



Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee

LA GACETA Summer 2022 Newsletter

HISPANIC



OFFICERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Nuestro Futuro es Nuestra Salud



LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas is a Health Care Administrator and holds a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology and International Health Care Systems from Trident University, a Master of Science in Quality System Management from The National Graduate School of Quality Management and a Bachelor of Science in Animal Sciences and Industry from the University of Puerto Rico. He currently serves as Senior Program Management Officer, responsible for providing analytical support related to operations research, policy analysis and management science methods to examine issues and problems on special projects or new business process for the Office of the Commissioner at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

LCDR Diaz-Vargas has been an active member of the Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC) since 2014 and has helped to support the vision of the Office of the Surgeon General to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation, and promote the Hispanic interests and accomplishments within the USPHS.

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LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas - FDA



2022 HOAC Chair Welcome

It is an honor to serve with each of you, and I am excited to share with all of you the hard work that is being done by our great officers in our organization. We are on the front lines of public health daily and many of us continue to deploy for the COVID-19, Unaccompanied Children and Monkeypox response. Each of the HOAC members bring a unique perspective and background to our organization, and certain your creativity and vision will contribute immensely towards achieving current and new goals for our organization and community that we serve. On behalf of HOAC Executive Committee and Voting Members, we would like you to join us in this new edition of La Gaceta. I hope you enjoy our contributions and this way of communicating the many great accomplishments and leadership we have to offer.

¡Bienvenidos!

Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC) informs and advises the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) on matters concerning the Hispanic Latino community. Focusing on professional development opportunities, education, community outreach, and a network of support for officers committed to promoting, advancing, and protecting the health and safety of Hispanic Latino communities throughout the nation and globally.



WELCOME TO THE 2022 HOAC Subcommittee Chairs & Co-Chairs

SUBCOMMITTEE	CHAIR	CO-CHAIR
Awards and Recognition	CDR Juana Figueroa	☆ LCDR Marcia Fields ☆
Communications and Public Relations	LCDR "Jeff" Peng Zhou	CDR Abraham Marrero
Recruitment and Retention	☆ LCDR Bryan Wilson ☆	LCDR Melissa Parra
Deployment and Readiness	LCDR Paula Arango	☆ LCDR Sandra Herrera ☆
Charter and Bylaws	CDR Matthew Lozier	☆ CDR Cristina Cardemil ☆
Nomination and Membership	LCDR Leslie Rivera-Rosado	CDR Gustavo Ceinos
Outreach and Education	CDR Michelle Rodriguez	LCDR Joshua Medero-Padin

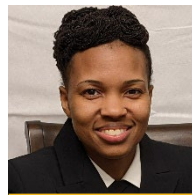


2022 New Voting Members



MEDICAL

CDR Cristina Cardemil - NIH



PHARMACIST

LCDR Marcia Fields - FDA



NURSE

LCDR Sandra Herrera - ICE



PHARMACIST

LCDR Bryan Wilson - OS



2022 Executive Committee



- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chair - | LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas |
| Vice-Chair/Chair Elect 2022 - | CDR Cesar Perez |
| Secretary - | LCDR Cristina Mosquera |
| Treasurer - | LCDR Thalia Vega |
| MOLC Reps - | LCDR Jorge Muñoz-Ortiz |
| | LT Adelaida Rosario |
| 2021-2023 Senior Advisor - | CAPT Ivonne Arena |



2022 HOAC HONOR Award Recipients



VADM Antonia C. Novello Award

LCDR Bryan Wilson - OS



LCDR Bryan Wilson currently resides in the Washington DC area. He serves as the Recruitment Specialist Team Lead in the Call to Active Duty and Recruitment Branch at Commissioned Corps Headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. In this role, he actively recruits applicants for general duty and ready reserves to the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps.

A passionate public health pharmacist, LCDR Wilson was essential in developing programs aimed at establishing direct patient care within the rural and tribal communities across the United States. He served at an isolated hardship site with the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Arizona, where he directly observed the difficulties and burdens plaguing the local communities. He established 24/7 Emergency Department (ED) pharmacy operations to advance patient care and spearheaded the development of inpatient policy and procedures and services in preparation for opening an inpatient hospital.

LCDR Wilson is the recipient of several awards and looks forward to continuing to impact the nation through his work with the Public Health Service.





2022 HOAC HONOR Award Recipients (cont.)



VADM Richard H. Carmona Award

CDR Rhonda E. Martinez-McFarland - CMS



CDR Rhonda Martinez-McFarland is an American Indian/Alaska Native with Hispanic descent, she was given the name “Wamnee Wanaxy Weya (Spirted Eagle Woman)”. The elders of her community gave her the name at ceremony and told her “you are now the leader of your people”. Born and raised in Bellingham, Washington, CDR Martinez-McFarland was raised by an American Indian/Alaska Native single mother of seven and grew up less fortunate. She experienced much adversity early in life becoming a teen mom by age 17, and dropped out of high school. In 1986 CDR Martinez-McFarland returned to school and obtained her High School GED and soon after earned her Licensed practical nurses (LPN) certificate at Bellingham Vocational Technical College.

CDR Rhonda Martinez-McFarland first nursing job was at the Lummi Tribal Health Center as a pediatric nurse. While continuing to work she began her advanced studies at Whatcom Community College, where she earned her Associates of Applied Science transfer degree (1998); transferring to Washington State University (WSU), Pullman Washington. CDR Martinez-McFarland completed a Bachelor of Science Nursing Degree as a Sigma Theta Tau honors student (2000). Although CDR Martinez-McFarland experienced many life challenges, she did not let these challenges prevent her from pursuing her passion and a career in medicine, where this led her to commission as a United States Public Health Officer (USPHS) in July 2001.

CDR Martinez-McFarland continued her education by graduating with honors and obtaining her Master of Nursing Education Degree (MSN-ED) at the University of Phoenix (2010) and a Family Nursing Practice (FNP) degree at Graceland University (GU) (2015).

CDR Martinez-McFarland has worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Licensed Practical Nurse, Registered Nurse and now as a Board-Certified Family Nurse Practitioner. CDR Martinez-McFarland was stationed at various American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Medical Centers throughout the Pacific Northwest as a registered nurse and as a Board-Certified Family Nurse Practitioner. Her focus in practice is as a patient advocate, mentor, and health coach. Currently she now is a Nurse Consultant/Public Health Specialist for AI/AN tribal leadership in the Division of Tribal Affairs at CMS for the past 7 years. At CMS, the focus of her role is addressing health disparities, Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, and coverage as well as responsible for outreach and education enhancing the knowledge of AI/AN healthcare providers, leadership and communities across AI/AN communities nationally. Her passion is to work in underserved communities focusing on reducing health disparities. On her off time, she practices as an FNP-BC as an Internal Health and woman’s specialist and enjoys reading, hiking, biking, paddle boarding, snorkeling and spending time with her kids and grandchildren.





2022 HOAC HONOR award Recipients (cont.)



Juan Carlos Finlay: Significant Achievement Award

LCDR Sandra Carpio - ASPR



LCDR Sandra Carpio currently serves as one of the Regional Emergency Coordinators for HHS ASPR Region 2 (NY, NJ, PR & USVI) and as action officer in Puerto Rico.

She previously served as Deputy Commander for the Health and Social Services Recovery Support Function for the Hurricane Maria Recovery Mission in Puerto Rico where she managed a \$19.3 Million interagency agreement with FEMA and led efforts of over 20 recovery projects on the island. Dr. Carpio began her commissioned corps career on 2014 as a Junior COSTEP for the Vessel Sanitation Program within the Center for Environmental Health at the CDCs, Atlanta, GA which led her to commissioning on 2016 as an Environmental Health Officer for the FDA, Office of Human and Animal Foods, Region East 4.

LCDR Carpio earned her doctor in public health degree from the University of Puerto Rico and a graduate fellowship certificate for the Pediatric Environmental Health Unit from Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. She enjoys traveling, cooking for family and friends, and teaching Latin dance.





2022 HOAC Member Award Recognition



Walter F. Snyder

NSF Environmental Health Award

CAPT Luis Rodriguez - CDC



ANN ARBOR, Mich. – National Sanitation Foundation (NSF), a global public health and safety organization, and the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), representing more than 6,000 members of the environmental health workforce, announced that Captain (CAPT) Luis O. Rodriguez, MS, REHS/RS, CP-FS, CPO, DAAS, is the 2022 recipient of the Walter F. Snyder Environmental Health Award. CAPT Rodriguez, a Senior Environmental Health Specialist for the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) assigned to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), received the award on June 30 at the 2022 NEHA Annual Education Conference. He has dedicated his career of more than 20 years to safeguarding environmental health and safety.

“It is an incredible honor to be recognized by my peers and be part of those professionals seeking to improve environmental health services across the nation,” said Rodriguez.

The Snyder Award was created in 1971 in honor of Walter F. Snyder, co-founder and first executive director of NSF. Presented by NSF and NEHA, it is awarded annually to individuals who continue Snyder’s legacy through outstanding contributions to environmental and public health.

<https://www.nsf.org/news/luis-rodriguez-recognized-nsf-national-environmental-health-association-neha-walter-f-snyder-environmental-health-award>





2022 Hispanic Heritage Month Activities

September 15, 2022 at 3:00 PM ET

CMS-sponsored event

Barbara Bernstein, Director of Dance in Time

Origins of Hispanic Heritage celebrations in the US and Importance of music and dance in Latin culture

Ms. Bernstein will teach beginner and advanced moves and will perform a medley of dances, including Salsa.

[Zoom link](#), Teleconference: 1-833-568-8864, ID: 161 114 6152; Passcode: 421287

September 17, 2022 at 2:00 PM ET

HAOC-sponsored event

HOAC Virtual 5K

At least 3 participants at a minimum of 3 different sites must sign up for a qualifying event. Run must be completed in 24hr period. Wear your PHS gear and document your run. Please send your information to the event leaders by Wednesday, September 21, 2022: RANK, NAME, SERNO, CITY/ST, and CATEGORY for the participation log.

Contacts: LT Stoll (Erica.Stoll@hhs.gov) and LCDR Almanza (Jacobo.I.Almanza@ice.dhs.gov)

<https://hrsa-gov.zoomgov.com/j/1610106473?pwd=RUZlc1BrV1p1K0c5aExYV0NjbmJ2Zz09>

September 22, 2022 at 2:00 PM ET

CMS-Sponsored event

CAPT Wanda Finch– Office of Minority Health

Hispanic Health Equity

[Zoom Link](#), Teleconference: +1-669-254-5252 or +1-646-828-7666 Meeting ID: 161 263 7939; Passcode: 916117

October 6, 2022 at 2:00 PM ET

CMS-Sponsored event

Department of Justice and CMS

Unaccompanied Alien Children and Human Trafficking

Zoom Information: TBD

October 13, 2022 at 2:00 PM ET

CMS-Sponsored event

Dr. Jerry Garcia: National Hispanic Museum and Latino/Chicano Museum in Seattle

Zoom Information: TBD





HOAC Members: *Articles from the Field*

Answering the Call Through Partnerships: USPHS Officers Serving the Homeless Community Phoenix Arizona

By: LT Alberto Pina – OASH



On Sunday March 22, 2022 The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Region 9 Prevention through Active Community Engagement Program (PACE) collaborated with the Hispanic Officers Advisory Community (HOAC) to partnered with the University of Arizona College of Public Health Mobile Health Unit and the Street Medicine program to provide health screening services, referrals to medical services, health education, COVID-19, Flu and Hepatitis A vaccines to the homeless community in Phoenix, AZ.

Thirty-One Officers came together to serve the homeless community in 100-degree weather working side by side with local organization such as, Chicanos Por La Causa HIV Program, Arizona Complete Mammography Mobile Unit, and future health professionals (public health, medicine, nursing, pharmacy) from the University of Arizona, Health Sciences Campus. As a result of our street outreach efforts, officers served over 400+ community members, and completed and disseminated the following services/items:

distributed 70 Narcan, 39 COVID-19/Hep A vaccinations, 72 MREs, 65 drawstring bags, 200 hats and 386 Hygiene Care kits.



It was a very successful event that brought together officers from across many categories and created an opportunity to build team comradery, while serving one of the most vulnerable communities in the Phoenix Metropolitan area. The event served as a reminder and commitment to the service of health and our mission to protect, promote and advance the health and safety of the nation. This event also provided an opportunity to provide clinical hours for officers, while increasing the visibility of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

PACE and HOAC look forward to hosting a community engagement event during the 2023 USPHS

Scientific and Training Symposium in Tulsa Oklahoma.

Articles from the Field (cont.)



COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Quotes captured from Officers during the event:

“This event served as a reminder as to why I love public health and joined USPHS, to serve vulnerable populations of this country. It was amazing seeing officers unite and give their time to provide services to the homeless population”.

“It was a very eye-opening and rewarding experience”.

“Thank you for this great opportunity and I really enjoyed providing the education and the Narcan to the patients in Phoenix during this community engagement event”.

“I really enjoyed the event and found it very rewarding for myself and hopefully made a difference for the individuals we helped”.



Primary Author LT Alberto Pina,

Secondary Authors: CDR Michelle Sandoval-Rosario, CDR Michelle Rodriguez





Articles from the Field (cont.)

A Community Event in Phoenix, AZ

By: LT Ngoc Le – IHS



As a junior officer, I got the opportunity to attend the US PHS Scientific training & symposium for the first-time last May 2022 in Glendale, AZ. Soon after completing the registration, I received an email calling for volunteers prior to the symposium from The Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE) chartered advisory group. PACE partnered with Phoenix Street Medicine and the University of Arizona Mobile Health Unit to provide health screening and vaccines to disadvantaged people in Phoenix, AZ. The partnership for the event was made possible by HOAC officers CDR Michelle Sandoval-Rosario and LT Alberto Pina.

All PHS officers gathered early in the morning on a street to meet up with the medical students and were divided into four preassigned teams along with the vaccination team in the mobile health unit specifically for COVID-19 and Hepatitis A vaccines. Each team consisted of PHS officers, medical students, and physicians from their schools. I was assigned to team Orange along with other 2 officers, 4 medical students, and their physician with a full wagon of necessities including food, water, over the counter medications, hat, socks, personal hygiene items, a blood pressure cuff, a blood glucose machine with test strips and lancets.

Our team initially heading toward the assigned ally and made announcement to the local occupants about some of the provisions and services that we offered. As we initiated the conversation, we spoke to the residents in a gentle way to alleviate any hesitation that they may have. We offered to check their blood pressure, blood glucose while the medical students would explain to them their results as well as provide any applicable preventative measures.

In a few circumstances, some patients exhibited such severe symptoms that was determined that a physician's examination was required. One female patient, for example, approached us in tears as she had been suffering unbearable pain in her throat the last few days with some mild fever. She was diagnosed with tonsillitis and was provided over the counter pain meds acetaminophen and ibuprofen alongside a bottle of peroxide spray.

Further along the street, we encountered another gentleman who was without shirt and walking barefoot on the sidewalk under the heat of over 90 degrees Fahrenheit in Phoenix. One thing that struck me was that this patient was formerly diagnosed with diabetes by his own admission, yet his only available food that day was the donut he was eating. He asked to have his blood sugar levels read regardless and had mentioned that he was not taking any medications. His blood glucose levels were over 200!



Articles from the Field (cont.)

One of the medical students in our team was explaining the meaning of his blood glucose to him while I handed him a bag of food, some bottles of water, a hat and socks.

In addition to assisting the medical students and the physician with health screening, one other officer and I also provided Naloxone spray and educated about its use to everyone who was interested. We taught how being in possession of Naloxone spray can save lives, showed them how to identify an overdose, and what action to take.

The event lasted for a total four hours; we had successfully used up all the provided supplies. Despite the intense heat in Phoenix that day, all volunteers were in agreement that the event was a success and took pride in our ability to give back to the community. We gathered back in groups and celebrated our success with pictures together. We thank the Phoenix Street Medicine, medical students, and their providers for having the UHSPHS officers join them on their important mission. Finally, it should be noted that this event provided to everyone in this community an opportunity to be seen and educated where they would otherwise not be able to. It was a blessing to be able to relieve a small burden out of their daily living situation. I had nothing but good experiences interacting with everyone that our group encountered. I had listened to their stories and could not help but feel empathetic for what they have had gone through. As a pharmacist with passion to serve others, and currently, working in an underserved area in Gallup, NM, I appreciated the opportunity to provide service to vulnerable people here in Phoenix. The event has had an extensive impact on me personally and professionally. My ability to make an impact has only deepened my passion and interest in future volunteer events and I look forward to the next one.

During this community service event, I was able to meet with many great individuals, and other Public Health Service officers from different categories and agencies, The volunteers had exhibited nothing but the highest level of care and professional aptitude. My exposure to the perspectives from this diverse set of medical backgrounds has planted seeds of motivation that I hope will allow me to grow further in my professional pursuits. It is easy to be proud of and admire such a group and I only hope that I grow to such heights. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to CDR Sandoval-Rosario and LT Pina for coordinating such a great event.





Articles from the Field (cont.)

Maintaining a Healthy Mind as We Age

By: LCDR Adriana Restrepo – BOP



What does the word aging mean to you? Is it getting older, slowing down, forgetting things, seeing more wrinkles and gray hair, or is it sharing wisdom, reflecting on life accomplishments, and no longer sweating the small stuff as much? Whatever the meaning of the word is to you, it's a normal experience and inevitable for all. One of the things that comes with aging is mental decline, memory lapses, and most seriously for some dementia. Experts suggest that adults can improve their chances of maintaining a healthy mind by managing

healthy problems, exercising frequently, eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep, learning new things, and staying socially engaged. In addition, our perspectives on aging are equally important. Older adults who view aging in a better light tend to have better health, physically and mentally. Meanwhile, focusing on the negative aspects of aging can predict poor health. The goal is to find ways to shine as we age, keeping our minds sharp and continuing to pursue life passions. These everyday steps are good reminders that can help us on our own journeys:

- 1) Exercise regularly. The right amount—and type—of exercise varies by age and health status, but it is best for us all to keep our bodies moving. Whether it's walking, training for a 5K, hiking through nature, gardening ... the options are endless. Even small everyday motions, like walking the dog can help create new cells in the brain which are essential for memory storage.
- 2) Do activities you enjoy. Hobbies like traveling, dancing, reading, listening to music, playing board games, word puzzles, or volunteering may help keep your mind and body functioning at its best. This can also result in developing and connecting you to a supportive community. Socializing can help improve cognitive skills and result in improved memory abilities.
- 3) Learn something new. Memory strength is similar to muscular strength. The more you use it, the stronger it gets. Keep in mind that you can't lift the same size weight every day and expect to get stronger. Our brains are the same. You'll need to keep your brain constantly challenged and learning a new skill is a great way to strengthen your brain's memory capacity.



Articles from the Field (cont.)

4) Manage stress as this is something that we all face almost on a daily basis. Meditation, mindfulness, gratitude, and relaxation techniques ease the strain on one's mental health. Remember that asking for help when you need it, and accepting it when it's offered is something that can help in the long run towards a healthier lifestyle.

5) Check your health regularly. Your primary care provider can advise you on the types of screenings and preventive care you need. Also, follow up if you have questions about medications or symptoms, including signs of depression.

6) Lastly, obtain a good night's rest. Without this, the neurons in our brain become overworked, making it difficult to coordinate information and access memories. It has been recommended that roughly an hour before bedtime, putting electronic devices to the side and focusing on resting to wrap up the day allows your brain to unwind and recharge.

The bottom line is that our brain is a big deal. It is the control center of our bodies, it is in charge of keeping our hearts beating and lungs breathing, allowing us to move, feel, and think. Mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness and it is important that we exercise our mind and keep our brains in shape. Mental fitness is important in maintaining our brains and bodies healthy, especially as we age. There are many types of mental dexterity exercises, and you don't need to go to the gym to do them. These can include active ones, such as learning a new song or playing a game, as well as restful ones, such as relaxation and meditation exercises. Schedule a mental fitness break into your calendar right next to your workout schedule. Your mind and your health are worth it.





Articles from the Field (cont.)

White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health support for Hispanic Communities

By: LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas - FDA

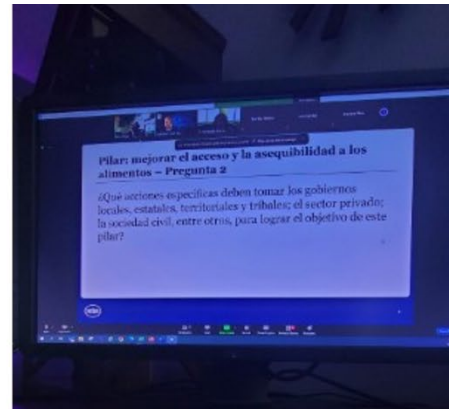
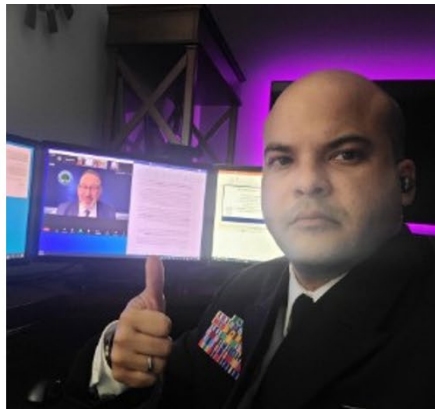


This September, the Biden-Harris Administration will host the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health with the goal of ending hunger by 2030, while also increasing healthy eating and physical activity so that fewer Americans experience chronic diseases, such as diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. Leading up to the conference, the White House hosted a series of virtual listening sessions to hear ideas from people across the nation. One of these national listening sessions was conducted in Spanish. This listening session took place on Monday, June 13 from 1-3pm EDT on Zoom. HOAC provided support and a list of fluent Spanish speaking facilitators and notetakers that served in each breakout session. We thank you for making a listening session in Spanish possible.

White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health

Officers involved:

LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas	LCDR Sandra Carpio
CDR Luz Rivera	CDR Juana Figueroa
LT Zuleika Aponte	CDR Michelle Sandoval-Rosario
CAPT Ivonne Arena	CDR Eduardo O'Neill
LCDR Paula Arango	CDR Hugo Gonzalez
LCDR Elizabeth Perez-Almazan	LT Sandra Herrera
LCDR Kenia Baisden	CDR Elizabeth Russell
LCDR Monica Orsborn	CDR Cesar Perez
LCDR Jacobo Almanza	LCDR Cristina Mosquera





Articles from the Field (cont.)

San Diego National Association of Hispanic Nurses Serving Your Community in Your Profession

By: LCDR Gustavo Miranda– ICE



I first heard about the [National Association Hispanic Nurses \(NAHN\)](#) in 2020 through a friend of mine after asking how I could get involve in my community. NAHN was found in 1975 as a non-profit professional association in the United States, committed to the promotion of the professionalism and dedication of Hispanic nurses providing equal access to educational, professional, and economic opportunities for Hispanic nurses. In 2021, I learned about the chapter in San Diego, CA area where I live, and I decided to join the San Diego National Association of Hispanic Nurses (SDNAHN).

SDNAHN is committed to community outreach, supporting, and advancing the healthcare in Hispanic and underserved communities, as well as supporting local nursing students in their pathways to a nursing career. SDNHAN has volunteer opportunities to serve in the Thousand Smiles Foundation providing cleft lip surgeries in Ensenada, Mexico: provides flu vaccinations, blood pressure clinics, and partners with Champions for Health and Volunteer, a non-profit organization that provides medical clinic services to low income, and uninsured families in San Diego County.

When I first attended the SDNAHN meeting the summer of 2021 I was happy to learn about the many volunteer opportunities they provide and how they are making a difference not only in the Hispanic community but their local community. Today I mentor a nursing student who also received a SDNAHN scholarship. It’s great to learn and share experiences with my mentee. The Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down our whole country in volunteering events and much more. However, I look forward to volunteering with this organization to help my community thrive during Covid-19 pandemic that thankfully appears to be calming down. I encourage everyone to reach out to your local community NAHN to see how they are making a difference in your community. Additionally, this will help you connect with other professionals and help you explore opportunities to make a difference in your local community.





Articles from the Field (cont.)

On PACE!

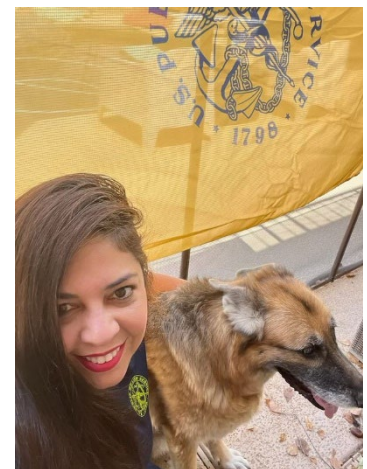
By: LCDR Thalia Vega – OASH



Hola, I wanted to talk about exciting opportunities to get involved with Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE). Getting involved with PACE is a great way to serve your community and spread important health information to the public that can help to protect, promote, and elevate their health. There are many ways to get involved but a great way to find out about the various opportunities in your region is by signing up for the listserv. I became involved with PACE in 2018 through various community activities and was recruited and appointed to the region 9 the Surgeon General Education Team (SGET) in 2019 where I have served as a Training Officer and Deputy Team Lead. I'm currently a regional coordinator for region 9. We are currently looking for motivated officers who are interested in joining the Surgeon General Education Team in Region 9 as well as those who may be interested in becoming PACE local leads. There are currently openings for Local Leads in Pinon, AZ, Fort Defiance, AZ, and Las Vegas, NV.

A strength of HOAC is that we can bring critical health messages such as the importance of hand hygiene, healthy eating, dental hygiene, vaccines, opioid epidemic information and more while fostering community engagement in underserved communities. Some of these communities and other Spanish speaking populations may find the information harder to access due to cost, a lack of accessible services, language and cultural barriers or distance if they live in a healthcare desert. PACE is actively looking for officers who can give presentations in Spanish or translate presentations into Spanish as well!

There are many other ways to get involved locally, as well as in regions across the country and nationally by volunteering for a sub-committee. Subcommittees that are currently looking for volunteers include: The PACE Training Sub-Committee, Recognitions Sub-Committee, and the Communications Sub-committee. There was also a recent request for volunteers in the DC area for an event on August 27th between 12pm and 6pm at Oxon Run Park SE, DC. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I would love to answer questions or put you in contact with officers in your region! There are opportunities to win awards and PACE was also recently added to the promotion benchmarks, so it is a win win! It is a very rewarding experience to work with the community at these events, so please reach out and get involved!



LCDR Vega with her dog Bella 😊





HOAC *Leaders in Training*

A USPHS Officer's Experience at the 138th Interagency Institute for Federal Health Leaders

By: CDR Alexander Varga – IHS



For two full weeks in April 2022, I had the distinct honor of attending the [Interagency Institute for Federal Health Leaders \(IAI\)](#), and thus represented the United States Public Health Service for the very limited number of seats we as a service are allotted at this hallowed gathering of federal health professionals. This training was geared toward health leaders who have been selected by flag officers or chief professional officers to represent their respective agencies and who are on the cusp of attaining critical leadership roles at major federal health institutions. As such, about 35 officers from the US Public Health Service, Army, Navy, and Air Force as well as 4 civilians representing the Veteran's Health Administration were in attendance. Of the officer pool, there were only seven O-5 officers from the services and the remaining 28 officers were full bird captains or colonels. Suffice it to say, the attendees had entire careers worth of health care experience, and this course acted as a beacon for greater duties and responsibilities to come.

The course met at the George Bush School of Government and Public Service in the heart of Washington DC. Classes met from 0800 to 1700 daily and consisted of 90-minute lectures (with lots of coffee breaks) from government and industry leaders. An entire constellation of starred admirals and generals were on hand, delivering lectures about leadership and the current and future states of health care for the uniformed services. Additionally, there were talks from an array of subject matter experts on geopolitics, cybersecurity, ethics, military history, and transitioning from the public to private sector. The quantity of information at times seemed overwhelming, but that was counterbalanced by the superior quality of the presenters at this conference.

The purpose of the IAI was to provide an opportunity for the seasoned, practicing federal health care executive to examine some of the current issues in health care policy and management and to explore their potential impact on the federal health care system. This was accomplished by describing how political, policy, economic and management trends impact health care and population health and apply this knowledge in future planning and by evaluating actions/activities that should be addressed to promote excellence in patient care and health promotion.



HOAC Leaders in Training (cont.)

Additionally, concepts of teamwork, evidence-based practice, application of information technology, outcomes-oriented performance improvement and responsible leadership were all motifs throughout the course that were explored at both the individual and service level.

Like so many conferences that I have attended, the connections made between fellow classmates and students are often more important than the material covered. The students at IAI represent some of the best their services have to offer, and it was invigorating and humbling to interact with officers of such caliber. I whole heartedly recommend this course, as it was one of the most formative and inspiring courses I have taken in my uniformed service career.





HOAC Leaders in Training (cont.)

Representing USPHS at U.S. Army's Command and General Staff Officer College

By: LCDR Bryan Wilson – OASH



I had the honor to represent the U.S. Public Health Service in completing a 16-week temporary assignment at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff Officer College (CGSOC), One of just nine U.S. Public Health Service officers who have completed the program. The 16-week course covered over 18 credits of masters-level curriculum. CGSOC has available slots for top qualified and deserving junior officers who display the potential to reach top-level leadership positions throughout their careers.

The goal of the Command and General Staff Officer College (CGSOC) is to "educate and train field grade leaders to serve as staff officers and commanders with the ability to build teams, lead organizations, and integrate Unified Land Operations with Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational partners in complex and uncertain environments." CGSOC is one of the oldest and largest military leadership courses for senior O-3s and junior O-4s to assist in transitioning officers from a tactical-level focus to an operational-level leadership perspective. Comprised of four schools, the CGSOC strives to educate, train, and develop leaders for organizational operations and be a renowned academic leader in the study of leadership.

Officers that complete this course can lead and build organizations and solve complex challenges in uncertain environments through adaptability, critical reasoning, creative thinking, and effective communication. Additionally, CGSOC graduates possess supporting knowledge and skills to perform duties effectively and assist the team in achieving organizational objectives, and understanding the complexity of the operating environment. Furthermore, graduates will take a disciplined approach to meet organizational challenges and are motivated to continue learning and improving throughout their careers.





HOAC Leaders in Training (cont.)

Graduating from FEMA Emergency Management Institute’s National Emergency Management Advanced Academy

By: **CDR Abraham Marrero – ASPR**



Emmitsburg, MD- I just recently graduated from FEMA’s National Emergency Management Advanced Academy at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, MD., after completing the full curriculum that provides the strategic level training and education in the essential skills and tools for emergency management professionals to lead dynamic and resilient programs.

Over the past year, I completed the four resident courses with three short distance learning sessions in the Advanced Academy including: Application of Advanced Individual Concepts in Emergency Management, Assessment of Teams in Professional Emergency Management, Contemporary Issues in the Emergency Management Organization and Advanced Concepts and Policy in the Emergency Management Profession.

FEMA’s National Emergency Management Advanced Academy (NEMAA) reinforces the qualities needed to lead emergency management programs, provides relevant management theories and concepts, and utilizes appropriate case studies. By working within their series, Advanced Academy participants work within a collaborative environment on projects and establish a network of their peers. The Academy is designed for emerging leaders and mid-level managers wanting to advance their skillset. Students learn skills critical to performing leadership responsibilities such as program management and oversight, effective communication at all levels, integrated collaboration, and strategic thinking. The Advanced Academy provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their critical thinking ability through a NEMAA paper. Students apply the key learning concepts from the Advanced Academy curriculum relative to their own skillsets and abilities within their organizations, and their own performance environments.



HOAC Leaders in Training (cont.)

FEMA’s Emergency Management Professional Program (EMPP) curriculum is designed to provide a lifetime of learning for emergency managers and includes three separate, but closely threaded, training programs including the National Emergency Management Basic Academy; a specialized and technical training program to develop specific, fundamental skill sets; the National Emergency Management Advanced Academy; and the National Emergency Management Executive Academy; a program designed to challenge and enhance the talents of the nation’s emergency management senior executives through critical thinking, visionary strategic planning, challenging conventional concepts, and negotiation and conflict resolution applied to complex real-world problems.

For more information on FEMA’s training classes through the Basic, Advanced, and Executive Academies, or other emergency management courses, go to: <http://training.fema.gov/empp/>.



FEMA

Emergency
Management
Institute



LEADERSHIP CORNER



CAPT Luis Rodríguez Los Consejos de Capitán

I feel extremely privileged to be able to write these lines for La Gazeta. I am not a long-time Captain as I just got promoted this past July 2022. However, after that it has become some sort of stardom for now CAPT L-ROD for accomplishing what it seems more and more an impossible feat. I feel compelled to give you some lines here of encouragement, life, and leadership that helped me persevere, stay positive even during disappointing times, and grow along the way.

Encouragement

Believe in yourself. You are here not to see if you can do the job, rather you are here because you can do it. **BELIEVE YOU CAN.** You are a USPHS Commissioned Officer. A health professional like no other, part of the only uniformed service in the world dedicated solely to defend the nation's health. This is nothing short of extraordinary.

Life

I am as honest as they come, and will tell you that my career has come with many frustrations, including failing to promote. This year was my fourth promotion cycle for Captain. Sometime along the way, I decided to **ENJOY THE JOURNEY.** I have lived in three states and one territory, have traveled extensively, and have helped those in distress. Use your PHS career to live the life, go places, learn about other cultures, look for ways to volunteer and network, do good, and grow yourself inside out. We set goals for ourselves, but happiness cannot come only from achieving the goals, please enjoy the journey as much as the destination.

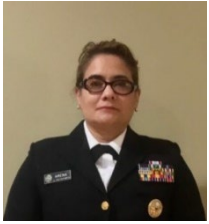
Leadership

My main leadership phrase is **LEAD BY EXAMPLE.** Walk the walk. Don't ask anyone to do anything you would not do. Take responsibility for your actions. Be a great listener. Be trustworthy. Build your people, at work and at home. Be that leader that unites people. Be sharp wearing your uniform. Learn from your mistakes. Respect the chain of command. Keep your cool. All in all, try your hardest to be the best person and officer you can be!





HOAC Leadership Corner (cont.)



HOAC Senior Advisor: CAPT Ivonne Arena - DHA



How to develop a sound personal leadership development plan

If our PHS Officers are looking to develop their leadership capability, one important strategy for guiding growth is to create a personal leadership development plan. This type of plan can help our officers to grow in their current role and also prepare them to take on additional leadership responsibilities in a new role.

Step 1-Before the Plan: Develop a Self-Assessment

Prior to creating your personal leadership development plan, it is recommended to make a list of what you feel are the 10 to 15 characteristics of an effective leader. Creating this list of leadership qualities will help our officers to assess their own skills. GovLeaders.org, a resource for managers and leaders, recommended that we think about a “life mission statement.” Similar to an organization mission statement, this is meant to link our leadership development efforts with your long-term personal and professional goals.

Step 2-Identify the elements of the Personal Leadership Development plan

1. Core Skills set to Master

Officers will need to identify the [skills that align with their leadership development goals](#) but are not part of their existing job responsibilities. If someone you currently work with has these skills, ask if you can shadow them or practice with them. If not, look for external resources that will help you build these skills.

2. Experience Gaps to Close.

These can include starting a new project, turning around a project that is not going well, managing larger and more mission-critical projects, and managing in a crisis.



HOAC Leadership Corner (cont.)

3. New Relationships to Build

As a leader, you interact with a variety of stakeholders on a regular basis. Many are within your organization and include department heads, front-line employees, and managers with different skill sets but similar tenure. As you develop this plan it is critical to identify the stakeholders with whom you'd like to have a stronger, beneficial relationship and reach out to start the conversation.

4. Key Action Items to Complete

As noted, the [specifics of a leadership development plan](#) should include strengths as well as potential areas of improvement. For each area where you see potential to improve, include an action item, the timeframe in which you want to complete the task, and the cost (in time and/or money).

5. Critical Indicators of Success

- Improving the quality of work
- Improving teamwork and morale
- Increasing delegation of responsibility
- Strategic planning and preparation

Step 3-Beyond the Plan: Building Leadership Development into your Role

A personal leadership plan should be a living document. You should revisit it on a regular basis to ensure that you are addressing the areas of improvement that you identified for yourself and meeting the timelines you set for taking on new responsibilities, building new skills, and so on. There are a few activities that you can add to your regular routine to support your development as a leader.

- a. Seek feedback.**
- b. Take time to reflect.**
- c. Find a mentor.**
- d. Sign up for training.**





2021 Subcommittee Accomplishments

Awards and Recognition:



LCDR Denise Duran - CDC



- Disseminated awards announcement on Feb 5th and extended nominations' acceptance date to Mar 31st to allow additional time for participation.
- Announced award nominations through the JOAG listserve on Feb 12th to increase awareness and visibility.
- Presented Findlay award nomination process during March 18, 2021 General HOAC meeting to increase interest and increase competition.
- Successfully recruited seven subcommittee members to serve as reviewers of the annual award process making the subgroup more effective by dividing out the tasks.



CDR Juana Figueroa- BOP



- Updated awards de-identification and scoring procedures making the process and implementation more streamlined and efficient.
- De-identified and scored two nomination packages for VADM Antonia C. Novello, three nomination packages for VADM Richard Carmona awards and three nomination packages for Juan Carlos Finlay (Significant Achievement category), supporting the award process to choose the ultimate winner of the award.
- Selected LCDR Jaqueline Rodriguez as recipient of the 2021 VADM Antonia C. Novello, CDR Luz Rivera as recipient of the 2021 VADM Richard H. Carmona, LT Sandra Herrera as recipient of the 2021 Juan Carlos Finlay for Significant Achievement.

Charter and Bylaws:



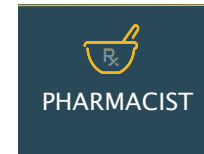
CDR Matthew Lozier - CDC



- Conducted thorough review and revisions of Charter and Bylaws (including the Appendices). Made revisions so that they reflect how work is conducted. Reinserted language about selecting the Senior Advisor, and reformatted the Appendices so that they were organized, had page numbers, and removed parts of the Appendices that were outdated.



LCDR Thalia Vega - IHS



- Based on review of Charter and Bylaws, provided guidance to Executive Committee about what to do when there is a tie in the voting for Executive Committee positions.
- Based on review of Charter and Bylaws, provided guidance to Executive Committee about how subcommittees provide end of year letters of appreciation to HOAC members who supported subcommittee activities.

Communications and Public Relations:



LCDR Cristina Mosquera
FDA



- Revamped and Published "La Gaceta" Summer 2021 Edition 2.0 – The best Newsletter in the USPHS Fleet.
- Created new HOAC Instagram account which has improved group visibility, promoted HOAC activities, events, networking, and health education messages.
- Managed HOAC Officer Facebook community which promoted HOAC activities, events, networking, and health education messages.



CDR Abraham Marrero
- ASPR



- Showcased Monthly Officer Spotlights (Voting Member and Non-Voting Member) on the monthly HOAC call and posted photos and bio on Facebook and Instagram to showcase and learn more about our wonderful and hardworking Officers.
- Continued to keep HOAC Website up to date for all members.



2021 Subcommittee Accomplishments (cont.)

Deployment and Readiness:



LCDR Paula Arango- ICE



- Maintain AC Active Bilingual Officers Roster: 150 participants
- Responded to 67 emails from our call to update the roster.
- Updated the HOAC officer roster of officers proficient in Spanish by interviewing 14 new officers.
- Reviewed the Deployment and Readiness Subcommittee Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
- Recruited volunteers for bilingual speakers and officers who would like to learn Spanish for our subcommittee's buddy system program.
- Compiled and distributed deployment readiness information to the HOAC membership.



LCDR Jorge Muñiz-Ortiz
- HRSA



- Reviewed and revised the 2016 Medical Spanish 101 document.
- Established a training program for Spanish learners.
- Volunteered to mentor HOAC officers in the first ever HOAC Deployment Mentoring project
- Projects:
 - Buddy System: Lead LT Joshua Marrero and Co-lead LCDR Karla Valles
 - Deployment Mentorship
 - Roster Management: Lead LT Ana Laur
- Documents with Medical Spanish Terms
- PACE/HOAC collaboration: Translated PowerPoint Presentation on HIV 101 (Translation Project 1st Phase – HOAC)

Nomination and Membership:



LCDR Leslie A. Rivera Rosado



- The Nomination and Membership subcommittee ran a very successful voting member recruitment campaign. On July 12, 2021, the N&M subcommittee distributed the Call for Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee Voting Member Nominations to the various PAC/advisory group chairs for distribution via their listserv. The N&M sub-committee also posted on social media (HOAC, JOAG, and SciPAC Facebook Pages) with a submission deadline of August 06, 2021. Four VM positions will open for the 2022-2025 term.



CDR Gustavo Ceinos - DHS



- On September 27, 2021, the N&M subcommittee finalized the selection of the four new HOAC VM for the next 3-year term (1/2022- 12/2024) The top four applicants were selected.
- The four selected applicants were notified on October 8, 2021, and their Agency liaisons provided concurrence by October 18, 2021. The non-selected applicants were notified on October 12, 2021.
- Official VM nomination packages were prepared and submitted to MOLC on November 2, 2021.
- Letters of Appointment signed by the Surgeon General were sent to the new VMs on November 22, 2021.

Outreach and Education:



CDR Michelle Rodriguez - FDA



- Led the planning and execution of the 2021 Hispanic Heritage Months activities in collaboration with other employee organizations such as HHS HEO and FDA-HOLA resulting in 5 virtual events. In addition to presentations, we incorporated fun activities such as sharing a list of relevant Hispanic movies to engage multiple audiences.
- Collaborated with PACE and the Deployment subcommittee on COVID-related outreach to establish a mechanism to properly vet fully bilingual officers to present Covid presentations on community engagement activities in Spanish and deployment mentorship to help prepare officers for deployments, respectively.



LCDR Joshua Medero-Padin - ASPR



- Identified resources for officers to conduct remote volunteer activities to promote safe education and outreach activities during the pandemic including 1) Translators without Borders and 2) United Nations Online Volunteers. The links were posted in the HOAC's Facebook page.
- Reviewed current SOPs from other subcommittees to inform the development of a new SOP for the Outreach and Education SC. The current draft is the first by this SC and amongst other things, includes guidance for non-voting members participation.



2021 Subcommittee Accomplishments (cont.)

Recruitment and Retention:



CDR Melissa Parra - CMS



- RHOAC university and college standardized recruitment email approved by OSG. Recruitment email is sent out to universities and colleges with predominantly Hispanic populations, Hispanic student organizations within large universities, and Hispanic professional organizations.
- HOAC Recruitment Information Packet was created and approved by OSG which will be used to distribute in the recruitment email and to anyone who is interested in HOAC and or PHS.
- Recruited 6 sub-committee members to ease awards scoring process.



CDR Cesar Perez - FDA



- HOAC hot Tips/Brochure was created and approved to be distributed at OBC and new members.
- HOAC slide presentation was created for OBC.
- HOAC slide presentation was created to be distributed to interested new accessions and interested members wanting to know more about HOAC.

Executive Committee



LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas - FDA



CHAIR ELECT

- Collaborated, alongside the Chair, on all HOAC related matters for the year. Recruited ten new members to HOAC members during calendar year 2020.
- Coordinated eight Officer Spotlights for the General Meetings and Facebook group publication.
- Provided guidance to all HOAC Subcommittees (SC). Specially, served as a mentor for the Outreach and Education SC during Hispanic Heritage Month and Nomination and Membership SC during 2021 new voting members selection process.
- Supervised all MOLC related activities and deadlines.



CDR Matthew Rodriguez - CMS



SECRETARY

- Organized HOAC monthly meetings or ad-hoc meetings called by Chair, sent out agendas and calendar invitations.
- Prepared minutes at meetings and teleconferences that document highlights of issues and discussion, particularly controversial issues, and their resolution as well as proposals and votes.
- Collected Executive Committee and Subcommittee monthly reports as part of the meeting minutes.
- Handled HOAC correspondence that became a permanent part of the HOAC records.



LCDR Jackeline Rodriguez - CMS



TREASURER

- Served as Liaison and corresponding point of contact with Commissioned Officers Foundation to receive updates about HOAC funds.
- Prepared monthly financial reports for HOAC Executive Committee.
- Provided treasury report at monthly HOAC meetings.
- Maintained a record of all pending financial transactions.
- Updated the treasury standard operating procedures (SOP)
- Oversaw inventory for commemorative coins and stickers.

If you are interested in joining HOAC or have any questions please contact the Nomination and Membership Subcommittee Chairs: LCDR Leslie Rivera-Rosado - Leslie.Rivera-Rosado@fda.hhs.gov or CDR Gustavo Ceinos - Gustavo.Ceinos@hq.dhs.gov.

Visit our [Website](#) |
Join us at [USPHS HOAC Facebook Group](#)



OUTGOING MESSAGE FROM 2021 HOAC CHAIR

LCDR Carlos Gonzalez-Mercado



Greetings fellow USPHS officers and members of HOAC!

I am more than grateful and proud to have had the opportunity to represent you as the HOAC Chair in 2021. It was a year of many challenges for our group and we consistently rose from all of them.

Year 2021 welcomed us with many uncertainties regarding our jobs, roles, schedules, expectations, and the many responsibilities we aim to accomplish every year. HOAC continued to excel throughout the year with great energy and commitment that characterize all of us.

As always, I am very appreciative of the constant support and collaboration from the Executive Committee members, who all took on the challenges to step into different roles and responsibilities even with deployments, sickness, family matters, and other life hurdles. I could not have done it without their support and understanding.

I am proud to see how many of you stepped out of your comfort zone to take upon leadership roles and continue supporting HOAC's mission throughout this year.

To all HOAC voting members, subcommittee leads, and non-voting members, thank you!

