



Holiday Newsletter

HOLIDAY ISSUE

DECEMBER 14, 2018

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Greetings MLS Officers,

First, let me thank each of you for your diligence and commitment to excellence. MLSPAG would not have made it this far without your inputs and sacrifices. I appreciate each of you; the Chairs and Co-Chairs, members of the subcommittees, the Secretary and MLSPAG officers. It has been a great pleasure to serve in the capacity of the Chair of the MLSPAG for 2018. The journey has been rewarding and impactful. Many have said to me personally that MLSPAG has been a good example to other PAGs. This is really exciting and encouraging. I want this to continue, even as we end this term of leadership and move to another. I want to personally ask that the same energy, diligence and commitment shown this past year by each of you, continues. We are in a season of opportunities for our profession. My hope is that we will be fully engaged to identify and follow through to help this generation and many generations to come after us.

The United States Public health Service has been in a transformation phase since the wake of the year 2015. The impact of the transformation became very obvious as we entered the year 2018. As we have seen, we are very fortunate to have seasoned leaders advocating for all of us when it mattered most. At this point, I would like to congratulate every MLS Officer on what we have accomplished this year: Early in the year of 2018 we made few scalable and achievable goals:

- (a) to create awareness of our profession.
- (b) to engage young officers in career development.
- (c) to encourage MLSPAG officers on how to take Leadership training as a priority in their career growth.
- (d) to help our fellow officers individually and collectively.

I am happy to let you know that we could not have done this alone, your help and commitments made it possible to achieve our goals and even more. We published an article about our profession in ASCP Critical Values; the MLSPAG Technical Readiness subcommittee approach for advanced technical readiness was adopted by other Health Services PAGs; encouraged junior and senior officers on career development; and introduced leadership training during the 2018 COA Symposium. Lastly, as I turn the gavel to the next Chair, I will like to highlight some of the strategic areas of importance that will need immediate attention. Most of which I have already discussed with my successor: All subcommittees' SOPs are under final review, MLSPAG Organizational Chart, Certification renewal letter from ASCP for affected officers, and Clinical Hours for clinical and non-clinical billets. As I move into another responsibility as the Chair of ASCP Council of Laboratory Professionals in 2019, I look forward to meeting all of you at some point. You can always reach me if you have any question at oloyedeb@gwu.edu. Tel: 9196418232.

Enjoy your holidays and stay safe.,
CDR Babatunde Oloyede, MLSPAG CHAIR 2018

Deployment Stories

Hurricane Michael Offers a First for the Commissioned Corps

By LCDR Jessica Damon, MLS, MPH

Hurricane Michael, a powerful Category 4 storm, reaching maximum wind speeds of 155mph (just 2mph shy of being classified as a Category 5) tore a merciless path through the panhandle of Florida and into southern Georgia on Wednesday, October 10th. The most powerful storm on record to have struck the Florida panhandle, Michael's devastating wind speeds left many of the beautiful pale sanded shoreline communities in

Base of Operations (BoO) a series of 5 tents providing Command, Triage, Green Level Care, Yellow Level Care and Pharmacy.



utter ruins. As part of the recovery efforts, Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) were sent to local hospitals in the most heavily impacted areas to provide emergency department decompression. On October 22nd, as these missions were beginning to wind down, I was privileged to deploy to Panama City's Bay Medical Sacred Heart Hospital as the USPHS Commissioned Corps tested a new, smaller deployment configuration, called a Health Medical Task Force (HMTF). An HMTF is an eight person clinical team comprised of providers, nurses and pharmacists. Rapid Deployment Force 4 (RDF4) was asked to form 2 HMTFs to be embedded with the GA-3 DMAT team at Bay Medical for the completion of the mission. Although the role of medical technologist is not typically part of the configuration, I served this mission as the

HMTF's Logistics/Safety officer with Administrative Support from LT Alyssa Fine, RN. The integrated team

led by Wendy Nesheim, Team Commander of GA-3 DMAT, welcomed our officers to the Base of Operations, a series of tents erected outside of the Bay Medical emergency department where we worked to care for patients triaged as green or yellow. This consisted mainly of lacerations, minor illnesses, and chronic conditions requiring medication support. Bay Medical Center, a level 2 trauma center, had sustained significant damage in the storm. All 5 floors of the hospital had been evacuated, but the hospital administration had managed to reopen and staff their Emergency Department to support and care for their friends and neighbors. The hospital allowed the DMAT and USPHS personnel to billet on the 5th floor, typically the Cardiac Care Unit, and they



Integrated team – USPHS, DMAT, and ESF 13 force protection – close of mission with the battered Bay Medical hospital in the background.

Deployment Stories cont.



Destruction at Mexico City Beach, Florida.

they opened their cafeteria to make certain we and other workers on site were fed. Although the deployment lasted only one week, this was sufficient time to build wonderful bonds of collegial friendship with our DMAT counterparts. In the Hot Wash report provided to Incident Command, both teams reported the integrated mission to be a remarkable success. The future of the HMTF may help the USPHS Commissioned Corps to serve more deployment operations throughout the year and is part of the modernization efforts by ADM Giroir and SG Adams to increase the agility and flexibility of the Corps.

USPHS Officers visit Mexico City Beach, FL post Hurricane Michael (Front row, right side, is LCDR Jessica Damon, MLS, MPH.





New Voting Member:

LT Danielle Baquero, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}

Consumer Safety Officer

U. S. Food & Drug Administration

Maitland, FL

Education:

- **Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Alabama (2008)**
- **Bachelor of Science in Clinical Laboratory Sciences from the University of West Florida (2011)**
- **I am currently working on my MPH with a concentration in Public Health Practice from the University of South Florida**

Background: Hometown, Family, Hobbies:

I was born and raised in Daphne, Alabama. I have a twin sister, an older sister, a younger brother, and an older half-brother. I enjoy traveling and recently went to Canada to Banff National Park. I hiked a lot of different trails and I got to see Lake Louise and Lake Moraine. I grew up playing sports and I enjoy running, HIIT classes, yoga, and circuit training. I am happily married to an active duty Army soldier who is part of the 82nd Airborne Division out of Fort Bragg, NC.

Current Assignment and what you like most about it/What I like most about my job:

I currently work as a Consumer Safety Officer (CSO) with the Office of Biological Products Operations. I enjoy my job because I still get to use my Med Tech background for certain inspections. Every inspection is different, so I'm always encountering new challenges, which I appreciate because I learn so much and it only continues to expand my knowledge. Also, as a CSO, I get to travel all over Florida and occasionally go out of the state.

Duties:

As a Consumer Safety Officer, I am responsible for inspecting human blood and tissue establishments. Some of my duties include independently planning and conducting inspections and investigations, collecting samples, performing recall audit checks, following up on fatalities, and serving as an instructor for on-the-job training. Being in Florida I have done many hurricane follow-ups, which makes for a unique assignment.

Previous Assignments:

My previous assignment was with the Bureau of Prisons where I worked as a Medical Technologist in Butner, NC. I worked as the sole Med Tech on morning watch (11pm-7am) and was responsible for equipment maintenance, quality control, calibrations, and phlebotomy.



New Voting Member:

LCDR Thomas Maruna MLS(ASCP)^{CM}

Senior Program Management Officer

Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats

Office of the Commissioner

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Education:

Master of Arts: Defense and Strategic Studies U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI	2017 - Present
Master of Science: Biotechnology – Biodefense Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD	2011 - 2014
Master of Science: Biotechnology – Enterprise Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD	2011 – 2014
Bachelor of Science: Clinical Laboratory Science George Washington University, Washington, D.C.	2004 – 2008

Background: Hometown, Family, Hobbies:

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Hobbies: kayaking, hiking/backpacking, camping, sailing, outdoors generally, travel

What I like most about my job:

I enjoy working with OPDIVS across the federal government, private companies, and academia to develop cutting-edge technologies and medical countermeasures to protect the American public. The scope of practice in Office of Counterterrorism and Emerging Threats is very broad, and I work on a team with a diverse set of professionals with hard-science backgrounds that make our daily work intellectually stimulating, as well as impactful on a large scale. Furthermore, of the six commissioned officers that I work with, five of them have prior service backgrounds similar to mine, making the corps officer dynamic fun and entertaining from a cultural perspective. In all, I would say that the high-level impact and general focus area of my work (i.e., counter-terrorism and medical countermeasures), and especially the people I get to spend each day with make my job enjoyable.

Duties:

Grant review & management, industry consultation, disaster management/coordination, intramural research coordination, internal assessment, educational course development

Previous Assignments:

- Senior Program Management Officer, Office of the Director, Center for Biologist Evaluation and Research, U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- Senior Regulatory Management Officer, Office of Tissues and Advanced Therapies, Center for Biologist Evaluation and Research, U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- Senior Regulatory Management Officer, Office of Blood Research and Review, Center for Biologist Evaluation and Research, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

The MLSPAG Awards Survey **by CDR Toni Bledsoe and LT Danielle Terrett**

Have you been frustrated with the Commissioned Corps Award process? Do you know how to write a strong narrative for an award nomination? Turns out, you aren't alone in your frustration. The MLSPAG Data and Evaluation Subcommittee created an Awards Questionnaire to gather information from our fellow MLS officers to try to identify specific problems or perceived problems in the CC Award process. We also asked for suggestions to improve the award process. First of all, some of the demographics: 35 officers responded to the survey with 30% of the officers having 11 – 15 years in the corps. The second highest group of responses (25%) came from 16 – 20 year career officers. The responses primarily came from O-4 (37%) and O-5 (34%) - no responses came from O-6 officers. Seventy-eight percent of the officers have never served on an awards board. A majority (80%) of the officers received awards from their current agency with 25% having 5 or more individual awards and 45% having 5 or more group awards from their current agency (82% of officers received group awards from current agency). 25 % of non-clinical billet officers have received the Field Medical Readiness Badge before the changes were made to the APFT and 6% after changes in the APFT. The overall rating of the award process was pretty much evenly distributed: Received very little help (33%), Received some help (29%), Where's my award? (20%), and I have a good idea how the process works (17%). Where did the officers receive the most help in writing and submitting awards? Most officers received assistance from a Coworker (38%) or a Mentor (38%). (17% of the officers received help from Corps Liaison and the HS PAC). Most of the officers believed their award to be held up at their Agency Review Board (44%) or at their Service Area/CIO Review Board. The advice that officers believed that would be the most helpful to them was having examples of successful narratives for each type of award (85%). To a lesser extent officers thought that one on one time with an award board member (50%) or a PowerPoint training (42%) would be beneficial.

Most of the officers also submitted criticisms and suggestions for improvement. Some are listed below:

Criticisms: The process takes too long; Award guidance is inconsistent between agencies; the process is biased; don't allow the liaison to downgrade an award without explanation that has been signed off by the agency; liaisons seem to have different opinions about what is worthy of an award; description for higher level awards appear to pertain mainly to Flag billets, manager, or leadership level positions – most officers do not fall into these categories; awards get 'lost,' confusing, frustrating, the worst experience - haven't tried to submit another award.

Suggestions for Improvement: Standardize and streamline the process between agencies; make the awards process like the COER with notifications of status changes as the award moves through the award review/process; re-write the CC Awards prescribed guidelines; clarify how every officer, no matter their billet, can receive awards; create a style/format template to be used by all agencies; educate civilian supervisors in the importance of CC awards to an officer's career and provide training in the writing/ submission of these awards.

(My thanks to the members of the MLSPAG Data & Evaluation Subcommittee, CDR Cara Nichols, LCDR Renae Hill, and LT Danielle Terrett, for their support and assistance throughout 2018.

Sincerely, CDR Toni Bledsoe, Chair, MLSPAG Data & Evaluation Subcommittee)

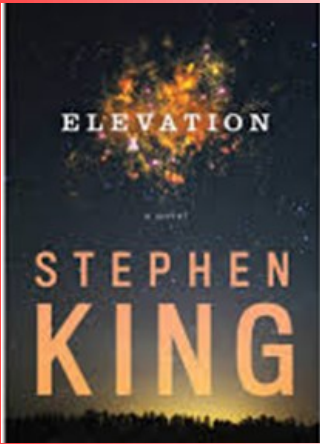
To view the actual survey results, please open the following links:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-N353SYV/>

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-DYN6CYV/>

GOOD READS by CDR Toni Bledsoe

Elevation by Stephen King



I came across this book at the Pittsburgh International Airport as I was on my way to Dallas, Texas, to celebrate my son's birthday. (How 'bout them Cowboys!). This book is a short but sweet read. It's a surprising tale from the master of horror, Stephen King. There is, of course, bizarre and un-explainable elements to the story. The story takes place in the small New England town of Castle Rock. Newly divorced successful website designer Scott Carey is having weight problems. Scott thinks his problem is actually a problem with gravity. When Scott steps on his bathroom scales he discovers that he is steadily losing weight. He also discovers that he weighs the same naked, with his clothes on, or with 15 pounds of change in his pockets – it doesn't matter- the scale stays the same. Also remaining the same is his clothing size and his physical appearance. His good friend, retired physician, Doc Ellis, has never seen anything like Scott's case. There are no reports of this phenomenon described on WebMD or Google (of course he did a Google search!). Scott feels better than he has felt in years. He feels healthy, light-hearted energized and a little guilty. Scott feels like he needs to make amends for his involvement in misunderstandings and prejudices which he observes in his community. The prejudices are directed toward his neighbors, Deirdre and Missy, a same sex married couple. The turning point of the story occurs during the Castle Rock 12k Turkey Trot. Scott makes a wager with Deirdre, a former nationally-ranked long distance runner and Olympic hopeful, that he will beat her and win the Turkey Trot. Remember, Scott appears to be an overweight middle-aged male who is one heartbeat away from a major coronary event. Deirdre thinks Scott is delusional, she is the clear favorite to win the race. Everything changes in a flash- a flash of lightning and in a flash of cameras that capture the moment it takes one runner to help another in celebration of the day. The crowd is swept up in the exhilarating moment. I will leave you to discover the fate of Scott Carey, the fate of the good inhabitants of Castle Rock, and last but not least, the fate of Scott's beloved pet, Bill D. Cat.

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION ACKNOWLEDGES ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

By LCDR Charles Boison

It is not out of place that all Veterans Day celebrations focus on the sacrifices made by members of our armed forces fraternity. For the past three years, I have attended Veterans Day ceremonies at Holman Middle School in Richmond, VA, where the principal and students have always followed this tradition since the school was opened in 2010.

On Friday, November 9, 2018, I attended the Veterans Day celebration at one of my daughter's school. This invitation is extended to all students' parents who are serving or have served in the military. What made this year's celebration special was the fact that the guest speaker paid tribute to public health officers who are fighting in wars, such as diseases that do not require the use of traditional weapons. As a navy veteran and an active duty USPHS officer, I was extended the olive branch to attend. All invited veterans; over 40 in number were ushered and seated by 8:30 am, which was 30 minutes prior to commencement of the program. A student population of approximately 1,000 was seated in the school's auditorium before 9:00 am.

The celebration and honoring of veterans began a couple of minutes after 9:00 AM. Activities planned for the program included the Pledge of Allegiance, presentation of the National Anthem, introduction of the school's principals, guest speaker and veterans, welcome message, the History of Veterans Day, Veterans Day Essays, and a rendition of "God Bless the USA," to name a few.

The ceremony was introduced by the Student Council Association President, Ms. Asia Hall, who was the Master of Ceremony (MC). Ms. Christie Forrest, an Assistant Principal, introduced the timeline of the ceremony known as "Recognition of Veterans." The traditional recognition of veterans as each branch of the military stood up during the playing of respective anthems marked a very significant aspect of the ceremony. The Principal of the school, Dr. Brian Fellows, a grandson of a marine, welcomed all veterans and paid tribute to his late grandfather who had donated a flag to the school prior to his passing. Dr. Fellows also appreciated the school's teachers who work tirelessly to maintain this tradition and help make the school as great as it is. Mr. Brock Goehler, another Assistant Principal narrated a History of Veterans Day, followed by essays written by selected students from grades 6, 7, and 8. "God Bless America," composed by Lee Greenwood, was beautifully sung by Ms. Amy Ladd, followed by an enthusiastic applause from the audience.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER'S ADDRESS

The "game" changer for me about this year's celebration was the contents of the message delivered by the keynote speaker, hence the significance of this report. LTC Charles Halverson, United States Army, delivered a simple, thought-provoking, and inspiring message entitled "Be kind, be a friend, and be helpful." LTC Halverson began his address by saying, "I am a soldier... serving our country. The army needs people with several skills. We need all sorts of professions. We need not only people serving humans, but also fighting diseases like Ebola- I served in Liberia with United States Public Health Officers. I am a lawyer, serving my country. Serving means putting the interest of others first, appreciate those who wear the uniform. We need to appreciate lawyers, politicians, and teachers who make our country better."

LTC Halverson paused midway of his speech and asked the students this question? "How about you students, what can you do?" LTC Halverson continued and encouraged the students: 1) To be kind; 2) to be a friend and; 3) to be helpful. He explained to the students how they could achieve the steps he had prescribed.

Veterans Day Celebration cont.

He urged the students to practice these recommendations and make the country a better place for others. A standing ovation after his speech made clear that LTC Halverson's advice resonated with the students.

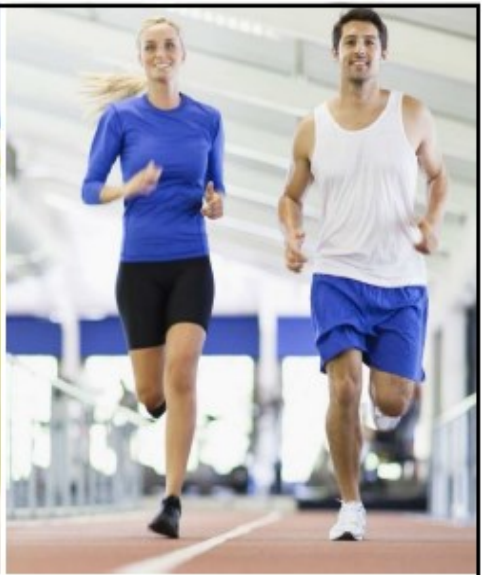
The ceremony, now at its climax, kicked off with the school's Intermediate Band playing "March from First Suite for Military Band," a video on American Tears. The closing was prompted by Principal Fellows and "Taps" played by Eight Grader Ms. Marguerite Hock. Of course, the ceremony would not be complete until the school played its anthem, Holman Standing Proud. This song was rendered by the Holman Small Vocal Ensemble, which was composed, accompanied, and directed by Ms. Lizzie Williamson.

As is the tradition of the school, all veterans were given the honor to file out of the auditorium first, and were honored with a breakfast/reception at the school's library.

During the reception, LTC Halverson, Master Sergeant Rabin Ramsook, and I had a time of reminiscence on our service to the country and what role each of our branch of service plays each day. LTC Halverson was very appreciative of the role the USPHS played during the Ebola response in Liberia, West Africa. Master Sergeant Rabin Ramsook, United States Airforce (USAF), who is Superintendent, 345th Training Squadron, Fort Lee, VA, whose daughter is a student of Holman, gave us a summary of his military career over the years.

Photo shows the Keynote Speaker, LTC Halverson, flanked by LCDR Charles Boison and Chief Master Sergeant Rabin Ramsook, USAF, Fort Lee, VA. Also looking in the camera is Dr Fellows, Principal of Holman Middle School.





THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING FIT DURING THE HOLIDAYS

CDR TRACI MULLINS



For many, the holiday season symbolizes a time to give thanks, spend time with family, and to reflect on the past year. The winter months are also full of indulgence and celebration. While we all try our best to stay on track during the holidays, it is not uncommon to pick-up unhealthy habits while allowing some of our healthier routines to momentarily take a backseat.

HOLIDAY WEIGHT GAIN

- According to a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, holiday weight gain is an issue in America and abroad. It found that the American participants experienced a 0.2% increase in weight over the Thanksgiving holiday followed by a 0.4% increase over Christmas. Our German counterparts experienced an increase in body weight by 0.6% over Christmas and an incremental 0.2% over Easter. Finally, Japanese participants saw a 0.5% increase in body weight over Christmas and 0.3% boost over Golden Week, a period which includes four national holidays.

BATTLE THE BULGE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

- The ramifications of overindulging and allowing your fitness routine to slip during the holidays can go far beyond a few pounds on the scale or an extra notch on your belt. There are a myriad of health risks associated with sudden weight gain. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease, being overweight can put you at risk of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, certain types of cancer, and more
- The list of benefits of physical activity goes on and on; helping to maintain a healthy weight, producing natural endorphins, fighting heart disease and more. To add to those benefits, research findings have reported a link between regular physical activity and a reduced risk of certain types of cancers.
- Rather than simply allowing yourself to gain a few extra pounds this holiday season, get moving! Make the commitment now to stick to your workout and/or activity routine. Hit the gym a little harder the day before and the day after a major holiday splurge and consider skipping the occasional sweet or cocktail – or opt for healthier food options or portion control. By taking a few measures now, you will be doing yourself and your body a lot of favors.

Make Fit Fun

By: LT Danielle Baquero, MLS(ASCP)CM



During the Holidays many of us take a break from our busy schedules and spend time with our family and friends. We enjoy each other's company, but this sometimes involves eating a lot of food, which is fine, but we just need to remember to maintain a balance. With family and friends in town, it is the perfect opportunity to get together and exercise! Exercising does not always mean going to the gym and lifting weights or going on a long run. Some ideas for exercising over the Holidays include tossing the football around with nieces or nephews or taking a walk with a family member while catching up. Does your town have any Holiday themed runs? I'm fortunate to live in an area that has many types of races or physical activity events almost every weekend. There are plenty of races that not only allow walkers or runners, but they are

also pet friendly and allow strollers. My husband and I are always looking for races especially those that support a great cause. Recently we ran a 5k race that supported Veterans and in November we participated in a 9.3-mile ruck to support those service members processing out of the military. Over the Thanksgiving Holiday, my sisters and I caught up with each other while taking a walk down the beach. I included a fun picture we took, which incorporated much exercise after all the jumping we did to get this picture! So next time you get in a rut about exercising remember to make it fun and you will not even realize that you are exercising!



Fitness Tip #1
Walking in a Winter Wonderland
By LCDR Jessica Damon, MLS, MPH

Regardless of the hectic pace of the hustle and bustle as you shop for gifts or travel to visit family and friends, one of the best ways to stay active during the holiday season is to WALK. In 2008, The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) issued Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. This comprehensive document summarizes the findings of major research studies on exercise and health outcomes. Key benefits from the research indicates that “Some physical activity is better than none”. So, when your regular gym rat routine gets disrupted by the holiday season, it is better to exercise some than not at all. A brisk walk (one where you are able to converse but may find yourself breathing a little hard) is good for cardiovascular health. Take a walk with your children, spouse, parent or friend can be equally good for your emotional health. And, one by yourself might be the perfect time to decompress from it all, as walking stimulates blood flow to the brain and increases mental clarity. Better yet, plan your walk to be through a natural environment with trees, rivers, mountains, etc... The Japanese have a word for this which literally translates to “forest bath”. Taking a stroll through green space is proven to help with your mood. In 2015, Gregory J. Bratman, a scientist from Stanford University, along with colleagues, published a study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science in the United States, “Nature experience reduces rumination, going over a single experience or thought repeatedly, and subgenual prefrontal cortex activation titled”. That might sound like quite a mouthful but the crux of the study is that walking in the outdoors, enjoying natural habitats such as city parks, for 90 minutes reduced repetitive negative thoughts in the study participants. Here is what he had to say.

More than 50% of people now live in urban areas. By 2050 this proportion will be 70%. Urbanization is associated with increased levels of mental illness, but it's not yet clear why. Participants who went on a 90-min walk through a natural environment reported lower levels of rumination and showed reduced neural activity in an area of the brain linked to risk for mental illness compared with those who walked through an urban environment.

Other benefits of walking includes its 100% portability. No gear to lug around, no special training to get started, and not even a particular uniform to participate (except, I do suggest a good pair of walking shoes). Whether you are travelling cross country by car, plane or train your feet will be right there with you. And, before you start to argue, that the winter is just too cold for walking... scientists from Maastricht University in the Netherlands assert in Trends in Endocrinology and Metabolism, that 'regular exposure to mild cold may provide a healthy and sustainable alternative strategy for increasing energy expenditure.' Therefore, you actually get a better bang for your buck if there is a chill in the air. So, as the merry making ramps up for the season, I hope that you will “face unafraid, plans that we’ve made, walking in a winter wonderland”.

Christmas Traditions

By: LCDR Julie Smoot

As a child, and still as an adult, I loved Christmas and was always so excited for this joyous time to roll around. One of the reasons I loved Christmas were the traditions my family took part in year after year. Every year my father would make his special chocolate candy; a recipe that had been passed down to him from his mother. It is a delicious mix of fudge and milk chocolate bars that is nothing like anything you can buy in a store. My father still makes his candy every year, only at Christmas, and it will be a tradition that will be passed down so that it can continue in our family. The second of our traditions happened on Christmas Eve. My entire family would attend the community Christmas Eve service that was held at a local church at 11pm, so that we worshiped into the first moments of Christmas. As a child, I thought it was fantastic that I got to stay up so late, but I also remember most is the singing. We would sing Christmas carols and there would be special music by members of the community. I think it was these services that really gave me my love of Christmas songs. As amazing as the service always was, the best part of this tradition happened after we got home. My mother would usually fix us hot chocolate and then would allow my sisters and I to each choose a present from under the tree to open. We would open that one present with such excitement, almost like we were doing something we shouldn't be, and then hurry off to bed in anticipation of the coming morning! Christmas in my family is a treasured time of celebration, tradition, and family that I look forward to every year. I hope the holiday season brings the same joy to you and your family!

Holiday Recipe

LCDR Lundy Patrick

Here is a recipe for Peanut Butter Roll which my mother used to make in abundance each year when Christmas rolled around, up in Kentucky. Here is the recipe:

Ingredients:

2 c. Sugar

1/4 c. White corn syrup

1/2 c. Water

1 tsp vanilla

2 lg. Egg whites

Peanut butter

Butter or margarine



Directions:

Beat egg whites and vanilla in a large glass bowl until the whites form peaks. Combine sugar, water and corn syrup. In separate pan, and boil until mixture "threads a hair". SLOWLY stir syrup into egg whites, beating continuously and vigorously until firm (when an indentation is left with finger). Pour onto prepared buttered surface and pat out until about 1/3 inch thick. Spread softened peanut butter on and roll up into a long roll, careful not to tear the candy. Slice into desired thickness and enjoy!

Recipes

The Smells of Christmas and Warmth of the Holidays are Baked Right In Spiced Toffee Cookies

By LCDR Jessica Damon, MLS, MPH

When you relax by the fire this winter, cozied up with your favorite hot drink, you will enjoy this delightful Christmas cookie. The maple, ginger, and toffee meld together in this delightfully spicy, chewy treat. They are quick to whip up, making about 6 dozen in a single batch. A rolled cookie, they can be great fun to prepare with little kitchen helpers about. So, don your festive aprons, push up those long sleeves, and bring out your kitchen aid mixers!

Ingredients:

3/4 cup butter, softened

1 1/2 cups sugar, divided

1 Tbsp. toasted wheat germ

1/4 cup molasses

1 large egg

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. ground ginger

1/2 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. ground cloves

1 cup brickle, milk chocolate coated toffee bits



Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large bowl, cream the butter, 1 cup sugar and wheat germ until light and fluffy. Beat in molasses and egg. In another bowl, whisk flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, salt and cloves; gradually beat into creamed mixture. Fold in the toffee bits. Shape dough into 1 in. balls; roll in remaining sugar. Place 2 in. apart on ungreased baking sheets (best to line with parchment paper). Bake for 10 minutes or until set. Cool on pans for 2 minutes. Remove from pans.

JOIN THE MLSPAG

MEETINGS

*Join us via
teleconference*

*every second Thursday
of every other*

month @ 1400 EST

1-866-882-1054

Passcode: 2066464



To submit an article for the MLSPAG

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Leah Ferrier and LT Angela Hatzenbuhler**

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