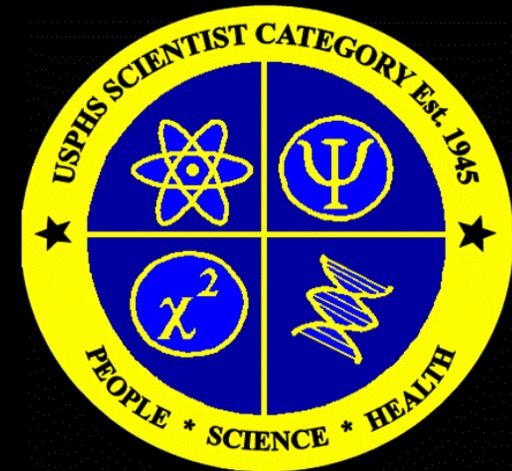


The Scientist Officer



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Pictured left are Scientists LCDR Jason Wilken and LT Ruth Link-Gelles in front of LBJ Tropical Medical Center during a deployment to American Samoa as part of CDC's Zika response. Taken October 14, 2016, by Carolyn Tunstall (Civil Service CDC employee).

Senior Officer Spotlight: CAPT Edward W. Gregg



Edward W. Gregg, PhD, CAPT in the U.S. Public Health Service, is the 2016 recipient of the American Diabetes Association's Kelly West Award for Outstanding Achievement in Epidemiology for his significant contributions to the field of diabetes epidemiology. The American Diabetes Association has applauded CAPT Gregg's research efforts for being an invaluable guide in health policy efforts for people with diabetes. On Sunday, June 12, 2016, CAPT Gregg delivered the Kelly West Award Lecture entitled, "The Changing Tides of the Diabetes Epidemic—Smooth Sailing or Troubled Waters Ahead?"

([http://professional.diabetes.org/search/site?f\[0\]=im_field_dbp_ct%3A7&f\[1\]=sm_field_wcast_mname%3Anode%3A120&f\[2\]=sm_field_wcast_sname%3Anode%3A144653&retain-filters=1](http://professional.diabetes.org/search/site?f[0]=im_field_dbp_ct%3A7&f[1]=sm_field_wcast_mname%3Anode%3A120&f[2]=sm_field_wcast_sname%3Anode%3A144653&retain-filters=1))

CAPT Gregg has a PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Pittsburgh, an MS from Wake Forest University, and a BS from the College of William and Mary. In personal correspondence with CAPT Gregg, he mentions how he was attracted to the challenge of being able to apply public health science to very practical and real public health problems, which proved influential in his decision to join the Commissioned Corps.

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CAPT Gregg is currently the Chief of the Epidemiology and Statistics Branch in the Division of Diabetes Translation at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He leads multidisciplinary teams that integrate surveillance, epidemiology, statistics, health services research, and economic studies to guide health policy for diabetes. In addition, he serves as either a lead or a co-investigator in several national multi-center studies, including Natural Experiments in Translation for Diabetes (NEXT-D) and the Look AHEAD (Action for Health in Diabetes) Study.

Having been recognized nationally and internationally for his extensive contributions to diabetes epidemiology, CAPT Gregg has provided guidance and expertise to numerous studies, organizations, and committees. His work has been described in more than 240 published articles and book chapters, which document diabetes statistics in the U.S. and the lifetime risk and cost of diabetes. This compendium of original research reports the decline in the prevalence of many complications of diabetes, the achievement of diabetes care goals, and the impact of lifestyle intervention on risk for diabetes and its complications. His extensive body of work has significantly influenced public health research and policy, and strengthened national and international surveillance of diabetes.

CAPT Gregg also speaks Spanish as a second language. In his free time, his favorite thing to do is to wander and explore new places on his bicycle. When asked what advice he would like to share with junior Scientist officers,

CAPT Gregg said, “No matter how much you like your own discipline (in my case, epidemiology), you can enrich yourself by learning from your colleagues from other disciplines.”

“No matter how much you like your own discipline (in my case, epidemiology), you can enrich yourself by learning from your colleagues from other disciplines.”

By LCDR Xinzhi Zhang

Junior Officer Spotlight: Scientist Responder of the Year

LCDR Leigh Ann Miller



We are pleased to feature LCDR Leigh Ann Miller, Scientist Responder of the Year, in the Junior Officer Spotlight for this issue. LCDR Miller joined USPHS as a Scientist in 2012, when she joined CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) Fellowship Program. Since commissioning, she has served in three assignments, all with CDC: one position at the Maine State Health Department as an EIS officer, and two different positions within CDC's Center for Global Health.

LCDR Miller currently serves as an Epidemiologist with CDC's Global Rapid Response Team. She has a background and longstanding interest in global health and finds the work engaging, enriching, and exciting.

LCDR Miller enjoys the multidisciplinary nature of public health and her educational background and training are proof of that. LCDR Miller has a bachelor's degree in English from Salem College; a master's

in Social Work from the University of Georgia; and a PhD in Public Health, with an international health and development focus, from Tulane University. In addition to her formal training, LCDR Miller served in the Peace Corps in both Sri Lanka and Thailand after earning her undergraduate degree. She credits her Peace Corps experiences as confirming her path and love for global health and travel.

LCDR Miller is honored to be recognized as the Scientist Responder of the Year. While she has not yet deployed for USPHS, LCDR Miller has participated in several deployments through CDC. Her first deployment was to Jordan in 2013 to assist with the Syrian refugee crises. While there, LCDR Miller worked with the World Health Organization to set up an early warning surveillance system for disease detection. That same type of surveillance system was later used to assist with polio surveillance for Syrian refugees who settled in Turkey. She cites a major accomplishment of her career so far being her work during the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. LCDR Miller had the privilege of deploying three times during the Ebola outbreak - in 2014, 2015, and 2016. While deployed in 2016, LCDR Miller served as the lead Epidemiologist in a remote region of Sierra Leone, where a small cluster of cases reemerged after the outbreak had been declared over. LCDR Miller credits the containment of those cases to the quick detection and response of Sierra Leoneans. LCDR Miller describes her work during the Ebola outbreak as both the most compelling of her career thus far and that of which she is most proud.

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Her most recent deployment for the Global Rapid Response team occurred during the Hurricane Matthew response in Haiti, where she filled a variety of roles, including Situational Awareness Lead and Chief Science Officer. As Situational Awareness Lead, LCDR Miller and her team worked to produce situation reports that were shared across CDC and other HHS agencies to brief leaders and key decision makers on relevant facts necessary for public health action. As Chief Science Officer, LCDR Miller worked with subject matter experts in Atlanta and with CDC field staff in Haiti to help guide the response so that it was culturally appropriate for the context while also being scientifically sound. LCDR Miller credits the multiple skillsets Scientist officers possess as one of the most beneficial factors contributing to her success during deployments to date.

“In a disaster or outbreak setting, there is always some information you have that you don’t need and always more information you wish you had. The job is to make the best decision you can at the time with the information, people, and resources you have available in the moment.”

LCDR Miller is actively involved in SciPAC’s Healthy Scientist Bulletin and on the Recruitment, Retention, and Readiness (RRR) subcommittee. She is also a member of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA), and enjoys participating in volunteer activities with ACOA. LCDR Miller finds serving meals to homeless persons through St. Francis Table especially fulfilling due to the opportunity it allows for direct interaction with the community.

Regarding her future career as a Scientist in the USPHS, LCDR Miller most looks forward to the versatility of job opportunities available to Scientists in the Corps. While she enjoys her current assignment, she has fun imagining working for the National Park Service or in a CDC country office overseas, and realizes it’s an attainable goal. Scientists do it every day already. Congratulations, LCDR Miller. It’s an honor to have you among our ranks!

By LCDR Jonetta Mpofu

LCDR Miller is pictured below with colleagues in Sierra Leone



Scientist Officer Receives the NIH Asian and Pacific Islander American Organization 2016 Leadership Excellence Award

On December 7, 2016, LCDR Xinzhi Zhang received the 2016 Leadership Excellence Award at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Asian & Pacific Islander American Organization (APAO) Annual Awards Ceremony in Bethesda, Maryland. LCDR Zhang is a Program Director who provides leadership in scientific program development on reduction of health disparities at the NIH National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). Beyond his agency duty, LCDR Zhang served as the President of NIH APAO in 2013. Under LCDR Zhang's leadership, APAO successfully launched its first newsletter. LCDR Zhang also served as a member of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Employee Resource Group Council to promote the mission and values of NIH in 2013. During 2013-2014, LCDR Zhang served as Chair of the American Public Health Association Vision Care Section (APHA). Under his leadership, the APHA Vision Care Section (with over 220 members) implemented a national strategic plan to prevent eye diseases and promote eye health. LCDR Zhang currently serves in the APHA Governing Council, which champions efforts to improve the health of people in all communities. He is also a voting member of the PHS Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC), which provides advice and recommendations on minority issues to the Surgeon General.

The NIH APAO was founded in October 1996 and serves as an independent resource, facilitator, and advocacy group for Asian & Pacific Islander American employees for career advancement opportunities at the NIH and other agencies. Its mission is to support NIH efforts and programs that promote equal opportunities in the workplace for all NIH employees. Scientist officers have a history of significant contributions to the mission of NIH APAO: CAPT Sally Hu and CDR Eric Zhou served as the President and Vice President of NIH APAO, respectively, in 2012, and CAPT Hu was the APAO Leadership Excellence Award recipient in 2014.

BY CDR Eric Zhou and CAPT Sally Hu

Pictured left to right at the NIH APAO Awards Ceremony are Scientist officers CDR Eric Zhou, LCDR Xinzhi Zhang, and CAPT Sally Hu. Lucie Chen, 2016 APAO President, stands on the far right. Photographed by Ruby Lee.



Minority Officer Column: LCDR Geoffrey Wu



LCDR Geoffrey K. Wu is a proud USPHS officer and Chinese-American. He is currently the Associate Director for Science and Communication in the Office of Lifecycle Drug Products, Office of Pharmaceutical Quality (OPQ), at the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), and is also a member of the OPQ Emerging Technology Team. For the past seven years, LCDR Wu has been highly involved in leading or co-leading regulatory review and research for controlled correspondence related to numerous drug applications, including new and abbreviated new drug applications. He received his PhD in Pharmaceutics and Pharmaceutical Chemistry from the University of Utah, and BS in Pharmacy and MS in Pharmaceutics from Peking University, China. He has more than 20 peer-reviewed publications, one patent, and multiple invited presentations in the above-mentioned scientific and regulatory topics. He is also certified by the Project Management Institute as a Project Management Professional, and holds a Certified in Public Health credential awarded by the U.S. National Board of Public Health Examiners.

When he was a civil servant in the FDA, he was intrigued by the vast array of PHS officers at the FDA CDER campus in Silver Spring, MD. Motivated to make a bigger impact in public health, LCDR Wu converted from the civil service to the Commissioned Corps in May 2013. He feels that it is an honor to wear the PHS uniform as it visibly represents his dedication and responsibility to his career in the field of public health.

LCDR Wu provides an outstanding level of support to newly accessioned officers and to officers of Asian Pacific heritage. He helped coordi-

nate the APFT, uniform purchases, and uniform inspections at about 30 Officer Basic Courses. LCDR represented SciPAC and the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) at several past Officer Basic Course open houses. LCDR Wu is a dedicated contributor to the APAOC and has served as a voting member for two years and co-led/led two subcommittees. As the Co-Chair of the Nominations and Membership subcommittee, he helped maintain a record of general members within APOAC and assisted in the selection of new voting members. As the previous Co-Chair and current Chair of the Publications workgroup, he helped create publications that highlighted notable accomplishments of Asian Pacific officers. He thinks of the APOAC as an excellent platform for officers from all categories to network and work together as a team on various projects. LCDR Wu also seeks opportunities to use his language skills and cultural knowledge to assist Chinese-Americans outside of PHS and his agency. To this end, he volunteered at the Office of Minority Health in the White House to translate Obamacare brochures (both hard copy and online) from English into Chinese.

LCDR Wu can relate to the challenges faced by first generation immigrants, especially with respect to cultural and language barriers. In China, he was raised to be humble and conservative and had to face going out of his comfort zone to become more outgoing and take on leadership roles when he moved to the U.S. thirteen years ago. During his first few years as a new immigrant, he made great efforts to strengthen his English-speaking skills. He listened to his voice recordings and joined Toastmasters programs for opportunities to speak in front of other people. His advice to officers who feel insecure about their leadership and public speaking skills is to aggressively seek opportunities to lead and speak.

In his spare time, LCDR Wu enjoys skiing and running. To maintain physical fitness and readiness, he is currently training as a long-distance runner. He is a proud parent of two children, aged 2 and 6.

By LCDR Iram Hassan

SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee Promotion Panels Initiative

BY CDR Tracy MacGill, LCDR Lana Rossiter, LCDR Rory Geyer, and LT Michael Lowe

Background: The Scientist category is fortunate to have a very active and well-organized mentoring program. Mentoring is important for the professional development of Commissioned Corps officers throughout their careers. There are few issues that impact an officer's career development as profoundly as the promotion process. Success rates for promotion have tightened across the board in recent years. For example, the success rate for T-O5 dropped to 25-30% in 2013 from the previous success rate of 41-43% in 2010-2012. As a result, the need to provide additional data-driven insight into factors that may relate to success or non-success of promotion-eligible officers to supplement the individual experiences of current SciPAC mentors was identified. The Mentoring Subcommittee (the SC) developed and launched a Promotion Panels Initiative in May 2015 to provide a comprehensive review of the experiences and achievements of recently promoted officers to provide additional tools for SciPAC mentors to advise their mentees.

Methods: During the first phase of the initiative, the 37 officers successfully promoted to T-O5 during the 2013 – 2015 promotion cycles were contacted. Seventy percent of those officers agreed to participate in the promotion panel initiative. To facilitate participation, these officers were grouped into those who were promoted on their first attempt (n =10) and those who were promoted on subsequent attempts (n =16). A series of questions for the panelists were developed that focused on the following areas: i) reasons (perceived) for success; ii) reasons (perceived) for being unsuccessful if there was more than one attempt; iii) achievements; iv) leadership activities that include SciPAC participation; v) awards; vi) supervisory support; vii) deployments; viii) mentorship; and ix) content of CV, OS, and ROS. A series of panels, moderated by the SC members, were held by teleconference. The recently promoted officers who participated in these panels generously and candidly shared personal experiences and recommendations for promotion success.

Promotion Panel Discussion Observations:

Promotion Success and Failure. In order to identify commonalities, officers promoted on their first attempt were asked why they believed they were successful. Additionally, officers promoted on subsequent attempts were asked why they believed that they were unsuccessful on their initial attempt(s) and what changes they made to their promotion package that they thought ultimately led to their success. Much of the discussion revealed information that was logical and familiar to previously issued guidance on promotion. Interestingly, many officers were unclear why they were successful, regardless of promotion attempts, and those who were unsuccessful on their first attempt struggled to articulate what they did differently between the successful and the unsuccessful attempt(s) at promotion. While they all agreed preparation was important, there was not a single item that they thought ultimately resulted in success.

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Leadership and Achievements. Most of the discussion revolved around how to best demonstrate leadership experience and accomplishments in the promotion package. Excellence and high performance, as highlighted by high COER scores, the ROS, and the CV, were generally viewed as critical components to success; however, officers exhibiting these attributes were not always promoted on their first attempt. All officers were found to be involved with PHS-related organizations to varying degrees, yet not all had experience with SciPAC.

Awards. The panelists had a wide range of awards numbers and types. Not all officers who were promoted had a Commendation Medal (CM), which is one benchmark for awards at the T-O5 level, though a majority of the officers had earned a CM at the time of promotion. However, a CM was not an assurance, as some officers with CMs were not successful on their first attempt but were on subsequent attempts.

Supervisory support. All participants agreed that supervisory support is a must. This reflects on the COER scores, a good ROS, and concurrence for deployments, additional duties, and TDYs, etc.

CV Review. The CV is a crucial component of

the promotion package. Discussions included content and formatting of the CV and associated cover sheet. Helpful tips and advice included, but were not limited to: 1) having your CV and coversheet reviewed by officers outside of your field and outside of your category; 2) highlighting impact and making this apparent to the reader; as well as 3) clearly communicating leadership experience and roles.

Mentorship. All officers on the panel agreed that mentorship was an important factor in promotion success. Many had formal mentoring agreements through SciPAC, while others had informal mentoring relationships with co-workers or other officers. Panelists noted that mentors played a valuable role reviewing all documents in the promotion package, as well as in providing advice for preparing for promotion.

Deployments. Deployment experience varied among the panelists. For example, some officers had multiple deployments while others had none. There was a consensus that since deployment is not specifically in the benchmarks, and because deployment opportunities can be limited, lack of deployment should not detract from your overall qualifications for promotion. Despite this, deployment was still seen as important.

Continuing Education. The majority of interviewed officers had minimal comments regarding the impact of continuing education on promotion, however all agreed that it should be tracked and addressed in the eOPF and CV.

Officer Statement (OS) and Reviewing Officer (ROS) Statement. Panelists agreed that the OS mostly focused on officership and PHS activities, while the ROS focused more on their job and accomplishments in their position. Additionally, the majority of panelists drafted their own ROS, which their reviewing official revised as they deemed appropriate. Helpful tips and advice included, but were not limited to, highlighting information that sets you apart from other candidates.

Recommendations for the Promotion Process:

Many of the recommendations shared by the panelists reiterated best practices from official sources such as the CCMIS, SciPAC, and JOAG. These recommendations included being familiar with the category benchmarks and documenting them clearly, highlighting increases in responsibility throughout an officer's career, and demonstrating the impact an officer's work has in the scientific and general community. In addition, panelists felt that formal and

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informal mentorship is important, and that it is necessary for officers to advocate for themselves and to take an active role in their career. Furthermore, the CV coversheet was thought to be the most important document in the promotion package. The cover sheet should be understandable to someone outside of the officer's field and needs to demonstrate benchmark accomplishments and career growth.

Approximately 75 percent of officers were in an O-6 billet when promoted to a temporary O-5 and the remainder were in an O-5 billet. There did not appear to be any correlation between promotion success and being in a certain type of billet (e.g., research, clinical, or regulatory).

The panel discussions did provide some unexpected insights. First, while the majority of officers felt it was necessary to be involved in SciPAC to be promoted, there were a few successfully promoted officers who were minimally or not involved in SciPAC. These officers chose to take leadership roles in other Commissioned Corps groups such as JOAG or COA. Second, having a large number of awards or high-level awards did not ensure promotion success. Lastly, officers believed that, although not required, deployments are an area that can

be important for promotion success as deployments are an opportunity to demonstrate leadership; can lead to awards; and demonstrate flexibility, mobility, and public health impact.

Many of the panelists who were unsuccessful on their first promotion attempt but were later successful did not make major changes to their promotion packages. This was in part because the officers did not receive any negative feedback from the promotion boards, and were unsure what to do differently. Nevertheless, some officers reported changes in responsibilities, leadership activities, higher COER scores, or overall better writing and formatting of promotion materials. In addition, there were perceptions that because the expectations from one promotion board to the next are difficult to predict, changes to the promotion package might be unwarranted.

Conclusion:

The goal of this initiative was to increase the understanding of the promotion process in order to assist SciPAC mentors in their roles. This was accomplished by holding a series of panels of officers recently promoted to T-O5, each of whom was happy to share their experiences. While much of the information shared by the panelists was expected, there were a few un-

anticipated observations. Many officers did not have a clear understanding of what elements were most critical to their promotion, and officers who were not promoted until after multiple attempts were not able to point to what changes, if any, led to their eventual promotion success. Overall though, the officers agreed that long-term career planning, early preparation of promotion materials, and perseverance are essential for promotion success.

Acknowledgements:

The SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee would like to acknowledge the time and contributions of the recently promoted T-O5 officers who participated in the promotion panels, and were critical to the success of the promotion panels initiative. We would also like to acknowledge the work of other subcommittee members who were involved in this effort, including LCDR Tyann Blessington, LCDR Jorge Muniz Ortiz, LCDR Cara Halldin, and LT Leslie A. Rivera Rosado.



Scientist Officers Support *Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities*

On Saturday, October 22, 2016, five SciPAC members gathered at the Atlanta BeltLine to promote visibility of the Commissioned Corps and support the Surgeon General's *Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities*.

VADM Vivek Murthy launched his *Call to Action* in 2015ⁱ, noting that only one-half of all U.S. adults and about one-quarter of high school students meet the respective guideline for aerobic physical activity recommended in the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. He noted that walking is an excellent way to increase physical activity and is a powerful public health strategy to combat diseases associated with a sedentary lifestyle. VADM Murthy has outlined five strategic goals, grounded in scientific and practice-based evidence, to support walking and walkability in the United States:

Goal 1: Make Walking a National Priority

Goal 2: Design Communities that Make It Safe and Easy to Walk for People of All Ages and Abilities

Goal 3: Promote Programs and Policies to Support Walking Where People Live, Learn, Work, and Play

Goal 4: Provide Information to Encourage Walking and Improve Walkability

Goal 5: Fill Surveillance, Research, and Evaluation Gaps Related to Walking and Walkability

With beautiful views of the Atlanta, Georgia, skyline in the background, the Atlanta BeltLine was the ideal setting to galvanize USPHS Commissioned Corps Scientist support for the Surgeon General's *Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* and to build camaraderie within the Scientist category. The Atlanta BeltLine is a network of public parks, multi-use trails, and transit along a historic 22-mile railroad corridor circling downtown Atlanta and connecting several Atlanta neighborhoods to each other.

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ⁱU.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Step It Up! The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General; 2015. This publication is available at www.surgeongeneral.gov

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Developed in 1999 and anticipated to be completed by 2030, the BeltLine is among the largest, most wide-ranging urban redevelopment programs currently underway in the United States.

The walk and social began at the Eastside location of the Atlanta BeltLine Trail at 0930 hours and five officers completed 4 miles along the designated trail. Our walk was truly a family event that included officers and their relatives.



Following the walk, we socialized over lunch near the area where the walk began. The event was a great success and was sponsored by the SciPAC Visibility Subcommittee.

Two events are planned for this spring at parks in the greater Atlanta area. All Scientists and their families and friends are encouraged to participate in the walks and socials at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area starting at 0930 hours on Saturday, March 25, 2017, and at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park starting at 0930 on Saturday, April 22, 2017. Look for more information to be sent out on the SciPAC listserv.

**By LCDR Timothy J. Cunningham
and LT Marcienne Wright**

**Scientist officers at the Atlanta Beltline, from left to right:
CAPT Fuyuen Y. Yip, LCDR Zewditu Demissie, LT Marcienne
Wright, LCDR Timothy J. Cunningham, & CDR Tegan K.
Boehmer**

COMMIT. Ironman Florida

By LCDR Joanna Gaines

The Ironman triathlon was invented by a group of bored Navy SEALs. It combines three existing events to create an absolute monstrosity of a race: a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride, and a marathon. I signed up for Ironman Florida with the goals of raising funds for the Challenged Athletes Foundation (CAF) and crossing the finish line. CAF is an amazing non profit organization that provides differently abled athletes with the necessary equipment, such as prosthetics or racing wheelchairs, to participate in sports. CAF works extensively with wounded veterans and has a unique mentorship program that pairs younger or newer individuals with disabilities with more experienced athletes to learn how to meet their personal and fitness goals. I chose to raise funds for CAF so that others might have access to sports and their associated benefits, beyond the physical benefits of exercise.

An Ironman is made not on race day, but on each and every training session leading up to race day. Countless hours are spent swimming, biking, and running. Beyond the three core disciplines, athletes must develop nutrition plans, learn how to repair and maintain their bicycle, ensure they are getting enough sleep, and heal from any injuries acquired during training. Commitment to a training schedule means meeting work obligations and balancing personal commitments while training as many as 20 hours per week. I learned that the secret to getting a good parking spot at CDC is to get to the office at 0530, which I did so I could leave

earlier for access to the pool. I lost two weeks of training to a deployment, where I had no ability to exercise. I ate more peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on my bicycle than most people eat in a lifetime. I swam, I rode, I ran. Relentlessly. I learned that the fourth discipline of triathlon is actually laundry, as I struggled to keep my hamper from turning into the Mt. Everest of stinky synthetic gear. I spent a lot of time riding my bike, crying and cursing my decision to sign up for such a stupid race, and wondering why I thought it was a good idea, much less an achievable one. I drank gallons of Gatorade. Training for any endurance event is distinctly unglamorous, and even harder to explain to anyone on the outside. I had no idea if it would all come together on race day, even though I did as much work as I could to ensure I might be successful.

Ironman's slogan is *Anything is possible*, and this is entirely true. I was incredibly lucky on November 5, 2016, when I had the race of a lifetime, finishing 100 minutes faster than my coach's calculations. My swim went exactly as expected. I had no mechanical issues on the bike, and no knee or hip pain during the run. The weather was glorious, and the support from the crowds was incredible. My parents and sister came to cheer me on, while my battle buddy and IronSherpa, CDR Jennifer Bornemann (3x Ironman), provided faraway friends and my coach with live updates from the race course. Most importantly, I raised more than \$2,300 for CAF in the process.

General George S. Patton said, "By perseverance, study, and eternal desire, any man can become great." I am not someone who innately enjoys exercise especially running or biking and these activities remain a constant challenge to motivate myself to do more. here is absolutely nothing special about me as an individual or an athlete; I was simply able to commit to a plan. There are at least 10 other Ironman athletes in USPHS, although I believe I am the first in our category. I would love to assist any other Scientist officer who is looking to start on their athletic journey, whether their goal is their first 5k or even something as insane as an Iron man. Physical fitness is more than just a USPHS requirement; it is essential to being successful in our service. I would encourage every officer to find a form of fitness that they find challenging and rewarding, no matter what that may be.

<http://www.ironman.com/#axzz4YaY6X1Hd>



"By perseverance, study, and eternal desire, any man can become great."
- General George S. Patton

Adopt-a-Highway Initiative: A High-Visibility Activity under National Prevention Strategy-Prevention Through Active Community Engagement

Early on a crisp October Saturday morning, eight PHS officers and one dependent son gathered behind a fire house in Silver Spring, MD, for a dirty and largely thankless task. We were there to pick up litter in a safe manner as prescribed by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). Armed with safety vests, disposable gloves, and mechanical grabbers, we minimized any risks of injury to our backs and exposure to any potentially toxic substances while we picked up litter for about two hours. When we were done, we put the trash bags by the designated signpost for removal by SHA and took an obligatory group photo similar to those you see hunters take after they've bagged the big one. In our photo, we stand proudly smiling over our bags-of-refuse "prey" at the last of several highway clean-up events for the designated territory in 2016.



LT Shiny Mathew stands proudly next to the Adopt-a-Highway sign on Rt 650, New Hampshire Ave, Silver Spring, MD, that she helped to adopt.

The clean-up event was conducted in support of the Surgeon General's National Prevention Strategy (NPS) Strategic Direction for Healthy and Safe Community Environments and brought great visibility for the Corps to nearly 10,000 motorists daily. Our "territory" was the one-mile stretch of Route 650, New Hampshire Avenue located in front of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, marked on the north and south side by a USPHS Adopt-A-Highway sign posted by the SHA in return for our cleaning efforts at least four times per year. This initiative was founded by LT Shiny Mathew, a Scientist officer stationed at the FDA, and is supported by the Washington, DC, Commissioned Officers Association NPS-Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE) subcommittee. The NPS-PACE subcommittee helps implement NPS initiatives through community outreach activities such as clean-up activities and health and wellness educational sessions at local elementary schools.

Why would anyone stand on the side of New Hampshire Avenue, a six-lane main artery that connects DC with northern Maryland, with cars and trucks whizzing past, to pick up plastic, cigarette butts, beer bottles, and other trash? Perhaps it's about making a difference, facing the challenge to complete the same task several times a year, or feeling compelled to serve your local community in an area of need. LCDR Philip Lafleur, a Health Services Officer who participated at the October event, is a veteran of this cleaning activity, and served as a Team I member at the Monrovia Medical Unit (MMU) in Liberia, commented, "It is because when we donned our PHS uniforms we gave a blanket, implicit statement that when we were needed for any role, large or small, we'd show up. For two months in Liberia we faced down the deadly Ebola Virus, as did hundreds of other PHS officers during those perilous times.

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No one had to ask us why we did that either. For us, trash or Ebola, it is all the same. A job needs to be done and PHS officers show up and do it.” His comments echo our motivations to serve our local community at the Adopt-a-Highway event.

Prior to participating in the cleaning event, LT Shiny Mathew had briefed volunteer officers regarding safety concerns of working on a busy highway. In addition, participants are required to watch a *YouTube* video on highway safety and sign off on Maryland SHA participant release forms. Our cleaning team is generally split into two teams entrusted to the clean north and south bound side. Each team has a designated traffic spotter whose sole responsibility is to watch for traffic, a medical practitioner to handle medical emergencies, and a communications officer with contact information for the nearest hospital, in case any emergencies should rise.

Americans discard 250 million tons of trash every year and although much of the garbage is hauled to landfills, a large amount of it makes its way to our natural environment. Sobering statistics from West Virginia indicate that on average, a two-mile stretch of highway yields around 32,000 pieces of refuse. The one-mile stretch of New Hampshire Avenue is no exception to this rule, considering that we generally collect 3-5 industrial size trash bags of refuse per clean-up event.

The NPS-PACE Adopt-a-Highway clean-up activity helped promote a healthy and safe environment and increased visibility for PHS Commissioned Corps Officers. It is our goal and hope that PHS officers can implement adopt-a-highway/adopt-a-road program in their local communities nationwide. For questions and advice on initiating a program in your area, feel free to contact LT Shiny Mathew at Shiny.mathew@fda.hhs.gov



DC NPS-PACE PHS officers pose next to the Adopt-a-Highway sign with bags of refuse collected from New Hampshire Avenue. Left to right (Standing): Ryan Mathew (son of LT Shiny Mathew), LCDR Justin Belk, CDR Keith Keidrow, LT Ellen Mollinaro, LCDR Philip Lafleur, CDR La Tonya Bonner; (seated in front) CAPT Sharon McCoy, and CDR Felicia Duffy. Note: LT Shiny Mathew, Scientist officer, took the group photo.

By LCDR Philip Lafleur and LT Shiny Mathew



In Memoriam: LCDR Shalon M. Irving

In this issue of *The Scientist Newsletter*, we honor LCDR Shalon M. Irving, PhD, MPH, MS, CHES. LCDR Irving was an epidemiologist in the Surveillance Branch of the Division of Violence Prevention in the CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Shalon was a lieutenant commander in the US Public Health Service. Shalon joined CDC as an Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officer (Class of 2012) in the Office of Health Equity in the Division of Community Health in the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Her work there focused on the epidemiology of health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities, as well as identifying indicators to better measure health equity. In 2015, Shalon joined the Division of Violence Prevention, where she worked on understanding the health consequences of intimate partner violence across the lifespan and describing racial disparities in violence among adolescents and young adults.

Prior to CDC, Shalon worked as an assistant professor of sociology at both Hofstra University and Claflin University, and as a visiting professor of Africana Studies at University of South Florida. She was a W.K. Kellogg health scholar postdoctoral fellow at Morgan State University, where she worked closely with Sisters Together and Reaching (STAR) Inc. to conduct a community health needs assessment. As a result of the findings, Shalon worked with others to develop and implement a sexual risk reduction program for adolescent females in the STAR service area of West Baltimore.

Shalon received her bachelor of arts degree in sociology and education from Hampton University; her master of science in sociology from Purdue University; her master of public health in health education and behavior from Johns Hopkins University; and her doctor of philosophy in sociology and gerontology from Purdue University. Throughout her career, Shalon demonstrated a deep commitment to equity and inclusion. Shalon worked outside of CDC with community and faith based organizations to promote health and well being in underserved populations. Her passion for and dedication to her work was profound. She was a cherished colleague and vibrant member of our community. Her positive energy and big smile will not be forgotten.

Shalon is survived by her daughter, Soleil Meena Daniele, and her parents Wanda and Samuel Irving.

Two sites have been set up to support Shalon's family. One provides resources to support the immediate needs of the family: <https://www.gofundme.com/support-for-shalon-irvings-family>

and the other is to support the establishment of a college fund for Shalon's infant daughter, Soleil: <https://www.gofundme.com/CollegeFundForSoleil>

Fitness Buddy Mentoring Team

LCDR Tajah Blackburn, LCDR Mark Scheckelhoff, LT Mark Pickett

The purpose of the Healthy Scientist Fitness Buddy Program is to give officers an opportunity to network with other Scientists through fitness activities. Officers are encouraged not only to help each other reach their fitness goals, but share their experiences in the PHS for professional development. The program application collects biographical information and exercise preferences, which will be used to identify officer strengths and interests so that officers can be effectively matched. This application also gives the coordinators insight into how officer interests align and who may work well together as experienced and new officers. To request information and the application form, please email LT Israel Cross at Israel.cross@cms.hhs.gov.

(Reprint from Healthy Scientist Bulletin, May 2016)

**JOIN US FOR THE *2017 USPHS*
*SCIENTIFIC AND TRAINING SYMPOSIUM***

Don't forget SciPAC Category Day on June 7!

More information available at: <http://symposium.phscof.org/?view=featured>

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June 6-9, 2017
Chattanooga, Tennessee**



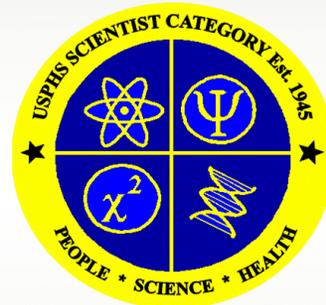
Image courtesy of Choice Hotels

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scipacnewsletter@gmail.com

Check out past issues of *The Scientist Officer* at:

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



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