



SWPAG Newsletter

Semper Servientes

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Highlights of Leadership



With General David H. Petraeus (US Army, Ret)

By LT Nathan Drew, LT Janelle Phillip, LT Tamika Finch-Hall, CDR Carla Burch, CDR Sherri Bisci, CDR Brandon Johnson, CDR Timothy Pappalardo, & CDR Stephanie Felder

On March 18, 2021 Social Work Professional Advisory Group (SWPAG) officers were given a golden opportunity to hear leadership perspectives from General David H. Petraeus (US Army, Ret). SWPAG and the Health Administration Professional Advisory Group (HAPAG) co-hosted this well-attended virtual event. After an introduction by CDR Stephanie Felder and opening remarks by RADM Matthew Kleiman,



RADM Kleiman, LCSW, BCD

the leadership discussion with General Petraeus was moderated by LT Janelle Phillip.



LT Phillip, LICSW

With more than 37 years of distinguished military service and recognition as one of “America’s 25 Best Leaders” by US News and World Report, General Petraeus provided key insights from his career experiences and gave officers in attendance challenging reflective questions to consider in our own career paths. Below are just a few highlights from the discussion.

Gen. Petraeus began by recommending that officers consider seeking vantage point positions – those positions that involve working under a very senior leader with visibility. These types of positions provide opportunities to learn best practices from such leaders, as well as insight on the types of characteristics that you do not want to model.

Consider how we deal with challenges, missteps, or adversity. These are things that we will always encounter – there will be mistakes made, setbacks, and the unexpected. In each case, understand and recognize what happened, learn from it, and keep moving forward. His words of advice – “Never allow your shoulders to slump,” because others are taking their lead from you. Later in the conversation he revisited this and stated that “leadership under pressure is what leadership is all about.”

In defining leadership, he challenged participants to consider “are you influencing others?” If so, this is leadership – no matter the position title! In discussing

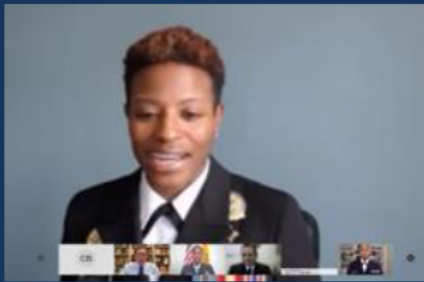
Highlights of Leadership, continues pg. 4



our work alongside those in sister services, he encouraged USPHS officers to exhibit true excellence – be the best that you can possibly be and do it better than the rest.

Team cohesion was a key point – he emphasized that every member of a team should be considered mission critical, and how important it is to remind them of your awareness that they are critical to the mission. Never underestimate anyone’s importance in the success of a mission; you never know when one single person – whether it be from their role, their perspective, their observations, their actions – will be the most important person for that particular mission at a given time.

Finally, in reflecting on leadership in the context of COVID-19, he drew upon experiences in Iraq while explaining the critical importance of these concepts when facing missions of this magnitude: 1) getting the big ideas right, 2) communicating the big ideas to the team, 3) overseeing implementation of the big ideas, and 4) determining how to refine along the way.



CAPT Presley

Closing remarks were provided by CAPT Diedre Presley, Chief Professional Officer of the Health Services Category. While this article alone cannot capture every single pearl of wisdom shared, the live recording of the event will be posted on the MAX.gov HSPAC site for your viewing purposes. ~



Five Minute Mentoring: A Call to Leadership

By LT Candice T. Karber, LICSW,
BCD & LCDR Robert E. Van Meir,
LCSW, BCD, CCHP-MH, CCTP

LCDR Van Meir: Did you bring your SDBs?

LT Karber: No Sir, I thought you only needed to wear those if you planned to present at COA.

LCDR Van Meir: That’s okay. I expect you to present the SWPAG poster tomorrow. Just wear your Khakis this time, and make sure to bring your SDBs next year.

LT Karber: Really? Are you being serious?

LCDR Van Meir: (looks over his glasses with a face of yes)

LT Karber: Roger that Sir. What time do you want me there?

The above scenario took place in 2018 during the annual Commissioned Officers Association Symposium in Texas after LT Karber’s mentor, LCDR Loquita Roberts introduced her to LCDR Van Meir. This was LT Karber’s first Symposium, and she was delighted that LCDR Roberts was helping her to network and understand the importance of attending the after-hours events that were set up by various Committees and Advisory Groups.

Five minute mentoring, continues pg. 5



LT Karber had a rental car, so she was able to offer ride sharing opportunities to fellow Officers who were attending the social gatherings.



The over the glasses look that LCDR Van Meir gave LT Karber was through the back seat of her rental car. LCDR Roberts was seated next to LT Karber in the front passenger seat, and she chimed in with “make sure to put this as a bullet on your CV”. There was a bit more back and forth about what the expectations of presenting the poster meant to the SWPAG, who might stop by, and the importance of seizing unexpected opportunities from both LCDR Roberts and LCDR Van Meir. During that brief car ride, a seed was planted. That next year, motivated by the success of the 2018 Symposium, LT Karber co-presented a poster at the 2019 Symposium in Minneapolis, and later that same year at AMSUS.



The nudge (or kicking out of the nest) that LT Karber received propelled her forward, setting her up for success as a Junior Officer (JO). She met several Senior Officers during that 2018 poster presentation and has since been able to garner other leadership opportunities. LT Karber is no stranger to the importance of mentorship. Her prior service as an Enlisted Soldier with the Army provided her with the first introduction to various Enlisted and Officer leadership and mentorship styles, but the PHS scene offered unique and unforeseen territories.

LT Karber continues to lean heavily on her mentors from decades past, and her more recent official and unofficial mentors in PHS.

What may seem like casual guidance or brief interactions, can have a lasting impact on the trajectory of an individual. Leadership can take the form of being a mentor, a branch chief, a CV reviewer, etc. and a large component consists of modeling.



As a Senior Officer, **have you considered the importance of remembering to not let your eyes wander when talking to a JO because there may be more important people you are canvassing the room to whom you plan to speak?**

Did you decide to correct a JO in front of colleagues, creating an embarrassing experience; instead, did you consider sharing in private?

Have you stepped back from a leadership position, or made space for a co-leading opportunity for a more JO?

The small mentorship opportunities that you create matter, and a little bit can go a long way towards shaping new leaders.

As the wise ancestor Dr. Maya Angelou said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

~



Social Work Practice, Soldier Recovery Unit

By CDR Scott Eppler, LCSW-BCD

The mission of the Soldier Recovery Unit (SRU) for the United States Army at Fort Riley, Kansas is to facilitate and manage care for wounded, ill, or injured (WII) Soldiers, enabling them to successfully return to the force and execute their duties, or prepare them for successful transition to civilian life. We are one of fourteen SRUs across the continental United States.



The Fort Riley SRU takes care of our seven state region's WII Soldiers from Active Duty, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve units. We provide these WII Soldiers with outstanding medical care, advocacy, and leadership. Our goal is to ensure these service members are treated with dignity, respect, and compassion.

To be successful in our mission, we coordinate for a smooth handoff between losing and gaining units. Also, we implement a people first concept of care that ensures each Soldier's nurse case manager, primary care manager, social worker, and squad leader meet and communicate on an official basis to ensure the best possible recovery for our Soldiers. Additionally, we work with each Soldier to establish comprehensive recovery plans, allowing them to create their own recovery goals resourced by the SRU.

We also provide a comprehensive Adaptive Reconditioning Program that optimizes a Soldiers physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being. Because of this program Soldiers are provided with therapeutic coping skills that they can use in times of stress. Our successful Adaptive Reconditioning Program ensures a quality of life upon return to the military force or transitioning to civilian life.



Our community based Remotely Managed Soldiers live with their Families and receive local health care in communities not near Army medical facilities. These Soldiers are still assigned or attached to the SRU and they receive regular support from their unit in managing their comprehensive recovery plan and accessing additional resources.

We also share and partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other governmental agencies to enhance the care and service of Soldiers and Families both at the local and national levels. At Fort Riley, the SRU is involved with numerous community groups; these collaborations allow Soldiers and their Families additional fiscal, health, and outreach resources to enable them to heal.

As a USPHS social worker, I have the privilege of leading a team of four civilian LCSWs and a civilian social service representative to accomplish initial psychosocial evaluations, as well as initial, emergent, and ongoing risk assessments mitigating a

Soldier Recovery Unit, continues pg. 7



Soldier's risk as they engage in their recovery and transition process either back to Army life or transition to civilian life. We support Soldiers with complex behavioral health care needs by working with our on-post department of behavioral health or community-based resources. I serve as the senior behavioral health subject matter expert to our SRU battalion commander and to other SRU leadership, cadre, and staff.



CDR Kimberley Jones,
LSCSW, MPH, CHES
Deputy Director,
Virtual Behavioral Health
Brooke Army Medical Center

Critical Competencies for Mentees (Part 2 of 2)

This job combines administrative and clinical duties and calls for juggling multiple hats all while managing numerous tasks to ensure best care for our Soldiers. Unlike a typical combat unit, which is focused on war fighting and readiness for the rigors of combat, this unit is Soldier-focused where the beginning and end of the mission is enhancing readiness by providing for the care of the Soldier. This means when we receive a Soldier into our unit, a spot is freed up to place a healthy Soldier in that unit from which that Soldier came. This process completes the mission readiness cycle for the combat unit.

WII Soldiers, Staff, and Cadre all work as a team enabling SRU Soldiers to return to the force executing their duties or we prepare them for successful transition to civilian life. This opportunity has been one of the most rewarding in my career. I am proud to represent the United States Public Health Service and support Soldiers in the United States Army.

Webster's dictionary defines mentee as derived from the word protégé defined as "A person who is guided by an older and [or] more experienced person or influential person. Mentees benefit from the mentoring relationship as their careers and professional growth are often furthered by a person of experience, prominence, or influence. The choice of a mentor is vital in the success of a PHS Officer's career path.

Mentee Competencies

➤ **Acquiring Mentors-**

Examples:

- Compile a desirable pool of potential mentors
- Actively meet with several mentors and sell your need for mentoring
- Convey your specific needs and goals to prospective mentors to determine best fit
- Select your mentor based on best fit scenario

Mentoring Matters, continues pg. 8



- Take the lead on negotiating arrangements, goals, expectations, length of relationships, confidentiality, feedback processes, and meeting schedules

****Operating as a mentee is not a passive experience. In the spirit of career self-reliance, one should be very active in selecting and negotiating with mentors who foster success.**

➤ **Learn Quickly-**

Examples:

- *Apply* the knowledge and skills presented; be ready to discuss *how* you applied them
- Observe carefully and learn indirectly from modeled actions of your mentor
- Study materials related to your development areas
- Integrate newly acquired information into your own problem solving framework
- Receive feedback nondefensively. Ask for specifics and be appreciative of the feedback.

****IMPORTANT**** As mentoring relationships mature, you will have opportunities to debate and disagree with your mentor. In the beginning, display a strong learning attitude, be willing to consider new ideas, and show an openness to be proven wrong ******

➤ **Show Initiative-**

Examples:

- Know when and when NOT to show initiative
- Ask appropriate questions to clarify and get more information
- Pursue useful resources on your own
- Take *informed risks* (stretch beyond usual comfort level) in order to acquire new knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's)
- Go *beyond* what your mentor suggests by incorporating useful ideas

****IMPORTANT**** Mentors differ in their expectations of the direction and drive of the mentor/mentee relationship. Show the right amount of initiative. Mentors vary in the amounts and timing of initiative they like from their mentees.

Discuss this *early* in your relationship to establish preferences, expectations and to negotiate mutually beneficial arrangements of mutual benefit.

➤ **Follow Through -**

Examples:

- Keep all agreements made with your mentors
- Complete all agreed-upon tasks on time
- Try out suggestions and report back
- Explain in advance if you want to change or break an agreement
- Persist with difficult tasks even when you are discouraged

****Mentees who fail to follow through on tasks and commitments may lose scheduling priority with mentors**

➤ **Manage the Relationship-** A most valued mentee skill by *some* mentors

Examples:

- Stay up to date with mentors on issues between you, goals to reach, satisfaction with your meeting schedules, etc.
- Analyze current status of your mentoring partnerships, and determine where to go next with them
- Prepare for the end of your mentoring relationships
- Leave the formal relationships on amicable term, even if the relationship continues on an informal basis

**** An informal poll of mentors revealed that several were frustrated with mentees who failed to follow through on agreed upon tasks.**

**Adapted from Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentees Linda Phillips-Jones, PhD*





2021 SWPAG Promotion List

By CDR Stephanie Felder

Captain (O6)

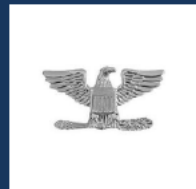
Tricia Booker
Anthony Johnson
Cole Weeks

Commander (O5)

Mark Durham
Robert Van Meir

Lieutenant Commander (O4)

Marie Cetoute
Angela McClendon
Tiffany Pham
Candice Karber
Heather Light
Dierdra Oretade-Branch
Marion Willbright



Introducing Our New Call to Active Duty Social Work Officers

By CDR Christine Nemeti, MSW,
LCSW, BCD
National Chief Social Worker
Federal Bureau of Prisons



LT Zach McDonough, LCSW has worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) since 2013 and has served as the South Central Regional Social Worker since 2018.

Prior to his current position, he worked at two BOP Medical Referral Centers in medical and mental health roles. Before joining the BOP, he worked as a Behavior Support Coordinator in Athens, Georgia for a non-profit organization serving adults with intellectual disabilities. He was also a forensic social worker for the state of Georgia at Central State Hospital.

CAD Social Work Officers, continues pg. 10



Zach graduated from Clemson University with a Bachelor's degree in psychology and obtained his MSW at the University of Georgia. His duty station is in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina, where he lives with his wife and two-year-old son.

I dabble in wrestling, Jiu Jitsu, tennis, pickle ball, and table tennis; however, the majority of my time outside of work is spent with my beautiful wife and children as well as church related activities. I'm excited to serve alongside you all and hope to meet you all one day.



Respectfully,
LT Robert Brant, LCSW, BCD
United States Public Health Service
US Department of Justice
Federal Medical Center Carswell Ft. Worth, Texas

Hi, I am LT Robert Brant, LCSW, BCD. I appreciate the opportunity to introduce myself



I graduated the University of Utah's MSW program in 2015 (Go PAC-12!). I was part of the MSW student government as well as the PHI KAPPA PHI society at that time. I spent several years as a certified deputy working in the capacity of the

mental health counselor at a sheriff's office following graduation. I also spent some time working as an ER social worker prior to joining the BOP. I currently have the opportunity to work with the mental health population at FMC Carswell.

My father is a retired Army Major who served in Vietnam. He instilled in me a strong desire to serve in the uniformed services and I appreciate the opportunity to do so within the Public Health Service.



Yá'át'ééh/Keshi (Hello),

My name is LT Kiki Wato. I am of the Many Goats clan and born for the Zumi clan. The Clamp Tree clan are my maternal grandfathers and the Zumi clan are my paternal grandfathers. I am a newly "Call to Active

Duty" HSO-Social Worker officer. The agency I work for is Indian Health Services. I am currently stationed on the beautiful Diné Nation in Shiprock, NM at Northern Navajo Medical Center. I work as a Clinical Social Worker providing medical social work and mental health services. I have been working here for approximately 5 years.



I hold a BA in Behavioral Sciences and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Denver. I am credentialed as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of New Mexico. When I am not working, my self-care consists of spending time with my wife and two daughters - fishing, camping, hiking, biking, and pretty much anything outdoors. I am also an avid sports fan and love attending live sports games. I have always wanted to serve my country from a young age but was constantly talked out of it by my grandfathers. Both of my grandfathers are Vietnam War veterans and did not want me to engage in any kind of war and possibly be on the frontlines. I look up to both of my grandfathers, so I listened to their advice and went off to college. By serving in the U.S. Public Health Service, I will get that opportunity to serve my country and also serve my Indigenous people on the Diné Nation. I also have the chance to exemplify a group of individuals (officers) that are on a mission to improve the health of people that live in our country and on American Indian land.

Ahéhee'/Elahkwa (Thank you)!
 LT Kiki Wato, LCSW

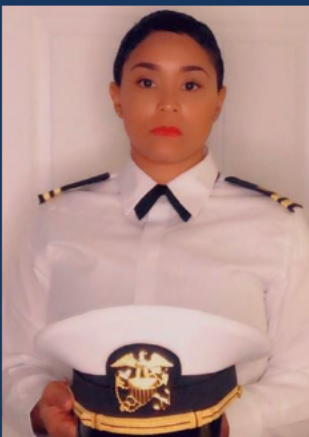


the United States Public Health Service; and successfully commissioned into the USPHS in March of 2021. LT Butler is a proud Chicago native, and is a Board-Certified Diplomate (BCD) in Clinical Social Work with a plethora of social work experience.

She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). In addition she holds a Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) from Chicago State University; where she was recipient of the Presidential Scholar Award for graduating with a 4.0 grade point average. This educated LT also holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) from Roosevelt University of Chicago, Illinois. LT Butler currently works as a Behavioral Health Provider (BHP) for IHSC (Ice Health Service Corps) at the Krome Detention Center in Miami, Florida; where she continues to serve vulnerable populations through social work.



Semper Servientes ~



Introducing LT Brittanie Butler, LCSW, MBA Lieutenant Butler has prior experience that includes work as a Federal Contract Behavioral Health Provider (BHP) at Krome Detention Center's Behavioral Health Unit (KBHU) in Miami, Florida. During this LT's work as a Federal

Contractor, she became inspired to join the ranks of





Chair's Last Call

SWPAG,

Congratulations to our newly promoted social workers. It is amazing to see your hard work pay off in the form of promotion, and with this year's current promotion rates, the challenge was the hardest in history. The promotion rates were as follows: 9% for O-6, 7% for O-5, and 25% for O-4. We are planning a meet and greet in the DMV area and RADM Kleiman is planning to attend. We will also honor our officers selected for promotion at this event.

RADM Giberson (retired) once said, "you were not chosen for this rank because of what you did before, you are pinning on this rank because of what you will do next."

RADM Giberson said this when he gave remarks at my 2018 promotion ceremony located at The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and I never forgot those words...I have said these words to myself when I took on more leadership, accepted the next position, when I gave the next presentation, submitted the next article, when I showed up that day in March 2020 to the New York Javits Center in the middle of COVID-19 when there was no vaccine and a great deal of uncertainty. I showed up beside my social work colleagues, CDR Sherri Bisci and CDR Timothy Pappalardo, although I was nervous and scared, but I took those words with me. I kept showing up each day, because I had two social workers that demonstrated a spirit of elevation and we helped each other. I hope you will remember these words, and I hope you will say them as you continue to take the helm as a Leader in the United States Public Health Service.

I recognize that this is also a bittersweet moment. All of you went over and beyond—the multiple deployments, sleepless nights, time away from family, and selfless dedication to our mission of service. Hold your head high because, at the end of the day, you have carried the mantle of the social work profession while in uniform.

Never give up, because your hard work and sacrifice does not go unnoticed by your peers, colleagues, supervisors, or family members.

When I ran for Chair of the SWPAG, I ran on a platform of elevation. I'm asking senior officers and those who have been promoted to take this opportunity to lift up the officers around you to a higher position. Ask officers how they are doing and how you can help.

I also encourage everyone to take advantage of the upcoming professional development opportunities which will include journal review and publishing, tele-mental-health certification, doctoral program information, community volunteerism, and promotion preparation. You will be hearing more about these exciting opportunities over the next weeks.

This is the time to stand fast and continue to push forward.

CDR Felder, PhD, LCSW

2021 SWPAG Chair

