

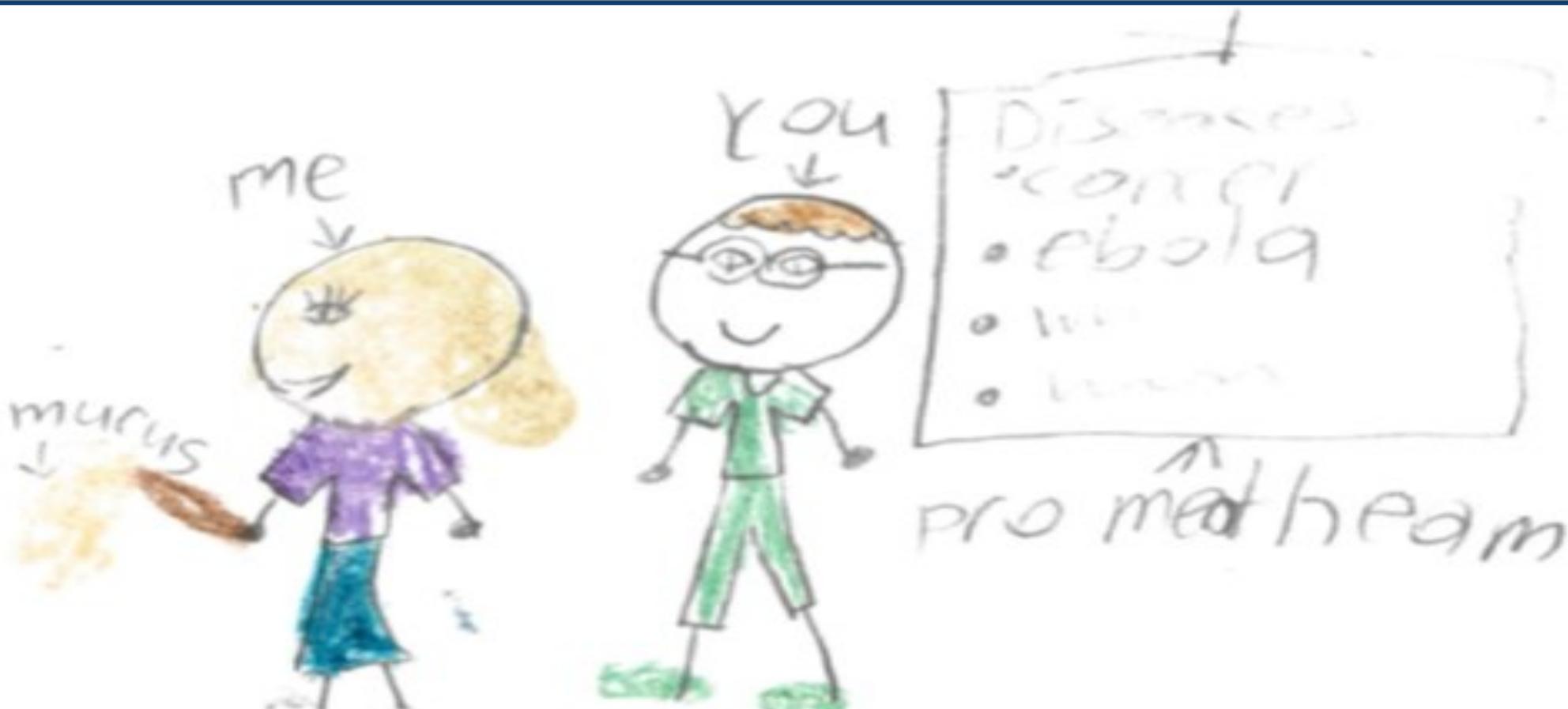
The Scientist Officer

Volume 9 Issue 1

Spring 2016



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Greetings from the SciPAC Chair, *CDR Matt Murphy*



CDR Matt Murphy
SciPAC Chair

Greetings, SciPAC officers! As always, September marked the new SciPAC calendar year and I am serving as the SciPAC Chair. The Scientist Category is a diverse category with a wide breadth of expertise, including epidemiologists, psychologists, microbiologists, and chemists and a variety of other disciplines. Whether in scientific achievement, public health promotion, or emergency deployments, I've seen firsthand the high quality of officers we have in our category and I am excited for the opportunity to serve the Scientist category.

To those of you new to SciPAC, who are perhaps confused about who we are and what we do, we've all been

there. Being part of SciPAC gives you an excellent opportunity to meet other scientists, learn about scientific endeavors across the federal government, and network for future collaborations. The SciPAC monthly calls are an important chance to learn more about the Commissioned Corps and issues that directly impact our category. SciPAC is also a venue to discuss ideas, concerns, and to actively communicate input to Commissioned Corps leadership. The strength of SciPAC comes from the active participation of our scientist officers and I look forward to working with all of you throughout the year.

Reflecting on Category Day 2015—A Huge Success!

By LCDR Eric Zhou, CDR Jennifer Adjemian, CDR William Satterfield, & CDR Robin Toblin

On May 19, 2015, SciPAC Category Day was held during the 50th USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium in Atlanta, Georgia. More than 90 Scientist Officers, nearly a quarter of our category, participated.

CAPT Jennifer McQuiston (Veterinary Category) from CDC provid-



SciPAC & OSG Leadership with Scientist Officers, 2015 SciPAC Category Day

ed the keynote address titled, “The Critical Role of Communications in the Ebola Response.” CAPT Deloris Hunter (NIH); LCDRs Kamil Barbour (CDC), Ashleigh May (CDC), Oliver Ou (USDA); LTs Brooke Hoots (CDC), Shondelle Wilson-Frederick (HHS), and Victoria Jeisy Scott also presented on a broad range of topics in public health including HIV care and treatment; demographic and health behaviors; zoonotic disease education; health disparities; associations between arthritis and fall injuries; and testing methodology in the Food Safety and Inspection Service. Additionally, there were two informative panel sessions that addressed the relationship between federal and state governments and the Scientist Category’s involvement in the Ebola response. The panelists included CAPTs Rachel Avchen, Aaron Fleishauer, Margaret Riggs; CDRs Jennifer Adjemian, Anne Dobbmeyer, James Kenney, Matthew Murphy, Sara Vagi; and LCDR John Pesce.

With 337 Scientist officers in the PHS serving at multiple agencies and geographic locations across the country, opportunities for Scientist officers to network are often limited. In an effort to meet this challenge head on,

the Category Day Subcommittee took an innovative approach by arranging several networking events, including a “Speed Networking” social event that was strategically placed during the extended pre-lunch break. During this event, officers rapidly got to know each other better by navigating through pre-established questions on their PHS history and assignment, job interests, professional development opportunities, and future career plans.

Additionally, several other opportunities for networking were set up, including an event devoted to mentor-mentee matching led by CDR Tracie Gardner, CDR Anne Marie France, and LCDR Anne Purfield, as well as a highly-attended evening social.

The 2015 SciPAC Category Day not only demonstrated Scientist officers’ unique value in their daily jobs and public health emergency responses, such as in the Ebola outbreak, but also enabled Scientists to further bond with each other as proud PHS Officers. The high turnout of Scientist officers was also historic, setting a tremendous precedent for future USPHS Symposia.



Surgeon General VADM Vivek Murthy with 2015 SciPAC Awards recipients (L to R): CDR James Kenney (Scientist Responder of the Year), CDR Anne Dobbmeyer (Senior Scientist Officer of the Year), CAPT Sara Newman (Scientist Mentor of the Year), VADM Vivek Murthy, LCDR Sara Pulliam (PsyPAG Early Career Psychologist), LCDR Qiao Bobo (Junior Scientist Officer of the Year) (Not pictured: CAPT Nicole Frazer, PsyPAG Senior Career Psychologist) (Photographed by LT Nicole Bell).

NEXT ISSUE: Special Feature on 2016 Scientist Category Day!

About to Undertake a PCS? *Consider Base Housing*

By LCDR Alice Shumate

Last summer, I completed a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) that involved a cross-country move to Spokane, Washington. Our household goods would be stored in Spokane until we were ready for them, and we booked a hotel room for our arrival. However, if we planned to take time to search for and buy a house, where would we stay for the 6-8 weeks that would require? To make it more complicated, I wasn't moving alone. Moving with me were my husband, who would be working remotely so needed to set up a workspace, and my dog...a big, active dog who loves to spend time outdoors and is anxious about changes in place and routine.

A USPHS colleague told me that she had stayed on nearby Fairchild Air Force Base when she moved to Spokane the year before—first in the hotel and later in a small apartment on base. I called to inquire about staying there, mainly because it would be cheaper and might afford us more space than our hotel room. The staff at Fairchild Air Force Base were helpful and efficient in scheduling us to move into a place in the Temporary Lodging Facility (TLF) that was to become available in about a week.

We moved in but were uncertain about several things. How would this work? What would the accommodations be like? Would we feel unwelcome or stick out like sore thumbs? My apprehensive husband had to move us in because I was away on a TDY on move-in day. That morning, his text messages started rolling in: "It has its own washer and dryer," "There's a second bedroom, so I can set up an office!" And final-

ly, "The dog is enjoying the fenced yard!" accompanied by a picture of the dog, happily rolling around in the grass without a leash for the first time in two weeks. For less than two-thirds the price of an extended stay hotel room, we were given a two bedroom, two bath duplex with a full kitchen and its own fenced yard. It was pleasant, convenient, and homey.



LCDR Shumate's dog, adjusting well to the TLF

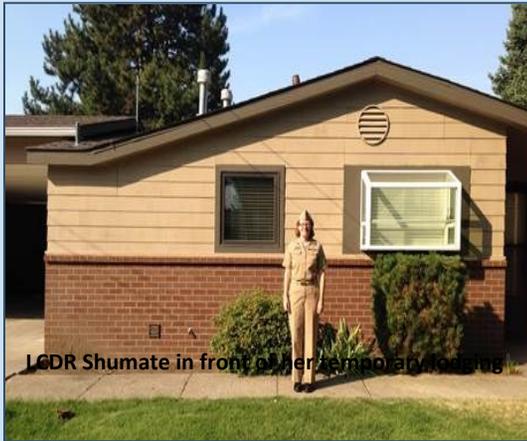
We warmed to living on base in stages, exploring different walks with our dog at night. We toured the park area displaying planes that had been based there at various times and learned about the current wings and what they did. We learned lingo. We met our constantly changing neighbors in the TLF; most stayed only 7-10 days upon arrival or before departing for another base. Everyone was friendly, welcoming, and interested in learning more about the USPHS. My fears about not being part of the culture were unfounded; soon I was walking my dog with a neighbor in the evening, stopping and facing in the direction of the flag, hand on heart, during Taps.

"...my initial strategy, upon moving on to the base, was to avoid doing anything in uniform."

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Fitting in on the base after hours, out of uniform, seemed easier, though. What about in uniform? When we moved on base I'd only been a PHS Commissioned Corps officer for two years and had



LCDR Shumate in front of her temporary lodging

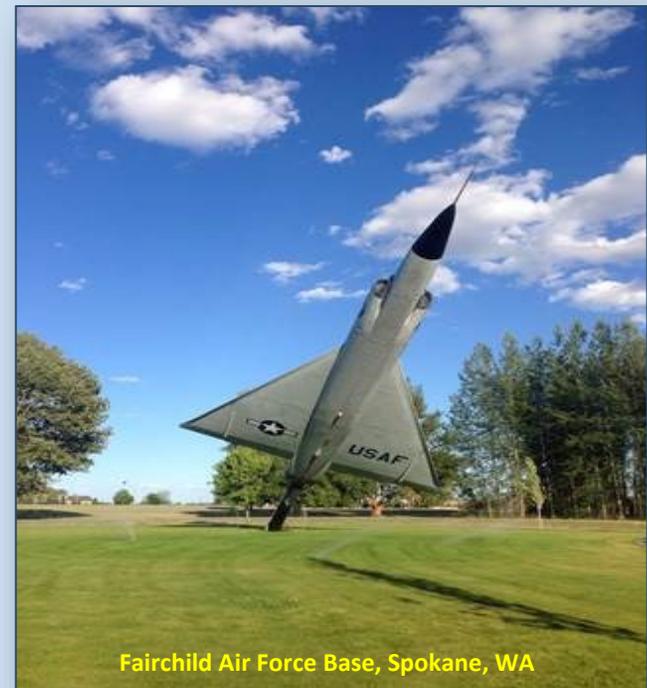
spent little time in uniform around military personnel, mainly for visits to my Military Treatment Facility (MTF). What little experience I had wasn't enough to make me feel confident and comfortable; terrified I'd do something wrong, I probably used 30% of my

brain capacity thinking about protocol at all times. So my initial strategy, upon moving on to the base, was to avoid doing anything in uniform. The first time my husband asked me to pick up milk on my way home, I am embarrassed to say that I drove past the Commissary near the base entrance, went home and changed into non-uniform clothes, and drove back over to the Commissary. Early on, while still growing accustomed to Air Force uniforms, I saluted an officer of equal rank in a panic as I searched for his rank, and realized he wasn't saluting me first. He smirked. With time, however, I became more comfortable in my USPHS uniform, eventually running errands in uniform with confidence.

I'm not on base very often now, but I drive on with confidence and that familiar feeling of returning home. While there, I'm happy to run extra errands and chat with people, explaining my uni-

form and the USPHS. I'm even in a good mood at the MTF! In a strange way, I think I am more at home now in my own uniform and in my role as a uniformed service member. These are intangible benefits that I didn't even consider when pragmatically choosing base housing due to cost and space. However, I think they ultimately make me a better USPHS officer. If you're ever in a situation to take advantage of base housing, I strongly recommend you consider it!

“In a strange way, I think I am more at home now in my own uniform and in my role as a uniformed service member.”



Fairchild Air Force Base, Spokane, WA

Scientists Recognized at the 25th Minority Officers Liaison Council Awards Ceremony

By LCDR Eric Zhou



The 25th Minority Officers Liaison Council (MOLC) Anniversary Awards Ceremony was held during the 50th U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Scientific and Training Symposium in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 21, 2015. Surgeon General VADM Vivek Murthy and Deputy Surgeon General, RADM Boris Lushniak, provided inspiring and welcoming remarks to a room of more than 100 officers and our special guest, VADM Antonia Novello. VADM Novello, 14th U.S. Surgeon General, was the first woman and the first Hispanic to be appointed to the position, gave an inspirational keynote address encouraging the MOLC to continue its leadership on reducing health disparities. VADM Novello is credited for her vision in establishing the MOLC in 1990, which functions as a liaison to the Office of the Surgeon General, providing advice and consultation on issues related to the professional practice and personnel activities of USPHS officers who belong to racial/ethnic minority groups.

Among 18 award recipients from different categories, one Scientist officer, LCDR Qiao Bobo, received the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee's (APAOC's) RADM Kenneth Moritsugu Award. In addition, the MOLC also presented RADM Helen Mishoe, former SciPAC Chief Professional Officer, with a certificate acknowledging her outstanding leadership and contribution as a senior advisor to the MOLC on SciPAC Career Day.

Four core minority advisory groups comprise the

MOLC: American Indian/Alaska Native Commissioned Officers Advisory Committee (AIANCOAC); Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC); Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group (BCOAG); and the Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC).

Based on the 2011 USPHS demographics report, 36% of USPHS officers identified as members of racial/ethnic minority groups: 13% identified as non-Hispanic Black; 9% as Asian/Pacific Islander; 9% as American Indian Alaska Native; and 5% as Hispanic. By general rank, 30% of flag officers are members of racial/ethnic minority groups, as are 31% of senior officers, and 44% of junior officers. The MOLC is currently preparing an updated PHS demographics report, but there is no doubt that minority officers play a crucial role in the USPHS.



VADM Novello (center) presented the RADM Kenneth Moritsugu Award to LCDR Qiao Bobo (L) (photographed by CAPT Jim Simpson).

Exploring New Opportunities for Disparities Research in Chronic Disease Prevention



The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), in collaboration with experts from other National Institutes of Health (NIH) Institutes and Centers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the extramural research community, held a scientific spring 2015 workshop on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland. The workshop focused on disparities in chronic disease prevention, with the goal of identifying research gaps and opportunities for targeted initiatives.

In keeping with the workshop theme, “Preventing Disparities in Chronic Diseases: Community-Based Multi-level Interventions,” the scientific program highlighted excellence and innovations in current theoretical advances informing community-based multilevel interventions, innovative analytical and statistical methods, integration of advanced technology (e.g., big data, telemedicine) into health promotion and disease prevention, and private and public partnership to accelerate information dissemination. Highlights of the conference included a keynote address by former Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin, with presentations on health disparities and chronic disease prevention by NIH Associate Director of Prevention and Director for the Office of Disease Prevention Dr. David Murray, and NIMHD

Acting Director Dr. Yvonne Maddox.

As a Scientist officer and program director at NIMHD, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to share research findings and novel ideas among a group of 93 preeminent academic, research, clinical, and public health experts in community-based chronic disease prevention efforts.

As discussed during the workshop, current scientific advances in developmental biology, life course science, and environmental epigenetics expand our understanding of the possible etiologies of the origins and mechanisms of many diseases and conditions. These advances also build a persuasive case for reframing the public health research efforts that focus on health promotion and chronic disease prevention among health disparities populations.

Participants also explored public health interventions that are designed to reduce the significant population-level burden of chronic morbidity and premature death. Lastly, in response to these discussions, a new funding opportunity announcement of \$5 million was developed, which will be targeted toward programs to reduce health disparities in chronic disease through prevention.

BY LT Xinzhi Zhang

Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE) Promotes Respiratory Health at Fields Road Elementary School in Gaithersburg, MD

As part of the District of Columbia Commissioned Officers Association (DC COA) PACE Subcommittee, LT Jonathan Leshin and LCDR John Pesce spoke to three groups of second grade students at Fields Road Elementary School in Gaithersburg, MD, about the importance of respiratory health. The PACE program is an officer-driven initiative to implement the National Prevention Strategy. PACE provides officers with the opportunity to put themselves at the forefront of the National Prevention Strategy by actively interacting with citizens at the community level. The goal of PACE is to educate the public about the Commissioned Corps, the National Prevention Strategy, and all other Office of the Surgeon General initiatives. This PACE program provides an opportunity to increase the visibility of the Corps, but also provides valuable leadership opportunities for officers. (Editor's note: for more information about PACE and SciPAC's role in supporting the National Prevention Strategy, go to [http://usphs-scientist.org/nps/.](http://usphs-scientist.org/nps/))



Using a lesson plan developed by LCDR Pesce, the officers first discussed their professional background in the Commissioned Corps of the USPHS and as scientists. They followed with an overview on why prevention of disease, not just curing disease, is important. The students were very engaged, giving their perspectives on why prevention matters. The lesson plan then moved on to address the causes of respiratory illnesses, and the students were taught about what helps protect the body from bacteria, viruses, and pollen. The group of mostly 7- and 8-year-old kids

were especially excited to learn that “boogers” and “snot” are important parts of their body’s immune system, which helps keep them safe. As part of this interactive module, they were asked what could cause the lungs and respiratory system to not work well, and they correctly identified that smoking can hurt their body’s ability to breathe well; being shown a diseased lung helped solidify this lesson in their minds.

The best was saved for last. The kids had the opportunity to make “snot” by mixing glue and water with sodium borate solution (5%). They then rolled this oobleck “booger” around their desks, which been sprinkled with glitter to demonstrate how the mucous membranes of the body pick up bacteria and viruses. This activity was by far the messiest part of the session, and it was the most loved, with everyone exclaiming how “cool” and “gross” it was. In just one hour spent with 88 second graders during this presentation, the teachers agreed it was one of the more interesting career day activities they’d seen. And as a final reward to the presenters, each of the students wrote a letter and drew a picture like those below, representing what they learned during the talk. Consider volunteering to help with a PACE event at a school near you soon!

BY LT Jonathan Leshin



Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Benefits: Universal Orlando Resort

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs support the esprit de corps of active duty, reserve, and National Guard service members and their families worldwide. Benefits include access to lodging, travel, amusement parks, special events, fitness, and other types of recreation. MWR programs may also include support services such as new parent support programs and suicide prevention services. USPHS Commissioned Corps officers and their families are eligible for MWR benefits and should take full advantage of the programs available in their local area.

Early in 2014, I happily learned of the opening of the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort¹. I decided that a visit with my Harry Potter-loving brother was the perfect opportunity to use my MWR benefits. From social media, I had heard tales from officers who had tried to use amusement park tickets obtained from MWR offices with various results. I was hopeful my experience would be a good one, but was prepared for the worst outcome -- I was going to enjoy the Wizarding World regardless of the cost. I am now happy to share my success story on use of MWR benefits.

The Universal Orlando resort website includes a link to a military savings page². From this website, I was able to find a list of Leisure Travel offices at military bases that offer discounted Universal Studios tickets³. Luckily, the base closest to me in At-

lanta, Dobbins Air Reserve Base, offers discounted tickets. The military sales contact at Universal confirmed that the best way to obtain these tickets is through your local base. At the time, the Information, Tickets, and Travel office at Dobbins was offering officers a 3-day park-to-park ticket for the price of a 1-day pass, an offer that could also be purchased for both friends and family. I purchased two of the discounted tickets: one for myself and one for my brother.



To visit both parts of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, you must have a park-to-park pass or an annual pass to visit both Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure.

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Once at Universal, I took our vouchers to the ticket booth and the staff checked our CAC cards. Though my brother should not have been required to present identification, luckily he is a former Army Reservist and was able to demonstrate that he is a veteran. Staff took our email addresses (for a follow-up survey), presented us with our official park tickets, and we were on our way to enjoying the park. As mentioned earlier, MWR benefits can also be used for lodging, although I did not take advantage of this benefit for my trip.



LCDR Demissie at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort

Based on my experience, here are my top suggestions for planning your trip: (1) be familiar with the policies of the company or location (Universal Studios, in my case) you are visiting; (2) contact your base Leisure Travel office to find out what they offer; and (3) call ahead to confirm the office's hours of operation and your eligibility for the activity you and your family are interested in.

By LCDR Zewditu Demissie

References:

1. https://www.universalorlando.com/Theme-Parks/Wizarding-World-Of-Harry-Potter.aspx?s_tnt=184140:3:0
2. <https://www.universalorlando.com/military/>
3. <https://www.universalorlando.com/military/military-base-list.aspx>



Hogwarts at Last!

Congratulations to All Scientist Officers Promoted in 2015!

Captain

Anne Christine Dobmeyer
Diana Louise Elson
Nicole Lynn Frazer

Ryan Thomas Novak*
Danisha Lexine Robbins
Paul Ryong Seo*

Commander

Jennifer C. Adjemian
Gelio Alves
Renee M. Calanan
Anne Marie France
Aimee Lynn Geissler
Emily Susan Jentes
Sara Ann Lowther
Charlene Sydnor Maddox

Tracy Rene Powell
Loren Edwin Rodgers
Erin Kristine Sauber-Schatz
Benjamin Johnathan Silk
Kanta Devi Sircar
Peter Evans Thomas
Robin Laurie Toblin
Sara J. Vagi
Tenaya Nekia Watson

Lieutenant Commander

Jessica Noelle Cleck-Derenick
Shalon Maurene Irving
Jonathan Andrew Leshin
Matthew Joiner Lozier
Madeline Ivette Maysonet-Gonzalez
Leigh Ann Miller
Oliver Lihui Ou

John Thomas Pesce
Amee Marie Schwitters*
Alison Sheehan Laufer Halpin
Alice Marie Shumate
Rachel Bailey Slayton
Marie Angela Thompson-Paul
Jason Andrew Wilken
Julia Amy Zucco

**Exceptional Proficiency Promotion*

GOOD LUCK TO ALL SCIENTIST OFFICERS UP FOR PROMOTION IN 2016!

OPDIV Spotlight: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

With approximately 331 Commissioned Corps officers across the nation fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of advancing the mission of the PHS, the Scientist category is rich with researchers from a variety of disciplines and experiences. Rightfully so, we often spotlight individual Scientists for their exceptional contributions as PHS officers in their respective OPDIVs, but expanding our familiarity with the type of work being done by Scientists across OPDIVs is also critical to capturing a broader picture of our category. Most of our category's officers are stationed at CDC or FDA, accounting for nearly 70% of Scientists' duty stations; however, other OPDIVs, such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), also are home to Scientist officers, who contribute significantly to health and safety of our nation.

The mission of CMS focuses on measurably improving care and population health by transforming the U.S. health care system into an integrated and accountable delivery system that continuously improves care, reduces unnecessary costs, prevents illness and disease progression, and promotes health. CMS has four Scientists who are working toward helping CMS achieve this goal. For example, LT Shondelle Wilson-Frederick is a statisti-

cian in the Office of Minority Health (OMH) at CMS, and is responsible for developing goals and objectives related to improving minority health and eliminating health disparities, developing an agency-wide data collection infrastructure for minority health activities and initiatives, as well as developing and implementing statistically reliable methods and strategies to merge survey data with administrative and service utilization data.

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LT Shondelle Wilson-Frederick (right), pictured with LT Israel Cross (left), conducting do-it-yourself science experiments at Camp Rehobeth, Maryland

LCDR Julia Zucco uses her degree in epidemiology to work on survey design, methodology, and analysis. Her division studies beneficiary populations to assess their patient experience in various health care settings. They also evaluate the performance of Medicare provider plans and facilities as CMS moves toward the goal of paying for *quality* of care rather than *quantity* of care.



LCDR Zucco (4th from right) at a recruiting event

Not only does CMS monitor and evaluate the performance of its health care agents, it also ensures program compliance and integrity with legislative mandates. When asked about her work in the Provider Compliance Group, LT Lisa Jarvis-

Durham said, “I am proud to work in a group that strives to eliminate errors in the fee-for-services payment systems, ensuring program integrity and safeguarding the future of the trust fund. Through various policy reviews, identification of program waste, and providing support through education and outreach to states, I believe my work is at the forefront, for all national and statewide Medicare and Medicaid programs and CHIP initiatives, in protecting against fraud, waste, and abuse.”

Lastly, LT Israel Cross leads work on CMS’s Compare Websites for public reporting programs, which are major channels through which CMS reports to the public on health care quality, efficiency, health outcomes, and care availability across multiple care settings. All of these public reporting websites feature star-ratings systems, which beneficiaries have found to be very useful in making informed health care decisions.

This brief spotlight on CMS underscores the variety of ways in which Scientists are having an impact in public health on a national scale. In addition, it reflects just a sample of the vast range of expertise among our Scientists, and the unique and valuable ways we contribute to the mission of the USPHS.

By LT Israel Cross

***Thanks and a big shout out to Oklahoma City for a fantastic
2016 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium!***

***Congratulations to the SciPAC Planning Committee for their tremendous work on
Category Day and fun social events!***

SAVE THE DATE

Get ready for 2017—Join us in Chattanooga, Tennessee!

<http://symposium.phscof.org/>



Image courtesy of Choice Hotels

Contribute to *The Scientist Officer*!

Have an idea for an article?

Submit an article, announcement, new, or photos to *The Scientist Officer*!

Share your ideas for articles by contacting the Editorial Team at:

scipacnewsletter@gmail.com

Submission Deadline for the Summer 2016 issue is June 21!

Note: All contributors receive acknowledgment via thank you letters at the end of the year, which you can submit to your eOPF, in support of officership.

Past issues of *The Scientist Officer* newsletter are archived at:

<https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/scientist/newsletter.aspx>

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