

# The “YouNameIt” Newsletter

Atlanta Branch, Commissioned Officers Association  
of the U.S. Public Health Service  
(representing members assigned to Atlanta area federal agencies)

Vol 14 Issue 1

Spring, 2003

## Calendar of Events

### March 21

Junior Officer Advisory Group Teleconference,  
Open to all officers 0-4 or below. Time: 1000 to  
1200. Bridge number: 877-716-0361.  
Pass code: 416627.

### April 19

Keep Georgia Beautiful, in conjunction with ACOA  
Road Clean Up Service Project. The ACOA will  
provide refreshments, trash bags, and safety vests.  
Please contact either CDR Larry Cseh  
(loc3@cdc.gov), LTJG Jennifer di Pietra  
(jvd6@cdc.gov) or Lester Sharpton (CAPT, retired)  
at 770-535-9670 or 770-536-6564.

### April 23

ACOA General Meeting Topic: CDC-Emergency  
Response and PHS-Preparedness. 1430 – 1600  
hrs, Clifton Campus, Building 16, Rm 1107.

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**The ACOA Executive Committee held a  
planning workshop on Saturday, February 22 to  
discuss how we can better serve you in 2003!**

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## Name That Tune...

(or actually the ACOA Newsletter)

We need your ideas! We are currently taking  
suggestions for a new name for this newsletter.  
Please send your suggestion by April 11, 2003 to  
LT Danice Eaton at DEaton@cdc.gov or call her at  
770-488-6143. The winning entry will be decided by  
the ACOA Executive Committee and the entrant  
will receive \$10.

## Atlanta Branch Buzz

Introducing election results for the 2003 Atlanta  
Branch Executive Members...working for you. Give  
'em an earful of suggestions!!!

President: CDR Amy Collins, CDC  
VP/President Elect: LCDR Tina Lankford, CDC  
Secretary: LCDR Linda West, CDC  
Treasurer: LT Dave Shoffner, CDC  
Past President: CDR Susanne Pickering, CDC  
Liaison to National COA: CDR Steve Inserra  
Member At Large:

LCDR Jeff Bosshart, HRSA  
CDR Larry Cseh, ATSDR  
LTJG Jennifer di Pietra, CDC  
LT Danice Eaton, CDC  
LT Kirsten Ernst, ATSDR  
CDR C. Dexter (Bo) Kimsey, Jr, CDC  
Lester Sharpton (CAPT, retired)

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## New ID Cards in the Atlanta Area

The Department of Defense (DoD) has introduced a new type of ID card: the Common Access Card, or the CAC. Only active duty uniformed services personnel, selected reserve, DoD civilian employees, and eligible contractor personnel will be issued the CAC. Issuance began at selected sites in Virginia, Germany, and Korea in Fall 2000. The CAC has a white background and gold chip on the front, it expires every 3 years, and it replaces the green, digitized teslon card.

The DoD approved the Commissioned Corps Section, (CCS), HRMO, CDC, Atlanta, GA as a Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) Realtime Automated Personnel Identification System (RAPIDS) site. This provides the CCS with the equipment and connectivity to the DEERS database required for updating DEERS information and issuing the new CAC to active duty personnel as well as the digitized teslon cards to retirees and dependents.

Please call LCDR Linda West at 770-488-1989 to set up an appointment to get the new CAC; to replace expired, stolen, or lost IDs; to renew or update retiree IDs; to renew or update dependent IDs; and to update information in the DEERS database (i.e., extend dependents until their 23rd birthday, if they are full-time students, and add new babies and spouses). LCDR West will schedule an appointment, explain what documentation is needed, and give you directions to the office.

The CCS no longer issues any type of ID through the mail. This compromises the increased DoD security measures we must meet in order to issue CACs and other IDs. For officers and dependents residing or stationed in areas other than Atlanta, you can schedule an appointment with LCDR West when you are in town during leave or school break, or contact a local military installation.

One very important note for retirees and dependents: Although retirees and dependents will not be issued CACs, our office does replace expired and existing older versions of the ID cards. If you have one of the "pasted picture" IDs, or an ID that has the "large PHS number" designated at the top

right of the card, you definitely should call LCDR West to make an appointment to get your ID(s) replaced. For questions relating to ID cards or DEERS updates, please call LCDR West.

## Service members' Group Life Insurance' (SGLI) New Rates

As of July 1, 2003, the new premium rate for basic SGLI will be 6.5 cents per \$1,000 per month, down from 8 cents per \$1,000 per month. This translates into an almost 19% savings for service members with the maximum \$250,000 of coverage. Overall, the reductions will save service members about \$96 million annually in basic SGLI premiums.

The VA is also reducing spousal premium rates for every age group. In addition, some age groups will see their rates drop substantially. For example, those in the 35-39 age bracket will see a 42% reduction in premiums. These reductions will save service members about \$42 million in family policy premiums.

In addition to the reduced rates, VA has also added two additional age brackets. By taking two of the current age brackets and dividing them into smaller age ranges, additional spousal members will now be able to receive more substantial premium reductions. VA hopes these reductions will allow even more service members to obtain life insurance coverage for their spouses.

Again, new premium rates go into effect July 1, 2003. For more information on rates and to view rate tables (officer and spouse), visit the Department of Veterans Affairs at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

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**Visit the COA national web site at [www.coausphs.org](http://www.coausphs.org) for timely and important benefits and legislation information!**

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## United States Surgeon General Visit to Atlanta, March 4, 2003

PHS officers received a special opportunity to ask Surgeon General Carmona direct questions on issues involving the mission of CDC in collaboration with the PHS, the proposed transformation of the Commissioned Corps, specific category questions, and more. SG Carmona was in town to speak at the ATSDR Partners Meeting and accepted the invitation to hold a special session for all Atlanta-based PHS officers. Part of the session included a special ceremony for three newly appointed PHS officers (LTJG Blonck, LTJG Tucker, and LCDR Gregg) to recite the Oath of Office before the Surgeon General. Many thanks to all PHS officers who took the time to attend and to CAPT John Steward, ATSDR and LCDR Tina Lankford, CDC for the dedicated work to provide this opportunity.

## Medical Benefits Advice

### Your entitlement to specialty care as an active duty officer stationed outside of a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) catchment area - did you know?

When you have need for care provided by a medical specialist and are stationed outside of a MTF catchment area and are not enrolled in TRICARE Prime, you must call Beneficiary Medical Program (BMP) and request authorization to obtain that care. The one exception is if you are a female officer and you see an OB/GYN provider for your routine health care. Obstetric care is not considered routine care and always needs to be authorized. Almost all specialist appointments require referral from a primary care provider. It is unlikely that BMP will authorize you to obtain speciality care on a self-referral basis. The usual exception is self-referral to a Dermatologist for a skin/mole check but you must still speak with a Patient Care Coordinator (PCC) to determine if you need referral for Dermatology care. Additionally, officers can self refer to a Psychiatrist at any time but still must obtain authorization for mental health care from BMP.

The PCC will need the provider name, billing address, phone number, tax ID number, and date

of the appointment when you call for the authorization. You will also be asked if the provider agrees to accept government assignment for the service as payment in full. If you have never seen the provider before or if the provider is not affiliated with organizations such as Emory Healthcare who have agreed beforehand to accept government assignment, you should ask the scheduler to verify that the provider will accept government assignment. The PCC can verify with the provider if there is any question regarding government assignment before you go to your scheduled appointment. If the specialist you have been referred to will not accept government assignment and there are other specialist providers within reasonable commuting distance who agree to accept government assignment as payment in full, you will be asked to reschedule with another provider. Finally, please be aware that there have been recent changes in our dental care entitlement. Specifically, root canals and crowns are no longer considered routine dental care and must always be preauthorized.

### Important telephone numbers:

Beneficiary Medical Program: 800-368-2777, option # 2 to speak to a PCC for authorizations.

CAPT Kitty MacFarlane, Health Benefits Advisor, CCS, CDC: 770-488-1883 for questions or assistance with billing issues.

## Local PHS Uniform Store

### Save money on uniforms! Donate items you no longer need!

The ACOA Branch uniform store offers officers really nice deals on uniforms, rank and insignia devices and miscellaneous items. Our goal is to help outfit new officers and 02 & 03 rank officers. The "store" is located at the Koger Center (at I-85 and Chamblee-Tucker Road), Stanford Building in the HRMO Corps Section. For specific questions, contact LCDR Tina Lankford, CDC, at 770-488-1886. Assistance provided preferably by appointment. We appreciate donations of any devices that you don't use or need.

## And now for a question...

### What would you do without a home?

You have the power to provide a home for a needy family. The Watsonian Society, a CDC employee organization of Public Health Advisors, is sponsoring an opportunity to build a Habitat for Humanity House for a needy family in the Atlanta area. A Watsonian Society-sponsored Habitat for Humanity House was previously built in 1997. Former President Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Carter have been known to help build these houses. The Watsonian Society needs to raise over \$50,000 in the next few months and plans to begin construction of this house in Fall 2003. Being a sponsor makes good sense. You'll support the community area in which you live and work, and you'll help make a significant difference in the overall landscape of the Atlanta area and surrounding communities. Background information and pictures are available at: [www.habitatgwinnett.org](http://www.habitatgwinnett.org). This is for information only; contributions go to our partners in The Watsonian Society which is the specific sponsoring organization for this house.

Please make this happen and make a contribution to this worthy cause. Donations can come from personal funds or you can participate by contacting a local organization and asking them to contribute. Checks should be made out to "Gwinnett County Habitat for Humanity" and are tax deductible. For those who have not as yet been contacted by a Watsonian volunteer, please send your contributions to Public Health Advisor and former CDC employee: Fred Martich 4056 White Oak Lane Lilburn, GA 30047.

## ACOA Road Clean-up

On March 8th, 6 members of the ACOA participated in the Adopt-a-Highway Road Clean-up service project, picking up trash along a 1-mile stretch of Ponce de Leon from Briarcliff to Clifton Road. Refreshments and clean-up supplies were provided. A big thank you to ACOA members Lester Sharpton (CAPT, retired), CAPT O'Connor, LCDR Bosshart, LCDR Reynolds, LCDR Tomashek, and LTJG di Pietra for helping out. In case you missed it, mark your calendars now for our next ACOA Road Clean-up, which is scheduled for Saturday, April 19, 2003.

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**Wanted: Officer or volunteer with savvy webmaster, web site design and/or IT skills. The ACOA Branch wants to improve its web site and your talent and creativity is desired and gratefully appreciated. Please contact LT Danice Eaton ASAP at [DEaton@cdc.gov](mailto:DEaton@cdc.gov) or 770-488-6143.**

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## Member's Column

### Proposed Cap in Pay Raise for PHS Commissioned Officers

(This message is brought to you by a member of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association and was adapted from communication from COA Executive Director Jerry Farrell, CAPT, USN-Ret.)

#### Background

On December 23, 2002, in a high level meeting involving senior White House and OMB officials, a proposal was discussed to cap the 2004 pay raise for all uniformed services at 2%, the same amount proposed for federal civilians next year. Upon learning of this, the Departments of Defense and Transportation protested vigorously and OMB retreated, modifying its proposal to cap NOAA and PHS pay raises at 2%. Further elucidating this decision, language from the February 3, 2003 submission of President Bush's budget to Congress stated, "For civilian personnel and the Commissioned Corps in NOAA and PHS where the work is predominantly civilian in nature, the FY 2004 budget proposes an across-the-board pay increase of 2.0 percent...." It is important for all officers to know that Secretary Thompson made every effort, albeit unsuccessfully, to reverse this before its submission to Congress. Once submitted, however, it becomes the official position of the Administration and Secretary Thompson and the Surgeon General, regardless of their personal feelings, are expected to support the President.

#### What is being done?

The COA has enlisted the support of our sister services in The Military Coalition (TMC) and on February 6, 2003, TMC agreed to support pay parity for all seven uniformed services. Similar

*Member's Column, continued from page 4*

support has been signaled by the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), the Reserve Officers Association (ROA), National Military Family Association (NMFA), and others. TMC is addressing this issue in testimony before at least two congressional committees this month and will also address letters to key committee chairs in Congress, as will MOAA. COA issued a "call to action" to all members urging they communicate with their congressional delegations on this matter and provided a sample letter on their web site <http://www.coausphs.org>. The COA press release and call to action information are also posted on the COA web site. COA will continue to seek public and congressional support on this issue by any and all means available.

#### **What can I do?**

You are urged to write your congressional representatives and encourage your family members, friends, and fellow officers to do the same. With our sister services writing letters and testifying before Congress on our half, we are beseeched to do the same for our own service! Be cautioned that the use of government stationery, computers and time should not be used to communicate with members of Congress on this issue. We also stressed that correspondence should not imply that the officer is writing in his/her official capacity, but rather as a private citizen.

We strongly appeal to all PHS officers to *wear their uniforms*, regardless of where stationed, and at all times while in a duty status. When officers who enjoy the same benefits as our sister services appear as civilians, our case for pay parity as a uniformed service is severely diminished.

***Remember, a non-uniformed PHS Officer is reinforcement to justify a 2% pay raise in 2004.***

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**To submit information, articles and op/ed pieces to the ACOA newsletter, please contact the Editor, LT Danice Eaton, at [DEaton@cdc.gov](mailto:DEaton@cdc.gov) or 770-488-6143.**

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## **“Opportunity Knocking” to Atlanta Membership to Shape Future of Local Efforts**

To get involved in any of the committees listed below, contact LCDR Tina Lankford (770) 488-1886.

Communications Committee: Co-Chairs LT Danice Eaton and Lester Sharpton (CAPT, retired). Communicates with Atlanta branch membership via newsletter and ACOA website.

Membership Committee: Chair LT Dave Shoffner. Recruitment/advertisement efforts for becoming a member of COA National and local Atlanta branch (letters, conference booths, etc.).

Professional Development Committee: Co-Chairs LCDR Jeff Bosshart and CDR Bo Kimsey. Conveys issues regarding career enhancement and leadership development (uniforms, awards, mentorship, etc.).

Special Projects Committee: Co-chairs: LTJG Jennifer Di Pietra and LT Kirsten Ernst. Coordinates special projects to benefit local officer esprit de corps (promotion ceremony, social functions, etc.).

Community Service Committee: Co-Chairs CDR Larry Cseh and Lester Sharpton (CAPT, retired). Work to promote Atlanta branch membership support with local community efforts (science fair judging, WPBA, Hands-on-Atlanta).

## **Remembering The Words We Said....The PHS Corps Oath**

I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God.