



SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY GROUP OF THE COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE US PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

# SWPAG NEWSLETTER

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News letter created by  
Communications  
Committee:

LCDR Booker  
LCDR Peglowski



## 2015 Promotion Results for USPHS Social Workers!

**CONGRATULATIONS! to all!**

### Selected for Captain:

Dwayne Lamont Buckingham	07/01/2015
Christopher Lee Mcgee	07/01/2015

### Selected for Commander:

Oswaldo Baez	07/01/2015
William Edward Bolduc	07/01/2015
Jennifer Lynn Bornemann	07/01/2015
Deanna De Vore	07/01/2015
Indira Maria Harris	10/01/2015
Karen Elaine Hearod	07/01/2015
Sonjia Ann Howard	07/01/2015
Laurie Ann Jones	07/01/2015
Jonathan James Lewis	07/01/2015
Angela Denise Richardson	07/01/2015
Cole Don Weeks	07/01/2015

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# from the *SWPAG Chair*

Dear SWPAG,

I am excited to announce we will be initiating an upcoming call for nominations for voting membership. I wanted to thank CDR Malaysia Gresham, our chair-elect, LT Cara Alexander and all who assisted them in finalizing policies needed to move forward with these changes to further align our processes and procedures with our parent committee, the Health Services Professional Advisory Committee.

It is our hope we will be able to announce a call for voting members very soon. We will provide a 3 week window in which our SWPAG may submit nominees and plan on announcing our finalized voting membership no later than our final SWPAG tel-con for the year on 9 Dec 2015. The new voting membership process will take effect for SWPAG business in 2016.



This will expand opportunities for SWPAG members to take a more active role within the SWPAG which can also help with future promotions! Thank you again for everything you do and keep up the great work!"

Also, congratulations again to all our social worker officers who were promoted! Job well done!

Very Respectfully,

CDR Scott Eppler, LCSW-BCD  
 Irwin Army Community Hospital  
 OIC, Warrior Transition Battalion Social Work Service  
 600 Caisson Hill Rd, Fort Riley, KS 66442  
 Office: 785-240-7155 / 719-332-9631



SWPAG has at FACEBOOK Page. Please go and request to join. The plan is to keep it updated with information that pertains to our SWPAG. We want to know all the good stuff that happens to you

If you want to post something, please send to:

tricia.h.booker.mil@mail.mil or justin.pegowski@ihs.gov

As usual, keep the articles coming for the newsletter!!

**LIKE US ON FACEBOOK !! Under USPHS SWPAG**

**Selected for Lieutenant Commander:**

Cara Alexander	01/01/2016
Tyson J Baize	10/01/2015
Israel Garcia	04/01/2016
Shariffa Nicole Vaughn	07/01/2015
Micah Shawn Woodard	07/01/2015
Monique Melissa Cemoye Worrell	10/01/2015

**CONGRATULATIONS!**



2015 Meeting Schedule

9 December 2015

Meeting time: 1430

**ONLY ONE MORE LEFT!**

**For more information  
about our PAG, visit the  
SWPAG website at  
[http://usphs-hso.org/?  
q=pags/swpag](http://usphs-hso.org/?q=pags/swpag)**

## Why work in the Federal Bureau of Prisons as a Social Worker?

By CDR Robyn Coons

The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is an exciting agency to work for and offers a social worker a wide range of opportunities. Social Work was introduced into the BOP in 1990 as part of a Joint Commission accreditation requirement, and today there are 52 social work positions throughout the BOP. Social Workers also have the opportunity to occupy administrative positions within the BOP such as Assistant Health Service Administrators, Health Service Administrators, Associate Wardens and Wardens. Historically, BOP social workers focused primarily on medical and mental health release planning and services for female offenders. As the BOP increases its focus and commitment on prisoner re-entry initiatives, it is looking to the knowledge and expertise of its social workers for direction and innovation. Recently, the BOP created the Chief Social Work position at the Central Office and six Regional Social Workers.

We are often asked “What do social workers really do in the prison system?” Here is a small glimpse of what we do, however, we do so much more:

- Provide clinical social work services in the areas of assessment, diagnosis and treatment for mental health, addictions, and sex offenders
  - Coordinate reentry planning for medical, mental health, and general population inmates to ensure a smooth transition back into the community
  - Reduction in Sentence (also known as Compassionate Release) Program consultant or coordinator
  - Crisis intervention and therapy for individual and family issues, illness, and loss-of-functioning issues
  - Oversee Hospice and Palliative Care programs and provide end-of-life care
  - Conduct psycho-education groups
  - Liaison between patient, family, and community in treatment planning, during serious illnesses and in reentry planning
  - In accordance with USC Title 18, sections 4243 and 4246, arrange follow-up placement of long-term mentally ill inmates in state hospitals or other appropriate facilities, and/or establish conditional release plans as ordered by the court
  - Assist in reporting suspected child or adult abuse to the appropriate state or community authorities
  - Represent social work on institution inter-disciplinary teams
  - Member of the institution’s Crisis Support Team and Crisis Negotiation Team
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Bureau of Prisons ~ Regional Social Workers and Chief  
 Front Row: Britt Woolley, Tanya Willford, CDR Melanie Pedersen, CDR Robyn Coons

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As social work in the BOP continues to grow and be in the forefront of prisoner community reintegration, now is the time to consider being part of the BOP Social Work team. If you have been thinking about a change and wondering if the BOP is a good fit for you, contact CAPT Jay Seligman, BOP Chief of Social Work at [jseligman@bop.gov](mailto:jseligman@bop.gov) for further information

## **DISTINCTION AND DEDICATION AS A SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONAL**

### **Indian Health Service Phoenix Area Employee of the Year Recognition**

#### **LCDR Anthony Johnson**

Service is often underrated although it is the backdrop of the mission for the United States Public Health Service and the Indian Health Service. From which, our social work colleague and professional peer, LCDR Anthony Johnson has been recognized for transcending service with regard to his function as the Director of Social Services for the Phoenix Area Indian Health Service, Colorado River Service Unit. He was recognized on July 16, 2015 at the Phoenix Indian Health Service Director's Award Ceremony as the Phoenix Area Employee of the Year. His selection comes with distinction as the Phoenix Area employs over 2400 staff which service American Indians/Alaska Natives in the state areas of Arizona, Nevada, California and Utah. The award reflects highly of his exceptional leadership, teamwork and sound work ethic in implementing and enhancing programs to assist patients in reaching optimal healthcare outcomes. In all, LCDR Johnson is a dedicated patient advocate, exceptional social worker and undeniable asset to the Indian Health Service mission in providing effective healthcare. The recognition highlights the United States Public Health Service and the Indian Health Service's focus on performance excellence, commitment and dedication to service of all humankind.

**LCDR Johnson reflected on the acknowledgement with the following quote:**

*"Excellence is a ladder which affords individuals access to better health and a better life."*



*viduals access to better health and a*

**Congratulations LCDR Johnson!**





## **Be Resilient and Serve with Motivation**

Dear Fellow Social Workers,

Do you occasionally feel overwhelmed, stressed and pushed to the limit? If you answered, “yes” I can empathize with you and understand how challenging it can be to work in a high tempo or intense work environment. Over the past six months, I have worked two jobs: Service Chief, Resiliency and Psychological Health Service and Chief, Department of Social Work.

When we feel stressed and overwhelmed, we often complain about the two Cs: Change and Challenges. However, we rarely talk about the big S: Solution. With this in mind, I would like to talk about three things that we all should be mindful of as we come to work each day as well as strive to build a healthy nation. Change will occur, challenges will materialize and solutions will surface.



### **Change**

Change involves making things different. Since being at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center I have experienced the integration of Army and Navy medicine, sequestration, furlough, change of command, change in the strategic plan, change in directorate leadership, change in department leadership, change in service chief leadership, change in policies, change in coding requirements, change in patient care standards and change in our overall focus. Given this, I have come to accept and realize that change is unavoidable. I have been in the uniform for over 17 years and have experienced more change than I desire. However, I have also grown from change.

### **Challenge**

Challenge involves being called to action to cope with things that we perceive to be difficult and unnecessary. When things do not go as we desire or how we believe that they should go, we feel challenged. With change come challenges. We are consistently being asked to think and work different. We are asked to meet standards despite technological and sometimes managerial challenges. We are asked to shift how we do business and are expected to do so with an enthusiastic attitude. Some people embrace challenges and some people do not. Nevertheless, challenges like change are unavoidable.

### **Solution**

Given that I have come to accept and realize that change and challenges are unavoidable, I embrace both. Like others, I express frustration and protest, but I try very hard not to stay in this mind-set. I have learned that resistance to change often intensifies the challenges that are placed before me. I have also learned that being solution-focused is more mentally satisfying than being problem-focused. By focusing on the way ahead, I maintain my internal locus of control. Believe I do feel stressed at times, but I focus my energy on getting it. I was once told by a senior leader that I could either move up or move on. He went on to say that I often felt disempowered and frustrated because I fought and pushed against the unavoidable - change.

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While change is not easy to cope with and often presents challenges, we must embrace it for what it is. We are living and working in times of where mental and medical health is worsening. As we strive to build a healthy nation, we must not allow change or challenges to sidetrack us. We have to change and redefine what we do in order to build a healthy nation

Wearing the uniform and serving the nation is not an easy task, but when you serve with motivation the task is less difficult. We cannot change what is presented to us, but we can change how we respond to it. I am proud to serve Wounded Warriors and their families. Also, I am proud to be a social worker and an officer in the United States Public Health Service.

My personal favorite quote - Resilient people find solutions in problems. In contrast, troubled people find problems in every solution. – CAPT Dwayne L. Buckingham

**Sincerely,**  
**CAPT Dwayne Buckingham**  
**SWPAG Senior Advisor**

## **Breaking Down the Mental Health Barriers: Helping Police Learn How to Better Interact with Veterans with Mental Health Issues.**

By: LCDR John Stanson, LCSW, BCD

I wanted to share with my social work colleagues a little bit of my experience with working with the Englewood Police Department (PD) and their training with the Denver Veterans Administration (VA).

I have worked with the 759<sup>th</sup> Military Police (MP) Battalion (BN) at Ft. Carson, Colorado Springs, Colorado (CO) for the last 5 years and during this time, I have noticed how little training the MP's at Ft. Carson receive on how to interact with Soldiers experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues.

I was contacted by SGT Cousineau of the Englewood, Colorado (CO) PD ,in May 2015, about organizing a PTSD training for Police Officers of the Englewood, CO PD. I reached out to the Colorado Springs VA about helping me set up this training . I was directed to talk with Dr. Winter of the Denver VA. Dr. Winters and I worked collaboratively with the Englewood, CO PD and presented to over 150 Officers of the Englewood PD , as well as 20 MP from the 759<sup>th</sup> MP BN ,on how to interact with Military Veterans with PTSD or other behavioral health symptoms.

This training helped the MP's of the 759<sup>th</sup> MP BN and the Police Officers of the Englewood PD learn how to de-escalate the situation and increase safety for both the responder and person with the mental health issue. In addition, this training helps reduce the need for seclusion and restraints, reduces the trauma of the crisis and keeps the person with the mental health issues on the road to recovery and wellness. It was a rewarding experience



## **Service and Sacrifice**

**By**

**LT Robert E. Van Meir, MSW, LCSW, BCD, CCHP  
Chair of the SWPAG Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee**

Recently while I was on leave in North Carolina visiting my family and having an informal wedding reception and meeting my new mother-in-law I was able to visit Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, NC. Prior to being called to active duty with the Commissioned Corp I was a contractor with the Army. I worked at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School (JFKSWCS). I got to meet and work with service members who were or being trained to be Green Berets. It was a richly rewarding experience and I learned a lot about the "brotherhood".

During my time back on post I visited with the Deputy Command Psychologist at the JFKSWCS. We go way back and I been friends since before he joined the Army Reserves and served two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. Dr. Moyer was very helpful in my decision to join the Commission Corp. As we were catching up I mentioned that I would be heading back to Tacoma, WA and the next day I would be on Temporary Assignment (TDY) to Port Isabel, TX.

Dr. Moyer said, "Oh a PHS TDY, are you staying at the Hotel Inn or the Ramada Inn?" Now since we have been friends for a long time and I realized that his comment was meant more in the nature of brothers giving each other a hard time than a slight I took it in stride. But it did get me thinking about the nature of TDY's and my decision to put on a uniform and serve my country.

I am also an air force brat. My father and mother both served in the United States Air Force. My dad was a Senior NCO and achieved the rank of Chief Master Sergeant (E-9). He oversaw the command posts on the eastern side of the United State as a result of his duties he was frequently gone on TDY's. TDY's to me growing up meant "pizza and movies". While the cat was away the mice would play. TDY's were just as normal to me as standing up for the national anthem before a movie.

I have been in uniform for under 2 years and in that time I have spent a total of 93 days TDY. I am currently serving 3,000 miles away from my daughter and my 84 year old father who is in declining health. I have missed the last two Christmas with them. I was not able to be there when my daughter had her second knee surgery (ending her college soccer career before being able to play one game). I was not there when she was elected class president at her university. I had to postponed asking my now wife to marry me last year when a 16 day TDY turned into a 43 day one. I missed attending a concert for a band that I have always wanted to see because I asked to go on a TDY after I bought the tickets.

I do not bring up any of these things up to complain. I am honored to serve and I feel a deep sense of pride everyday as I put my uniform on. While I was in Artesia, NM for 43 days TDY another officer was complaining about the food, the heat and the work. I said to them, "No one is shooting at us, we have maid service, we can talk to our love ones every day, and that is why you wear the uniform. This is what we signed up for...To go where our country needs us, when they need us and for as long as they need us".

But there is a cost to our service and we as uniformed officers do serve and we do sacrifice. We work in hazards duty stations, we work in isolated areas and we even serve overseas. We miss time with our families, we miss holidays, and we work overtime with no added pay. We even place our lives on the line in some of the assignments we take. PHS officers have lost their lives in the line of duty. PHS Officers fill vital roles and most of the time our country is not even aware of whom we are. (continued on page 9)



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I am a Commissioned Corp Officer of the United States of America. I will continue to sacrifice for my country. I take heart in the fact I do not serve alone. I have over 6,700 brothers and sisters who represent the finest health care professionals our country has to offer. I thank you for your service and we should all stand with pride and celebrate our service to our country.

**Developing Empathy for the Lived Experience  
of Psychiatric Disability:  
*A Simulation of Hearing Distressing Voices***

**CDR Marivic Fields, MSW  
LCDR Alexia Blyther, MSW  
Public Health Advisors  
SAMHSA**

Social workers are provided with a wide range of opportunities to practice a broad range of skills. They become experts in advocacy, clinicians, administrators, or public health advisors. In our case, we have become trainers in an exciting and unique training program.

It was World Mental Day and the theme was "Living with Schizophrenia". During many hours of brainstorming various ideas to raise awareness on mental illness, we decided to pilot a simulated training program in our workplace. The curriculum we used was created by Patricia E. Deegan, who holds a doctorate in clinical psychology. Dr. Deegan has a psychiatric disability and has experienced hearing voices that are distressing.

The simulated training was participated mostly by SAMHSA staff with no clinical experience but was welcomed by seasoned clinicians as well. Staff used headphones for listening to a specially designed recording of distressing voices. During this simulated experience of hearing voices, participants engaged a series of tasks including social interaction in the community, a psychiatric interview, cognitive testing, and activities group in a mock day treatment program. The simulation experience was followed by a debriefing and discussion of their experiences during the simulated training. The curriculum also included a one hour recorded lecture where Dr. Deegan talked about her lived experience, scope of the training and expectations.

Staff walked away with a unique experience of developing empathy and an increased awareness for those suffering from schizophrenia. For some, it was a difficult experience but very rewarding.

We also introduced the Hearing Voices Network through a webinar and the demand was welcomed by international participants who are equally interested in learning more about hearing voices. Since then, we have received requests for future trainings. Recently, we trained more staff in recognition of the Mental Health Awareness Week.

We recognize the need to continue to raise awareness, break the stigma, and provide support and understanding for those suffering with mental illness. As social workers in a public health agency, this is our mission. Unlike the old adage, 'you will never understand until you experience it yourself', we will create that experience for you!