being a [Meet and Greet](#) lead for New York and writing articles for the [With Pride & Distinction](#) publication helped me achieve those goals ten-fold. It was the foundation that has led me to serve as your JOAG Chair. This humbling role has afforded me a front row seat to see all the amazing things JOs do, such as the collaborative planning efforts for the fast-approaching Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) meeting that will be taking place in February as well as the USPHS Scientific & Training Symposium in May. JOAG is in the planning phase of coordinating some very exciting opportunities for both events (stay tuned for additional details).

While you set goals and seek out opportunities to support JOAG, I strongly encourage you to consider becoming a JOAG [Voting Member](#). We will be advertising multiple available positions later this year. This is a great opportunity to serve as a leader and advise the Office of the Surgeon General on matters that affect JOs and advocate for JO development/utilization.

I look forward to us all working towards our goals, getting out of our comfort zones, volunteering, and leading together. Thank you for all you do for JOAG, our Agencies, the Corps, and the country.

In Officio Salutis,
LCDR Mouhamed "Mo" Halwani, MPH, M.S., CHES[®], MB (ASCP)^{CM}
JOAG Chair 2022-2023



Photo: LCDR Mouhamed Halwani

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Greetings Junior Officers,

Welcome to the Winter Edition of the Junior Officer Chronicles (JOC). The temperatures are cold, and the snow gently comes down! We hope you enjoy the JOC in its new, revised format and look. As the editors of the JOC, we are proud to publish your stories, experiences, and suggestions related to the great work that you do as officers! We hope that this edition showcases the great work, stories, and experiences that fellow officers have had! A short biography of the JOC co-leads is below:

LCDR Noah Buikema: I am an Engineer with the National Park Service (NPS) in Denver, Colorado, working on infrastructure projects such as wastewater, water, fuel, environmental cleanup, and other interesting projects in amazing locations! I have my BS and MS in environmental engineering from Michigan Tech University. I first began working for the Indian Health Service in the Pierre District Office serving the Lower Brule and Crow Creek Sioux Tribes. I made the jump to the NPS in 2017 and love the fact that work trips are at our National Parks! My free time is spent primarily mountain biking, playing drums in my band, and getting lost in the fresh powder in winter.

LCDR Janelle Phillip: I am a clinically licensed, Board-Certified Diplomate in Social Work. Prior to being commissioned into the United States Public Health Service in May 2019, I served 15 years as a social worker in state and federal service. My experience includes child and family services, law enforcement and corrections, judicial, policy, veterans' services, education, and administrative. I currently serve as Program Manager for the Krome Behavioral Health Unit, the only 30-bed national program that provides care for non-citizens with serious mental health disorders across the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. In my free time, I enjoy my family, my dog, singing, traveling, and laughing.

We welcome your feedback for ways we can better serve you. Submissions to be included in the 2023 Summer Edition can be sent to both LCDR Noah Buikema and LCDR Janelle Phillip with the subject line: "2023 Summer Edition JOC"

We appreciate your support and thank you for your contribution in JOAG's premier magazine by junior officers, for junior officers.

Happy reading!



Photo: LCDR Noah Buikema



Photo: LCDR Janelle Phillip

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

SPOTLIGHT

LCDR Ubong Akpan

Category: Pharmacy

Education: BSN (Nursing), PharmD

Agency: Defense Health Agency (DHA)

Current duty station: Albuquerque, NM

Interests: Quality improvement, patient centered care and risk management

Position: Program Manager, Patient Engagement. I lead a team that focuses on fostering the inclusion of patients and empowering them as active healthcare partners. We utilize individualized approaches, tools and resources that promote positive health behaviors in active duty service members, retirees, their families, and other eligible beneficiaries throughout the military healthcare continuum.

Family: Married with two children.

Hobbies: Running, playing ping pong, traveling.

Please tell us a little bit about yourself:

I am a father of adorable twins who keep me on my toes with no dull moments. I am blessed to be married to a beautiful and intelligent woman who is also very supportive of my role as an officer despite her busy physician (post-residency fellowship) work life. I have been blessed with opportunities to work with wonderful officers and have some impact in areas that I believe are crucial to patient care and public health.



Photo: LCDR Ubong Akpan

1. How did you get involved in Public Health?

I started out as a federal civilian employee with the Indian Health Service (IHS) because a commissioned officer, whom I met as a student at a pharmacy convention, connected me with the opportunity. I had worked as a registered nurse in a Level I trauma county hospital in Houston, TX but had no knowledge of the Corps during my nursing education. I recall hearing about the Corps during my final year of pharmacy school but lacked access to information about the service to formally pursue it. While at IHS, I had the ample opportunity to speak with other officers about their experiences and the process of being involved. I was excited to be part of the USPHS and make an impact on the health of our nation. I was called to active duty in the Spring of 2019 and have since enjoyed serving proudly in our uniform.

2. How long have you been involved with JOAG and what is the most interesting aspect of your involvement with JOAG and/or serving the mission?

I have been part of JOAG since commissioning. I reached out to an officer who introduced me to the Policy and Procedures Committee (PPC) chair, and I was plugged in to volunteer within the strategic planning subcommittee. The most interesting aspect of my involvement was when I was selected to serve as the non-voting member co-chair of the PPC, which is a huge committee with lots of entanglement with

not only other JOAG committees, but the Corps as a whole. These cross-committee collaborations and working with other officers were rewarding. PPC helped shape my leadership skills as we worked on a lot of deliverables requiring laser-focused directions, follow ups, and overall accountability. I believe my time and experience in PPC shaped and prepared me for voting membership.

3. What committee do you liaise with this operational year?

I am currently the Executive Committee (EC) liaison to the Public Health and Uniformed Service (PHUS) committee, the Outreach Committee, as well as to the JOAG PAC and non-PAC liaisons. I also serve as the JOAG liaison to Commissioned Officers Association.

4. What do you hope to accomplish/achieve in this position for the operational year?

As JOAG's Vice Chair, I hope to be supportive of the current Chair, LCDR Mouhamed Halwani, in meeting his objectives, including getting Junior Officers (JO) more engaged to meet the mission of JOAG, as we JOs are the stewards of our service. I hope to play an integral role within the EC to ensure great outcomes for JOs. I hope to be an effective liaison within and outside, and on behalf of JOAG, creating career and networking opportunities for JOs.

5. What's your favorite piece of advice to share with fellow junior officers?

Keep up the great work. Be steadfast, even in hard times, as nothing great comes easy. Strive to positively impact a fellow junior officer. We need to boost our morale, maintain comradery and look out for one another.

6. How would you respond to being able to ask yourself any question to relay to every other JO?

"What impact am I making; Am I engaged or just present"? I want to be active and impactful when I am involved. If I am not making a positive impact in the lives of others on a personal or professional level, then I need to reevaluate why I chose to be involved.

JUNIOR OFFICER SPOTLIGHT

LTJG Delia Gilbert

Category: EHO

Education: BS

Hometown: Maryland

Agency: National Park Service (NPS)

Current Duty Station: Staten Island, New York

Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG) Delia Gilbert earned her Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health and Safety from Missouri Southern State University. She has been an Environmental Health and Safety Specialist for over two years with experience in identifying, evaluating, and controlling high-hazard working environments such as lead, chemical hazards, toxic and explosive gases, blood-borne pathogens, laboratory hazards, and work processes. Currently, she is the Occupational Health and Safety Manager for the National Park Service at Gateway National Recreation Area in Staten Island, New York.



Photo: LTJG Delia Gilbert

1. How did you find out about the PHS?

I first heard about the USPHS in 2016 from my husband, who was Navy active duty at the time, and he encouraged me to pursue a career with the USPHS. In 2018, I applied for the Junior COSTEP and was selected, but, unfortunately, I was unable to join because I was stationed in Guam with my husband. However, I continued to work on my degree, never giving up my pursuit to become a PHS Officer.

2. What are your goals with the PHS?

My goals with the PHS are to be a proactive and valuable team member, focusing on disease prevention and improving human life. I am constantly looking for ways to increase my knowledge and skills in my field, in order to serve my country better. In addition, I aim to focus on career development to enhance the mission, performance, and overall impact of the Corps.

3. What does your current assignment entail?

I am the Occupational, Health and Safety Manager for the National Park Service (NPS) at Gateway National Recreation Area based in Staten Island, New York. I serve as the subject matter expert for assigned units, relating to Safety and Occupational Health Programs. Additionally, I am responsible for evaluating individual park operations for conformance with Federal, State, and local safety and occupational health standards. I also assess the park operations to determine if applicable safety management systems are being met for activities including, but not limited to, safety culture, management leadership, employee involvement and influence, safety organization, and continuous improvement processes.

4. Have you served on any deployments? What was your role?

At the time of this writing, I have yet to serve on a PHS deployment since joining six months ago. However, I look forward to deployment. I am constantly preparing myself through training, understanding how we can support communities through difficult times, and being positive. Being positive doesn't mean I ignore difficulties or hide my feelings. Instead, being positive means accepting whatever the situation is and trusting that I have the power and resources to get through it.

5. What is your most memorable PHS experience so far?

My most memorable PHS experience as an Environmental Health and Safety Officer was working in the field, transported by NPS sea vessels to different sites. It is rewarding to inspect facilities, ensuring they comply with environmental regulations and that staff have the proper training and follow procedures to reduce the risk of injury or illness.

6. PHS Collateral duties?

My current collateral duty includes organizing and supporting the Health and Wellness program throughout the Gateway National Recreation Area. In that role, I ensure a balance of everyone's physical, mental and spiritual well-being, which speaks to how we live our everyday lives.

7. Do you have a personal leadership philosophy or mentor? Is there anyone that inspires you to become a better leader?

I always believe in putting others before myself. Therefore, I firmly believe in servant leadership. A servant leader serves by actively listening to others' needs and empathizing with their plight. The contributions we make to the lives of others are far more vital than individual accomplishments and create a more just and caring world that exemplifies service, which is one of the core missions of the PHS. I am constantly reminded about the value of service by a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."



Photo: LTJG Delia Gilbert, CDR Scott Daly, and CDR Jonathan

Making Time For Professional Development: JOAG's Professional Development Book Club

Authors: LT Ana Lauer and LCDR Diane Richardson

“I am so overwhelmed with work, all these policy changes, and so many other things, but you want me read a book?!” Yes! Well, “yes-ish.” Many new and seasoned junior officers find it challenging to take the time to grow professional between deployments, their jobs, personal commitments, etc. However, book clubs are simple, effective, and enjoyable ways to learn about different topics and subject matter.

You might have heard this simple story about a teacher giving his student a big, empty glass jar. He gives his student a basket full of ping pong balls and asks him to fill the jar. The student pours as many balls as she can into the jar before declaring it full. “Is the jar full?” asks the teacher. “Of course! I can’t fit in any more balls,” retorts the student. The teacher then pulls out a jar of sand. He again asks his student to fill her glass jar. She takes the jar of sand and pours the sand into the jar, filling the crevices around the ping pong balls. She makes sure to fill the jar to the rim. She looks at the teacher and says, “Now it’s full!” The teacher asks her if she is sure. The student rolls her eyes and gestures at her obviously full jar. After a few moments, the teacher brings out a pitcher of water. Suddenly, the student realized that she could still pour water into the jar that she thought couldn’t possibly hold any more. The point of the story is that we can all still find ways to fit in the things that are important in our lives.

The JOAG Professional Development Book club wants to bring professional development to all junior officers wherever they may be. The team works hard to bring relevant stories, books, and other media to the attention of JOAG. If you have time to read – or let’s be honest, listen to- the highlighted book, great! If you don’t have that kind of time, maybe you can watch the related TED talk or read the short article on the same topic. Regardless of what you manage to read, watch, or listen to, you are always welcome to join the book club discussions.

The JOAG Professional Development Book Club discussions are tailored to foster conversation and sharing, not to quiz officers. The book club strives to create a safe space for learning, growing, and networking. A typical discussion consists of a summary or main topics covered by the book and questions about the book. The questions take principles put forth by the book and try to tie them into our personal and professional lives. For example:

- The book argues that followers’ four basic needs are: trust, compassion, stability, and hope. Are there others you would add to the list or some that you would take away?
- What are some ways you have gone from trauma to triumph? Recently? In the past?
- How can leaders/supervisors encourage the process of finding meaning in your work?

What if the discussion is at a time you can’t make? The committee posts book club discussion power point slides to the JOAG Facebook page. An archive of past presentations can also be found on the [Book Club’s Max.gov page](#). In addition, past discussion are located on the [JOAG Professional Development Goodreads page](#).

The Professional Book Club Subcommittee is committed to helping you grow personally and professionally. Our quarterly book clubs are advertised on the JOAG listserv and Facebook. We look forward to seeing you at our next discussion!

National Night Out D.C. Event

Authors: LT David Chon and LT Kesia Purcell

According to Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, “The best way to build a safer community is to know your neighbors and your surroundings. National Night Out triumphs over a culture that isolates us from each other and allows us to rediscover our own communities.” On the first Tuesday of August, thousands of communities came together nationwide to promote and foster a positive police-community relationship during an event called National Night Out (NNO). This year, Metropolitan Police Departments, federal law enforcement agencies, local businesses, non-profit organizations, and thousands of residents participated in the event. This year, four (4) of our PHS Commissioned Corps Junior Officers (LCDR Candice Todd (OASH), LT Lorna Benoit (OASH), LT David Chon (FDA), LT Kesia Purcell (FDA)) participated in the NNO event held at Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C, to promote and represent the PHS chartered advisory group, “Prevention through Active Community Engagement” (PACE) and its component, “Surgeon General Education Team” (SGET).



Photo: Lincoln emancipation statue

The DC Metro SGET is a team of PHS Officers who are trained to be subject matter experts on topics prioritized by the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) to deliver evidenced-based educational lessons in our communities. The DC Metro SGET’s goal for the event was to network with local partners, increase PHS visibility, and serve as recruiters for PHS. During the event, the Junior Officers joined senior officers, CDR Zanethia Eubanks (NOAA/SGET National Chair/Event Leader), CDR Kelly Fath (DOD), and CDR Gayle Tuckett (FDA), to connect with local residents and network with community leaders to learn about potential opportunities for the DC Metro SGET to best serve the community.

PHS Officers connected with more than 500 members and leaders of the community during the event. When asked what was memorable about the event, CDR Tuckett highlighted how we “increased visibility of the Corps, built professional connections, and fulfilled the mission of PACE through true community engagement.” CDR Tuckett also recalled working with the event leader, CDR Zanethia Eubanks (NOAA), during the event to form a connection with a local organization to provide education on substance abuse and mental health topics giving rise to the possibility of an SGET event. This is the first of many events DC Metro SGET has planned for this operational year, and the DC Metro SGET looks forward to engaging with the DC community at similar events.

JOCEB at the USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium

Authors: LCDR Christopher Hooban and LCDR Edward McDonald

The Junior Officer's Career Enhancement Booth (JOCEB) had nine dedicated officers to support operations during the 2022 Symposium in Glendale, AZ. The officers highlighted available JOAG career enhancement materials and programs available to Junior Officers. The products included a Promotion Checklist, information regarding the JOAG Peer-to-Peer Network, and the Job Shadowing Program. Volunteers received training prior to the event and were able to quickly guide junior officers through critical information for career advancement. In addition to the support the JOCEB program provided to junior officers attending the symposium, the program also provided an opportunity for the junior officers that volunteered. For new officers it gave them an opportunity to engage with fellow officers from various geographical areas and different categories. One officer highlighted how, since being commissioned last year and graduating from virtual OBC, they did not have the chance to interact with other officers in person outside of their workplace until this event. By staffing the booth, they were able to engage with many officers from around the country including some senior officers who provided encouragement to these stellar officers at the start of their careers.

JOAG's JOCEB will continue to engage junior officers by providing volunteer opportunities and sharing relevant information to help them continue their careers.



Photo: LT Allison Sui providing valuable career enhancement info at the JOCEB booth.

4 Key Relationships You Need

Author: LCDR Erin Heap

In his book, *Everyday Millionaire*, Chris Hogan explains the importance of gathering a group of individuals that will encourage and support you in your journey down a specific path. In his writing he is discussing building wealth, but I find the concepts the same for professional growth. We need to mindfully select those we chose to speak into our lives. It does not matter what career step you may be on or what rank you wear, there is always room to grow. Here are 4 key relationships you need to build a strong network of people to help direct you in the pursuit of reaching your goals.

Coach

This person challenges you from the sidelines, they are not doing the work for you but are there to motivate you to get up, get moving, and to never quit. They aren't in the game and can see things from a different view, they instruct and direct you in making change. You must trust your coach, knowing that they see and have experience in things you may not. This person shouldn't beat around the bush, instead give it to you straight and tell you what you need to do to win, then it's up to you to listen and act. A good coach leaves a lasting impression, find one.

Mentor

This person is on a same or similar journey as you, they are just a few steps ahead. They have done what you want to do and have overcome the obstacles that you are approaching. They should prepare you for future hurdles and help you navigate your next steps. Self-learning is important but mentorship is key in encouragement, realizing that someone did it and so can I. Find a mentor that is selfless, available and willing to share experiences.

Cheerleader

This person is your #1 fan. They believe in you, they encourage you, they know you can do it! Your cheerleader may not understand what you are going through directly, but they understand that you have challenges and remain a consistent support. This may be a coworker, parent, sibling or your partner. This person will not let you hang your head, they are an 100% encourager and someone you can always count on to help you up, dust you off, and tell you to go get em'.

Friend

This person is in your circle to remind you to have fun and make sure your life leaves room for what is really important. A friend is built in to help you manage work life balance, make you laugh, and tell you to relax and "let your hair down". In this relationship you don't have to try to impress them, they keep you grounded. This person should be honest, will love you through thick and thin and set you straight when you need it.

Not Just Another COVID-19 Deployment

Author: LT Jamla Rizek

With slightly under 50,000 people living in American Samoa (AS), in the heart of the South Pacific, concerns grew after the first positive COVID-19 case was confirmed on February 21, 2022 with only one hospital on an island without the necessary infrastructure or means to care for an influx of patients. Army Corps of Engineers arrived on island to provide their expertise and so did DMAT NM-1, to assist hospital staff, specifically the Emergency Department, in caring for patients. Team Commander Byron Piatt “It was an amazing opportunity for all of us. We were basically given a COVID-19 do-over. We were able to take two years of knowledge and experience with COVID-19 and work with a community who was only just experiencing it for the first time. We were able to share best practices with a receptive audience and work collaboratively to support the people of American Samoa.”



Photo: Sunset at American Samoa

To Amanda Gallagher, DMAT NM-1 PA, “We arrived in American Samoa about a month after the beginning of the first community spread of COVID-19. The community was reasonably afraid having watched the rest of the world struggle with COVID-19 for nearly two years. The island’s only hospital had prepared but had not yet been put to the test with real patients. Many of us felt this was in a way a ‘do over.’ We were able to pass on the knowledge we, as emergency medical providers, had gathered through trial by fire.”

“Whether working in the EOC with territorial leadership and federal partners (e.g. FEMA), or with local nurses at one of the rural pop-up vaccination sites, Officers displayed seamless coordination while exceeding mission objectives and respecting local cultural practices.” Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) Region IX Emergency Coordinator, Melissa Jenssen, further emphasized that, “The strong partnerships Officers cultivated with local staff unlocked opportunities and revealed critical training gaps. Between the development of SOPs which can be used beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and the facilitation of trainings on life saving skills (e.g. monoclonal antibody administration and Basic Life Support), the impact of PHS Officers service in the territory will resonate for years.”

Dr. Fiona Traill trailblazed the travel restrictions to the island which was commendable as it contained the spread. Her expertise was pivotal to the Department of Health’s response. Strict quarantine orders were placed on the island to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to isolate other strains from travelers from entering the island. “COVID-19 arrived to our islands more than two years later compared to many parts of the world.

Continued on Page 32...

Driving around the ASH: A Junior Officer's Survival Guide

Author: LCDR Mouhamed Halwani & LCDR Kinbo Lee

When I first heard that the 17th Assistant Secretary for Health, ADM Rachel L. Levine, was going to visit my hometown and needed an officer to assist her in traveling around town, I jumped at the chance; however, it wasn't until the night before, that it dawned on me, that I live in New York City and that I would need to battle potholes, pedestrians, and traffic jams in uniform with a four-star admiral in the car. My wife didn't help my stress levels as she teased that my New York driving skills would result in me losing my commission.

Being around a flag officer can be stressful and intimidating for a Junior Officer, but if you abide by military customs and courtesies, observe our traditions, and act professionally, you shouldn't have anything to worry about. Lucky for me, LCDR Kinbo Lee (Aide-de-Camp to ADM Rachel Levine) was able to meet with me before hand and brief me on the expectations and the run of the show. Some tips I would like to share in the event you find yourself in this situation are:

- Be early (helpful adage: "To be early is to be on time. To be on time is to be late.")
- Make sure your uniform and vehicle are clean
- Be aware of any dietary restrictions
- Recognize that your time with the admiral is not an opportunity for you to convey your thoughts (unless directly asked)
- Be thoughtful (I had ice cold diet cokes and water waiting for the admiral throughout her stay)
- Offer to help with anything and everything
- Be polite
- Mind the temperature and noise level in the car
- Aid the Aide in whatever is needed

This experience was extremely memorable for me and one that I encourage all Junior Officers to volunteer for if given the chance. Opportunities like this not only offer a chance to see our leaders in action but see the bigger picture when it comes to the work being support by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I was inspired by ADM Levine as her commitment to the Corps, our Nation, and serving others is readily apparent. I had the opportunity to hear ADM Levine speak to different audiences and engage in substantial discussions with community leaders, non-profit organizations, and state and city health officials on various HHS priorities. The range of topics included harm reduction, in-patient and community mental health care, environmental health, and advancing initiatives within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health's new Office of Climate Change and Health Equity to decarbonize the healthcare sector, which I learned contributes nearly 10% of all greenhouse emissions when considering the supply chain.

Excitingly, my experience also took me backstage in Carnegie Hall as ADM Levine delivered the commencement address to the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai's graduating class. She shared her journey and career path over the years and how different opportunities led to doors being opened that she never previously considered. I couldn't help but think back on my own path. During the speech she quoted *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and it really jumped out at me, quoting... *Continued on page 32...*

JOAG Represents at the 2022 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium

Authors: LT Jazmin Reed, PhD and LT Taneshia Knight, PhD

Planning Subcommittee Co-chairs, Outreach Committee, Junior Officer Advisory Group



Photo: CDR Eric Radden receiving the VADM Richard H. Carmona Inspiration Award Sr Officer Award from VADM Carmona, RADM Hinton, and CAPT Schobitz.

After a two year hiatus, over 250 junior officers were finally able to attend in-person and participate in the much talked about USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium, which was hosted in Glendale, Arizona on May 23-27 this year. JOAG, without question, returned to the symposium in full force leaving a positive and lasting impression on junior and senior officers alike. Over 85 junior officers volunteered to assist with the various JOAG-led activities including an in-person JOAG General Members Meeting, a JOAG-hosted presentation, two JOAG-sponsored booths (the Uniform Inspection Booth and the Junior Officer Career Enhancement Booth), and a community service event in which JOAG partnered with a local food bank. [Click here](#) to view some highlights of the symposium (photos courtesy of our fabulous photography volunteers).

Of note was the General Members Meeting, the annual in-person meeting for JOAG, which was held the last day of the symposium. Distinguished guests including VADM Richard H. Carmona (retired, 17th Surgeon General), RADM Denise Hinton, Deputy Surgeon General, and CAPT Rick Schobitz (Director, Commissioned Corps Headquarters) assisted with presenting this year's four junior officer awards. CAPT David Lau, JOAG's new Senior Advisor also delivered an inspiring welcome address. Over 30 voting and non-voting members were also recognized for their contributions to JOAG. The Executive Committee capped off the meeting with a networking opportunity allowing junior officers in attendance to participate in candid, small group discussions with Chief Professional Officers (CPO) from each professional category. Personally, this networking opportunity proved to be highly valuable. I was grouped with CAPT Timothy Jiggins (Chief Environmental Health Officer) who provided a positive outlook on the changes in policy over his years as an officer and how there is always a renewed sense of excitement and hope about the corps every time he meets with junior officers; and I was also able to score a new mentoring relationship.

JOAG closed out the symposium later that day with the "About JOAG" presentation discussing how JOAG can benefit junior officers and how officers can get the most out of their JOAG experience. Officers learned about how JOAG represents over 3,000 officers to provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General and other Corps and non-Corps entities on interests and concerns specific to junior officers.

Continued on page 33...

Transition to the USPHS Commissioned Corps

Author: LCDR Matt Hubler, PhD

I was in the second year of my three year commitment to the US Air Force when I decided I needed a change. I was one of just 250 Active Duty pharmacists in the US Air Force. I enjoyed the work I was doing and loved the comradery of the Airmen I served with, but there was something missing. I looked at my career path and had come to the conclusion that I would either have to leave clinical work to become a commander or stay clinical and have a very small chance to promote. I had worked hard for my pharmacy degree and I didn't want to lose my skills. Why would I leave the profession just to make rank? It just didn't make sense. I reached out to a mentor of mine who is a pharmacist and who happened to be the Indian Health Service Liaison in the Oklahoma City Area. He helped me start the paperwork and pointed me to a few places to apply for a position. I was able to find a position as a Clinical Pharmacist with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation tribe in Oklahoma.

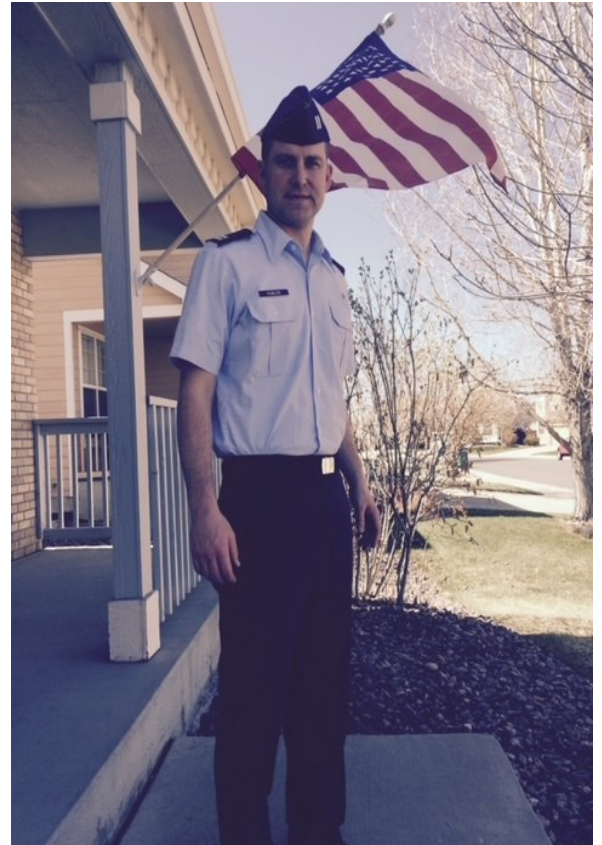


Photo: LCDR Matt Hubler in Air Force uniform



Photo: LCDR Matt Hubler in USPHS SDB uniform

I completed an inter-service transfer (IST) in 2015 from the US Air Force to the USPHS. The process to complete an IST is not easy as there is not a single point of contact at USPHS headquarters to assist you step by step. The potential transferee must apply to both the USPHS and to a position in an agency that has a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the USPHS Commissioned Corps. Timing is everything! In order to not lose any active-duty time, the officer must also have their releasing service put in separation orders that are effective contingent upon the accession of the gaining service. The officer would be able to take off one service's uniform one day and dawn the new service's uniform the next. As time goes on there are more and more ISTs but the process has not become any easier.

It is imperative for officers to network and look for mentors to help them navigate the nuances of the Commissioned Corps. Fortunately, the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) has a committee dedicated to the Recruitment and Retention and a subcommittee for Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The TAP subcommittee has members who have completed ISTs and are willing to assist officers make the transition to the Corps. We want to help make the process more user friendly. JOAG has helped me find ways to serve other officers and make connections! I encourage each officer to take part in JOAG activities and to mentor newer officers.

What to Expect When You're Expecting a Flag Officer

Author: LT Casie Parker

I received an email asking for volunteers to act as escorts for the Assistant Secretary for Health, ADM Rachel Levine, during her visit to Orlando. I was excited for the opportunity and submitted my name immediately. I was not quite sure what exactly the detail entailed. However, the thought of being in the presence of such a trailblazer was certainly intriguing.

A frenzy of communication commenced between ADM Levine's staff, local PHS personnel and the Orlando VA administration. Addressed during the emails, calls and texts were all the possible needs of the visit that may arise. In the few days leading up to the Admiral's and the flag entourage's arrival there was much conversation regarding airport protocols, vehicle size, meeting locations and times, food preferences and service customs and courtesies. The buildup was merited as when the team finally touched down, everything was in place, and the tour went off without a hitch.



Photo: (Left to Right) LT Grimaldi, LCDR Alexander, LCDR Masessa, ADM Levine, Director Cooke, LT Parker, LTJG Morgan, LTJG Herrera.

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The focus of the visit was for the Admiral to meet with this area's LGBTQ+, minority and veteran communities to ensure that they were being heard and understood. The meetings reinforced what I learned in my early medical training, that we have a duty to care for all in need, inclusive of every ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, or sexual orientation with equal regard. In addition, we need to recognize that patients may be struggling with issues that they are uncomfortable discussing or not know how to convey.

A resonating sentiment from the attendees of the tour was a feeling that their medical providers may not understand or be aware of the factors related to their health disparities. One idea proposed, was that perhaps focusing more on relationship building between the health systems and patient advocacy groups may aide in steering the ship towards bridging these gaps. At the end of it all, I was left with a resounding belief that approaching everyone you meet with humility and openness will improve the therapeutic relationship and may save their lives.

The experience of escorting and interacting with a flag officer is one that I highly recommend to any officer if given the opportunity. The benefits are both on a personal and professional level. Below are a few technical recommendations that were important facets during the detail. I hope that they are helpful to anyone interested in serving in this role in the future.

Recommendations:

- Go into the experience with an open mind.
- Do a little research on the VIP and their platform.
- Speak with the aide regarding specific preferences (drinks, snacks, peculiarities).
- Plot out schedule and locations ahead of time to ensure enough time is allotted.
- Speak with representatives at the sites for details such as parking.
- Look into meal options to offer if asked.
- Make sure your uniform is squared away.
- If retrieving from the airport; obtain a gate pass from the airline desk to allow you to meet the entourage at the terminal.
- Arrive early.
- Watch time and assist with staying on schedule.
- Be mindful of issues in the area that may come up in conversation.

Symposium Community Service Event

Author: LCDR Peter Hughes

It was great seeing my fellow Officers face to face after COVID-19 resulted in the two year pause of the in-person USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. Meeting up with old friends and making new ones also is one of the things I appreciate most when attending the Symposium. This year everyone was fired up and wanted to participate in the multitude of events that were available including the Symposium Community Service Event at Valley View Community Food Bank (VVCFB) in Sun City, AZ.

The VVCFB was founded in March 2007 and the group's mission is to serve those in need with compassion and respect while providing the resources for wholesome nutritious food. This nonprofit organization aides the residents of Phoenix's West Valley region, and currently serves more than 1,000 individuals daily. The founder Jesse Ramirez has a passion for community service and assisted at the West Side Food Bank in Surprise, Arizona for 21 years prior to starting the VVCFB.

The organization attributes its success in helping the community to its volunteers. The organization states, "When we say we can't do it without you we really mean it!" VVCFB has more than 760 volunteers who help feed the community and run the food bank on a daily basis. Volunteers pack food donations that come through our doors, help clients get the food they need, and support the food bank's daily operations. Due to participant restrictions, ten Officers were able to be a part of this organization's important community service. During our short time there we were able to do a multitude of tasks including dividing and bagging flour and popcorn, receiving and organizing the meat and baked goods, cleaning and repackaging donated eggs, and assisting with clean up at the end our shift. While working there we also were able to learn more about the community we were helping. In addition, we were also able to teach the staff about the Public Health Service and our mission to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation.

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Photo: Ten JOs took time out from the symposium to volunteer with a local food bank. Front Row (Left to Right): LT Lin, LT Ajoku, LT Dunton, LCDR Little-Wolf, LT Huynh; Back Row: LT Rizek, LT Jaeger, LT Huggins, LT Reyes, LCDR Hughes

Drive-Through Vaccination Clinics with Island Flair

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

Hot & humid tropical weather with a mild ocean breeze; vehicles lined up as far as the eye could see; island music blaring so loud you had to shout to communicate with the officer right next to you; all while stationed on a tiny island in the middle of the South Pacific. These were all experienced by PHS Officers working one of the weekend drive-through COVID-19 vaccination clinics on the island of Tutuila, American Samoa from March through May, 2022. Deploying in support of this mission proved to be a rewarding and memorable experience for the officers.



Photo: Patients' vehicles eagerly lined up for the vaccination clinic (American Samoa)

Strict quarantine orders implemented by the American Samoa Department of Health (DOH) kept American Samoa COVID-19 free throughout 2020 and 2021. After the first COVID-19 case in February 2022, efforts were made to decrease the burden on very limited medical resources. Although much of the local population had already started their COVID-19 vaccination series, additional efforts were made to increase vaccination rates and provide additional COVID-19 treatments. While vaccination clinics and COVID-19 treatment clinics were operated during the week, DOH implemented weekend drive-through vaccination clinics to expand community-based outreach efforts and to provide options to those who were otherwise unavailable during the week due to work, mobility issues, etc.

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

After local staff offered a prayer, officers donned their PPE, the clinic opened and the organized chaos began. Islanders pulled their vehicles up to one of several drive-through booths where officers and staff filled out screening questionnaires and administered COVID-19 vaccinations. The patients were in very high spirits and were eager to get vaccinated. Many patients spoke English, however some only spoke Samoan. Learning some Samoan phrases such as "fa a vaivai lou lima", which translates to "relax your arm", proved to be helpful in ...

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assisting patients. It almost felt as if they embraced this drive-through vaccination clinic not only as an opportunity to get vaccinated, but as an event. The fun and lively atmosphere of each event created not only a demand, but a genuine appreciation for the service being provided. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves listening to the music, dancing, and spending time with friends and family.

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

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



Photo: Nothing says breakfast like pork chops and chicken soup

JOAG Officer Spotlight Program

Listen, Learn, Connect!

Authors: LT Sarah Hughes, MPH and LCDR Julie Witmer, MS, BSN, RN

Are you seeking career guidance? Are you interested in listening to senior officers share useful career advice? The Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG) Professional Development Committee (PD-C) meets virtually on the 2nd Thursday of every other month (November, January, March, May, July, September). The Officer Spotlight portion features a senior officer who shares information about their experiences, knowledge acquired throughout their careers, insights, and suggestions for junior officers. The senior officer communicates anecdotes and lessons learned, followed by a question-and-answer session for junior officers. Many senior officer speakers provide their contact information and are open to follow up communication. Some speakers may be hiring officials or liaisons within their respective Agencies.

Building strong, professional relationships may lead to long-lasting connections, may potentially influence future career decisions and present exciting options, in addition to improving self-confidence and facilitating personal growth. These types of connections can be powerful tools for growth and could pave the way for future opportunities in your career. The knowledge shared by Officer Spotlight speakers can serve as additional resources in reaching your goals.

Networking within the Commissioned Corps is an important component to navigating your career. For example, knowing an officer who is established at a new duty station may facilitate the transition, provide guidance, lessons learned, and advice for the journey. There are many benefits of establishing these connections, including creating partnerships, instilling best practices, and meeting others on the same career path. It can be valuable to see how others, in similar positions, have attained their goals. Networking can be a steppingstone to success! Networking is a two-way process—give and take—even junior officers can be a link or resource for senior officers. Many junior officers don't consider what they have to offer, but they can contribute to the success of others by sharing experiences as well. There is always more to learn and connecting with others fosters trading ideas that can help at home and in the workplace.

Some examples of recent Officer Spotlight speakers include a USPHS Ready Reserve Corps regional commander who shared her knowledge of the Ready Reserve Corps and helped officers better understand how this component will work together with active-duty personnel to meet the mission of the USPHS Commissioned Corps. Another recent speaker shared stories of her experiences as a COSTEP officer, adventures at remote duty stations, deployments, and lessons learned including many things she wished she had done differently, earlier in her career. This allowed junior officers to learn valuable lessons from her choices. Other speakers include psychologists and social workers who shared recommendations for mental health, ensuring officers focus on work-life balance with an emphasis on self-care. Some officers share experiences from deployments, including leadership roles they filled during deployments.

The coordinators of the Officer Spotlight Program seek to provide a diverse range of speakers, from various backgrounds, categories, and Agencies. Please consider joining the bimonthly JOAG PD-C calls to listen to the insights provided by the Officer Spotlight speakers and begin your networking journey! Watch the weekly JOAG listserv announcements for upcoming Officer Spotlight speakers and opportunities to join JOAG PD-C calls.

Southern Border Deployment

Authors: LCDR James Ireland, PharmD, MS, BCPS, CPH, CMQ/OE, LCDR Clint Merkel, PharmD, BCACP, LCDR Jennifer Iverson, PharmD, LCDR Sana Elassar, REHS, MPH, JD

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

Due to various factors contributing to the increase in unaccompanied children arriving at the U.S. border, the USPHS Operation Artemis (UOA) mission was authorized in April 2021. Many USPHS officers deployed in support of UOA; working in conjunction with federal volunteers, FEMA, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, contractors, and various non-governmental organizations. The purpose of this mission was to provide care to the unaccompanied children arriving at the U.S. border and support to the staff responsible for them. PHS officers that deployed in support of UOA were tasked with various roles, including administrative, behavioral health, safety, vaccination support, and pharmacy oversight. Austere conditions combined with very intense heat and UV index required officers to maintain awareness and safety. Many officers deployed in unfamiliar and non-traditional roles for the mission. They rose to the challenge by maintaining maximum flexibility and providing exceptional service and support to the children.

While deployed, PHS officers supported several COVID-19 mass vaccination clinics, delivering over 1,800 vaccinations to the children and staff. These clinics were supported by the entire deployment team, including pharmacy, medical, behavioral health, logistics, planning, and the OICs. Officers helped in numerous ways to ensure successful operation of the clinics. This included serving as interpreters, directing foot traffic, collecting and screening vaccination consent forms, preparing and administering vaccinations, and providing direction and oversight to federal contractors. Many of the clinics were set up on short notice after the camp unexpectedly received thousands of near-expiration COVID-19 vaccines.

By maintaining flexibility, pharmacy officer LCDR Merkel fulfilled the Deputy Officer-in-Charge role at the Ft. Bliss Emergency Intake Site. Although this deployment role was new for LCDR Merkel, using his interpersonal and organizational skills learned as a pharmacist allowed him to navigate the various tasks encountered during the month. Of the many challenges during the month, LCDR Merkel served as a liaison to the children, tent staff, contractors and site command to help resolve issues and promote the health and safety of the children.

Similarly, LCDR Elassar's role as safety officer required working closely with the safety contractor on issues related to the safety of staff, children, and fellow officers. In her role, she conducted evacuation drills, heat stress monitoring to ensure it was safe for children to have outdoor time, noise surveys, qualitative fit testing for staff & officers, food safety audits, ensured cleanliness & hygiene in dorms and ensured toilets and A/Cs were functioning. To avoid toilets being blocked and potentially creating a public health concern, she developed a pictograph to help girls understand proper disposal of feminine hygiene products. During daily walk throughs in the dorms, LCDR Elassar developed trusting relationships with staff and children where most felt comfortable sharing concerns with her.

Even deploying in one's typical role required a great deal of flexibility and adaptability, as experienced by LCDR Jennifer Iverson and LCDR James Ireland.

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Evaluation and Enhancement of Infection Prevention Protocols

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

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt across the world, and in every community. However, some communities were more impacted than others, particularly those located in remote and rural areas. While COVID-19 rates were increasing, American Samoa (AS), a remote U.S. territory located in the South Pacific Ocean, had the unique ability to self-isolate from the rest of the world by imposing travel restrictions. However, being remote also contributed to its challenges in their efforts to provide medical care when COVID-19 reached the island.

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



Photo: LBJ Tropical Medical Center

REPORT FROM THE RANKS

We were offered the unique opportunity to provide support beyond our clinical roles. ASPR asked us to conduct a short-term quality improvement and infection control assessment. The goal was to provide continued support to LBJ hospital leadership, ensure all recommendations were implemented, obtain a general assessment of isolation precautions, assess risk to other patients, and report any ongoing issues.

We began by conducting a walk-through of every patient ward to include the newly erected Quarantine Tent, Emergency Room Testing Tent and two COVID-extension tents. Our walkthrough was conducted alongside the Charge Nurse of each unit who provided a clinical snapshot of each patient. We then conducted a chart review with the LBJ Infection Control Supervisor to obtain: admitting diagnosis, initial COVID PCR result, COVID-19 screening, use of *aerosol-generating procedures* and oxygen status.



Photo: Gate sign to LBJ Tropical Medical Center

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

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

UNIFORM CORNER

Proper Uniform Maintenance Tips

Author: LCDR Casmir Ogbonna

The general purpose of maintaining a proper uniform for officers in the Commissioned Corps of the U. S. Public Health Service (USPHS) is to uphold an appearance that is consistent with USPHS uniform policies and guidelines. The uniformed service image, reflected by attention to detail while wearing the uniform, is a key element in the public image of the USPHS. Below are some useful tips for keeping your uniform looking stellar.

General Uniform Maintenance Tips:

- “Dry clean only” clothing should be dry cleaned and handled with care.
- Uniform components made of wool should not be dried or stored in heat/warm conditions as it can cause shrinking of the material.
- Uniforms with defective zippers, missing buttons, or requiring a rank upgrade should be taken to a tailor who is experienced in military alterations.
- If loose strings are visible on your uniform, use nail clippers or scissors to cut them.
- The embroidered insignia can be kept bright by occasional scrubbing with a nailbrush and a diluted ammonia solution. This should be done as soon as a tarnished look is noted.
- Take time to iron your uniform. The USPHS is one of the eight Uniformed Services of the United States. It is your responsibility as an officer to ensure that uniform is worn properly to honor our service and the service of all those who chose to wear the uniform before us.
- The metal insignia should be cleaned with regular soap to look bright.
- Avoid carrying large or bulky objects in your pockets (except for ODU pants) as this will damage the shape of your uniform. Also remember pockets are for things – not for hands!
- Uniforms shall be kept scrupulously clean, with lace, devices and insignia bright and free from tarnish and corrosion.
- Maintain multiple sets of uniforms to reduce wear on each set.
- Uniforms that have a “shiny” appearance due to over-starching or being ironed or dry-cleaned at the improper temperature are considered unserviceable.
- Military creases on shirts are an individual option. Sewn-in creases that are added by the officer are not authorized.



Photo: Service khaki worn by two models

UNIFORM CORNER

Uniform/Component	Tips/Recommendations
Service Dress Blues (SDB):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional dry cleaning is the preferred option for maintenance of the SDB If you choose to clean them yourself, wash on delicate with a detergent designed for delicate laundry and hang them to dry. Do not put them in a dryer with heat as it can cause shrinking of the materials and possibly cause color fading. If you must press the SDB, then the uniforms should be inside out so that the creases are inverted when worn.
Service Khakis (SK):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Khakis may be washed and dried in normal washing machines and dryers using permanent press cycle. Do not use bleach or starch, since both can cause degradation of the stain resistant fabric. The Service Khakis may be removed from the dryer while it is still slightly damp and should be ironed immediately and placed on a hanger to dry completely.
Service Dress Whites (SDW):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional dry cleaning is the preferred option for maintenance of the SDW This uniform may be washed inside out in a normal washing machine. Bleach or oxygen based whitening products may be used to remove stains and restore the bright white color. Iron the uniform immediately following washing and drying
Operational Dress Uniform (ODU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash on cold water in a washing machine using quick wash function Hang to dry preferably inside out Use a tide stick to get a stain off your ODU instead of washing it every time to avoid quick fading due to constant washing/ironing Steaming ODUs is less harsh to the fabric than ironing it constantly. Mild ironing can be done occasionally using low temperature setting
Service Shoes (Oxford)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The smooth leather service shoes should be polished using shoe polish that corresponds to the color (black, white, or brown) of the service shoe. The synthetic leather (shiny gloss) service shoes should be cleaned using a non-abrasive cleaner, or a clean damp cloth. All service shoes should be stored at room temperature to maintain the integrity of the leather.
Black Boots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove and clean visible dirt from boots using a clean, damp cloth and polish boots with black polish. When blousing boots, do not blouse the Operational Dress Uniform (ODU) pant legs directly into the top of the boot. Blousing should occur over the top of the boot and the shoe laces and tie should not be visible.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

New PHS Ready Reserve Officers Experience

Author: LCDR Shani Smith



Rank and Name: LTJG Aaron Chambers
USPHS Category: HSO
Duty Station: Region 9
Location: Rancho Cucamonga, California



Rank and Name: LTJG Lynnette Gillard
USPHS Category: Nurse
Duty Station: Region 3 Ready Reserves
Location: Norfolk, Virginia



Rank and Name: LTJG Christian Heiss
USPHS Category: HSO
Duty Station: Region 2 Ready Reserves
Location: New Jersey

1. Why did you decide to become a PHS Ready Reserve Officer?

- **LTJG Heiss:** I was looking for an opportunity to continue to serve after the Navy but still pursue my civilian career and practice a broader range of public health skills than I use in my civilian job. Protections in USERRA (the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act) also help ensure my civilian job and benefits are protected while I'm serving with USPHS, which wasn't the case when I tried to volunteer through other disaster relief organizations.
- **LTJG Chambers:** Contrary to popular belief, the life of a podiatrist isn't all about the fame, women, or rock-star-like status. After I left active-duty and transitioned to private practice, I found I missed several aspects of the service, mainly the comradery, the community interaction, and the ability to lead outside of my profession. Additionally, my wife stated I needed to "get out of her hair" and "get a hobby" so I decided to continue my service with the USPHS. All jokes aside though, I have really enjoyed all aspects of the USPHS so far and am glad about my choice.
- **LTJG Gillard:** Honestly, I wanted to. Nearly everyone in my family served our country in the armed services. Therefore, I wanted to use my nursing skills in this manner. One appealing part about the Ready Reserves was the ability to stay at home and not be transferred. I have a young son and I don't want to uproot my family at this stage of my life.

2. What was your initial impression about being a PHS Ready Reserve Officer?

- **LTJG Heiss:** We have been doing drill weekends via Zoom calls, and it has been inspiring getting to meet other officers from across the country in very different categories who are doing amazing things in their civilian careers while also serving in the Public Health Service. But the slight differences between the USPHS and Navy uniforms catch me off guard from time to time!
- **LTJG Chambers:** My initial impression with the PHS Ready Reserves has been extremely favorable. There is a culture of mutual respect and I think it bodes well for the overall service. During my time with the Navy, I was in several different commands, and some left a lot to desire in terms of respect and discipline. I've found with the USPHS and the Ready Reserve both the members and leadership are extremely approachable, knowledgeable and embody what I consider to be a Uniform Service Officer.
- **LTJG Gillard:** The newness of the PHS was my first impression. Plus, the excitement of my fellow officers and superiors to serve and the team-first environment was appealing after I completed OBC.

3. What has been your most memorable experience so far?

- **LTJG Heiss:** In March 2021, I deployed in support of Operation Allies Welcome, assisting resettlement efforts in Missouri for refugees from Afghanistan. I got to use all my skills including helping families learn how to access health care in the United States themselves, coordinating local agency efforts to vaccinate the new arrivals, and helping with environmental health research.
- **LTJG Chambers:** Being part of the Arctic Care 2022 IRT was a fantastic experience that allowed me to practice my specialty at a location with limited access. This experience embodied all of what I was looking for in being part of the reserves. Additionally, the early morning drill weekends have been a big hit with my cat, as his food bowl usually gets filled prior to me logging on. So overall, it's been great for my personal and professional life, as well as with my ever-tumultuous feline relationships.
- **LTJG Gillard:** My first deployment. I had just completed OBC and was given my orders soon after. I got to meet some amazing officers who made my first deployment smooth. In addition, they were open to numerous questions which allowed me to learn much from them.

4. What would you tell others who are interested in becoming a PHS Ready Reserve Officer?

- **LTJG Heiss:** The Ready Reserve Corps is not just another part-time job and juggling the responsibilities of your regular full-time job and life outside of the Commissioned Corps with weekend training and full-time deployments can be stressful. But the opportunity to serve, learn new skills, and give back make the effort worth it for me.
- **LTJG Chambers:** I'd tell them what others told me prior to joining, that it's still a service that requires sacrifice, but the positives outweigh the negatives, and you can do great work that directly impacts others.
- **LTJG Gillard:** Take the leap – it's worth it. You get to be around amazing people, learn new things and, as a clinician, use your license and skills to help a variety of people more than you'd normally help in the civilian world.

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Not Just Another COVID-19 Deployment

(Continued from page 15)

...People panicked and clinics and hospitals filled with large amounts of people all at the same time. It was chaotic. It didn't help that there's an extreme shortage of nurses and medical workers on island. I remember being so short staffed one morning that I was the only one working when the PHS officers arrived. Without hesitation, they immediately lent a hand and started working without a second thought. It was a complete blessing and I along with many other islanders felt so grateful and happy to have had the opportunity to work alongside them" Joyce Niko, RN.

Hospital pharmacy lacked the tracking capabilities to monitor burn rate. LCDR Joe Allen spearheaded efforts to track inventory. According to LCDR Allen: "We tried to assess and get an idea of potential issues early on. In American Samoa product could take up to 2 weeks to arrive. The essentials from the pharmacy perspective were ensuring the basics for COVID-19 therapeutics: inventory, storage (cold chain integrity), and ability to meet the anticipated supply needs. By continuously monitoring on hand inventory at all sites and tracking utilization, we were able to determine our burn rate which ASPR needed to expedite treatment shipments. All-in-all we were able to maintain our supply and prioritized treatments to those most at risk."

One of the final COVID-19 deployments was not an ordinary deployment if there is even such a thing. The stunning views of the islands in American Samoa was not the only reason this deployment was unique. This deployment provided many unique opportunities to serve and created many lifelong memories. As if that was not significant enough, PHS Officers provided over 1,600 antiviral treatments. This lasting impact highlights the work that PHS Officers do in such a short amount of time.

Driving around the ASH: A Junior Officer's Survival Guide

(Continued from page 16)

..."I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be." As Junior Officers, many of us have plans and aspirations, but it's also important to realize that there will be setbacks. These setbacks, at first sight may be discouraging. But in reality, such challenges serve as preparation for and open the doors to explore new, wonderful avenues that we may never have thought about otherwise. Remember, the Corps is filled with opportunities, and as Junior Officers we should keep our eyes open and eagerly explore them while we can. You never know where it may lead you next.

REPORT FROM THE RANKS

JOAG Represents at the 2022 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium

(Continued from page 17)

...Voting Members presented on the role of their respective committee, provided projects of interest, and discussed what is it for officers if they join that committee. LCDR Jennifer Weekes served as moderator for this presentation fielding Q&A from the junior officers in attendance. This session served as another opportunity to meet with CAPT Lau and a former Commissioned Officer Foundation President.

This year's theme of *Public Health: Preparing for the Future* was certainly exemplified by junior officers participating in the symposium including those who presented their work at either the scientific track oral presentations, poster presentations or on category day, the four JOAG awardees, as well as JOAG volunteers. Not only did junior officers rise to the occasion when called upon to ensure JOAG-led activities ran smoothly, but actively responded to ad hoc requests from symposium planners (A special shoutout to the four officers who served as aides and the four officers who remained on stand-by – way to apply those Semper Gumby skills!). In all, the symposium offered a mere glimpse of the commitment and potential junior officers provide in ensuring a bright future for PHS and public health.

Next year's symposium is in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I would highly recommend attending this event and checking out JOAG-led activities that are hosted throughout the week.

Symposium Community Service Event

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Officers were also able to learn more about the diverse missions and agencies each participant supported. Participants included nurses, pharmacists, scientists, and therapists from throughout the country and a wide range of agencies. This year's officer volunteers were LT Sophia Ajoku, LT Catherine Dunton, LT Kharisma Huggins, LT Miaka Huynh, LT Peter Jaeger, LT Xia Michelle Lin, LT Shannon Little-Wolf, LT Christian Reyes, LT Jomla Rizek and me. The group definitely developed some esprit de corps through participating in the event. I definitely appreciated the chance to meet and work side by side by these officers and look forward to seeing them again at future events. Please be sure to keep an eye out for the community service event that will be held in Tulsa, OK next May. I am sure it will be a great event and definitely an experience to be a part of. Hope to see you there!

Southern Border Deployment

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...Although they deployed as pharmacists, their contribution to the deployment was a pharmacy oversight role, since their deployment site had a pharmacy operated by contract pharmacists. In their deployment role, they ensured the pharmacy was operating in accordance with federal rules and regulations. They also provided oversight of critical vaccine inventory, which fluctuated greatly due to the large number of arrivals and reunifications of unaccompanied children with their family members.

Although the mission was extremely challenging, it proved to be very rewarding and memorable for these officers. PHS officers that deployed in support of UOA served honorably as they protected, promoted, and advanced the health and safety of the Nation.

Share your photos and ideas with the rest of your junior officers across all social media platforms with the #hashtag [#JOAG](#) throughout the year! There is a new PHS-themed #hashtag every month! Check out the monthly #hashtags scattered throughout JOC.



Junior Officer Spotlight

Do you know of a deserving officer?

Do you know a junior officer that has a unique duty station? Is the officer a super star at work? Do they work tirelessly to support community endeavors, or just have a story to tell? We want to hear from you! Submit the officer's name and a short (50 words or less) narrative on why you think this officer's story should be shared. Submissions should be sent to LCDR Noah Buikema and LCDR Janelle Phillip. All submissions will be reviewed and one junior officer will be selected and showcased in the Summer 2023 Edition of the JOC.

THE OFFICIAL JOAG MAGAZINE
DESIGNED FOR JUNIOR OFFICERS BY JUNIOR OFFICERS
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