

# The Signal Newsletter

Atlanta Branch, Commissioned Officers Association  
of the U.S. Public Health Service

(representing members assigned to Atlanta area federal agencies)

Vol 14 Issue 2

May/June, 2003

## Calendar of Events

### May 28, Time: 1200-1300

Lunch and Learn – Commissioned Corps vs. Civil Service. Koger Center/Stanford Bldg/Satcher Rm.

### May 29, Time: 1300-1700

Basic Life Support (BLS) class.  
ATSDR Conf. Rm. 3A, 1825 Century Center Blvd.

### June 15-20

COA Conference. Scottsdale, Arizona.

### June 18, Time: 1200-1300

Lunch and Learn – CCRF Fitness Test.  
Century Center.

### June 26, Time: 0800-1500

BLS Beginners Class. Dobbins Naval Air Station  
Atlanta Branch Medical Clinic.

### June 28, Time: 0900

CCRF testing (Tentative)

### July 1, Time: 1330

Promotion Ceremony at Century Center.

like spouse, son or daughter, is considered the “dependent.” The previous policy allowed accompanied dependent travel in CONUS only if the final flight destination was OCONUS. Most dependents of USPHS officers live within CONUS, thus the new policy opens the door for families to fly together within the US.

This policy is in writing and has been distributed world-wide. If you and your family want to fly Space-A to visit family far from Atlanta and in the United States and you have time & patience, take advantage of this trial policy and...GO FOR IT!

Seats on Space-A flights are secured on a space available basis on military aircraft or military chartered flights at minimal cost, or even no cost from some places. It is best to avoid peak times such as holidays and the summer when fewer seats are available. For more information on Space-A travel, visit <http://www.militaryliving.com/>.

*Written by: Lester M. Sharpton, ACOA Retired representative to the Executive Committee, and Military Officers Association of America (Formerly The Retired Officers Association) Life Member.*

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## New Opportunities for Space-A Travel

The US Air Mobility Command, which controls the majority of cargo flights worldwide for the military, has instituted trial policy permitting dependents to travel within the Continental United States (CONUS) on Space-A travel flights. CONUS consists of the lower 48-states and excludes Alaska & Hawaii, which are considered OCONUS (outside the continental United States). This trial policy started on April 1, 2003 and will be in effect until March 31, 2004.

On these flights, an active duty USPHS commissioned officer or retiree is considered the “sponsor”, while the authorized family member

## Commissioned Corps Readiness Force Membership

### A Factor in Promotion and Assimilation for All Future Cycles

In a letter dated March 26, 2003, to all Commissioned Corps Officers, VADM Richard H. Carmona, MD, MPH, FACS, Surgeon General and Acting Assistant Secretary for Health directed that "membership in the Commissioned Corps Readiness Force (CCRF) will be a factor considered by all future promotion and assimilation boards. This will encompass all competitive promotions, both temporary and permanent, in all grades through O-8." For the full text of the letter see the May issue of the *Commissioned Corp Bulletin* at: [http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF\\_docs/May03ccb.pdf](http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/May03ccb.pdf).

The Atlanta Chapter of COA strives to assist all officers wishing to become CCRF qualified by providing opportunities to obtain Basic Life Support (BLS) certification and meet physical fitness standards. This issue of *The Signal* has dedicated resources to beginning this assistance. CDC has a long way to go in obtain the 30% deployable members as set forth by the President and DHHS for FY03. According to recent statistics, less than 15% of CDC Commissioned Corps Officers are CCRF deployable. All other OPDIVs in the Atlanta Area (ATSDR, FDA, BOP, HRSA, etc.) have already met or exceeded the 30% goal. It's ACOA's hope that officers will avail themselves of the BLS and fitness testing events to rapidly raise the CDC statistics to meet or exceed the FY03 goal. For more information on CCRF go to: <http://oep.osophs.dhhs.gov/ccrf/>.

## CRUNCH and RUN

### CCRF Physical Fitness Testing

Have you been putting off taking the physical fitness test required for CCRF? Procrastinate no more! ACOA is organizing an event for officers on Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM. The location will be announced closer to the event, but will most likely be in the Corporate Square/Executive Park area of the city. We anticipate it will take less than an hour for an officer to complete the three components of the fitness test which include: 1.5 mile run/walk,

push-ups and crunches or the side-bridge exercise. For more information on the qualifying standards for physical fitness in CCRF go to: <http://oep.osophs.dhhs.gov/ccrf/>.

Please RSVP for this event by June 20<sup>th</sup> via e-mail to any of the following officers: CAPT Arnold Manangan (axm2@cdc.gov), CDR Jeff Bosshart (jbossart@hrsa.gov), LCDR Tina Lankford (tfl4@cdc.gov), or CDR Steve Inserra (sai0@cdc.gov). Further details will be sent to officers who register.

If you are interested in volunteering to help with this event, please contact one of the above officers. We need people to time events (bring your stop watch if you have one) and someone who is BLS certified.

## BLS for Health Care Providers

One of the requirements for many health care professionals is BLS (basic life support) certification. CCRF requires the same course, which is offered by the American Heart Association (AHA). Starting in May, the Atlanta COA will start offering the AHA BLS Health Provider Course monthly at various CDC/ATSDR campuses and military installations around the Atlanta Metro Area. For more information on BLS and CCRF go to: <http://oep.osophs.dhhs.gov/ccrf/>.

The first ACOA sponsored class will be on Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup> and will be limited to officers needing recertification only. The class will be held at ATSDR Conference Room 3A, 1825 Century Center Blvd from 1300-1700 and will be limited to 12 officers. To register, please e-mail to CDR Jeff Bosshart (jbossart@hrsa.gov) or LCDR Patricia Pettis (pip2@cdc.gov). Class enrollment is on a first-come-first-serve basis. The cost for the class will be \$2 plus an additional \$10 if you wish to purchase the book (not mandatory). Fees may be paid by cash (exact change only) or check.

A class for BLS "first-timers" or officers whose certification has expired will be held at Dobbins Naval Air Station Atlanta Branch Medical Clinic on Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup> from 0800 to 1500. This class is limited to 18 officers and priority will be given to those seeking certification for the first time. Officers

*BLS for Providers, continued*

seeking recertification will be added if space is available. To register, please send an e-mail per the above instructions. The cost for the class will be \$2 plus an additional \$10 if you wish to purchase the book (not mandatory). Fees may be paid by cash (exact change only) or check.

Other sources of AHA BLS certification are listed below. The cost is generally \$40-60 per person, including the books. Classes are offered at various times and locations. Contact the sources directly for details or for classes offered closer to your residence, go to the AHA website [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) to search by zipcode.

1. Atlanta Technical College. 1560 Metropolitan Ave. S.W., Atlanta, 30310. Phone: 404-756-3740.
2. Grady Health System. 80 Jessie Hill Jr. Drive, Atlanta, 30303. Phone: 404-616-4850.
3. ExtendLife.Net of Georgia. PO. Box 723832, Atlanta, 31139. Phone: 877-698-4900.
4. CARECO, Inc./SOS Technologies – Atlanta. 699 Roundtree Road, P O Box 962380, Riverdale, 30296. Phone: 770-996-5433.
5. Chattahoochee Technical College. 2680 Gordy Parkway, Marietta, 30066. Phone: 770-509-6317 Ext. 254.
6. Gwinnett Tech Institute 5150 Sugarloaf Pkwy, PO Box 1501, Lawrenceville, 30043 770-962-7580.

## Fort McPherson Commissary Hours Change

The commissary at Fort McPherson will no longer be open on weekends. The change is intended to “better serve the customer” by keeping costs low. Items are purchased at a bulk rate with a 5% surcharge to cover handling, personnel and store expenses. There are no state or local taxes on food items. Please remember that the people who bag and cart food to your vehicle work for tips only, but it is okay to bag and carry your own.

Directions to the commissary at Fort McPherson are available at

<http://www.mcpherson.army.mil/comissa.htm>.

The new hours of operation at the Fort McPherson Commissary are:

Monday	1000 -1800
Tuesday	1000 -1900
Wednesday	1100 -1900
Thursday	1000 -1900
Friday:	1100 -1900
Saturday:	Closed
Sunday:	Closed

The commissary at Fort Gillem near Forest Park is still open on weekends.

*Written by: Lester M. Sharpton, ACOA Retired Executive Committee, and Reserved Officers Association Life Member.*

## Professional Category Corner

Did you know that every PHS category has its own Professional Advisory Committee (PAC)? Links to each PAC are provided on the DCP website at <http://dcp.psc.gov> and below. Visit your PAC’s website to find out how to become more active! ACOA is looking for an Atlanta-based senior representative to serve as a local liaison/mentor for each PAC. If you are interested, please contact CDR Collins ([ACollins@cdc.gov](mailto:ACollins@cdc.gov)).

Dentist: <http://www.ihs.gov/nonmedicalprograms/phs/PHSDental/dpacmenu.htm>

Dietitian: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/diet/dietpac.htm>

Engineer: <http://www.usphsengineers.org/>

Environmental Health: <http://www.ehopac.org/>

Health Services: <http://www.usphs-hso.org/>

Nurse: <http://phs-nurse.org/>

Pharmacist: <http://www.hhs.gov/pharmacy/main.html>

Physician: [http://www2.ihs.gov/ppac/Welcome\\_to\\_PPAC.htm](http://www2.ihs.gov/ppac/Welcome_to_PPAC.htm)

Scientist: <http://www.usphs-scientist.org/>

Therapist: <http://www.cc.nih.gov/rm/pt/tpac.htm>

Veterinarian: <http://www.fda.gov/cvm/links/vcc/default.htm>

**The Professional Category Corner will appear in each issue of *The Signal*. Each month will feature news from a different PAC. To submit content, e-mail the editor at [DEaton@cdc.gov](mailto:DEaton@cdc.gov).**

## Readiness and Response Lessons

The Atlanta Branch would like to express great thanks for our speakers at the ACOA General Meeting held April 23, 2003 at Roybal Campus. Each speaker was outstanding in providing our officers with not only the latest updates on readiness requirements, but also information on how to become more involved and where there may be opportunities to serve. The meeting proved to be very relevant and informative and approximately 50 officers were in attendance (not including remote envision or IPTV). If you wish to view a videotape of this conference, please e-mail LCDR Tina Lankford at TLankford@cdc.gov.

Meeting highlights included:

- CAPT Rob Amler, ATSDR/OAA: Provided personnel awareness information in regard to safety against health threats.
- CAPT Austin Hayes, HRMO/CCS: Provided latest percentages of CCRF members by center. (CDC-wide membership is only 15%!)
- CDR Renée Joskow, OS/ OER: Provided overview of CCRF application process, new requirements, CC membership goals: 2003 goal-30%, 2005-50%, 2007- 70%.
- Mr. Tom Jackson, NPS: Provided overview of National Pharmaceutical Stockpile Program's role, response capabilities, and areas of future need.
- Ms. Barbara Newhouse, NPS/ERT: Provided information on CDC's emergency response teams, including the application process and expectations of the officers who serve.

Thanks again to all of you for making this one of the best meetings ever!

## Telling It Straight About Promotions

*Written By: Wade P. Kirstein, MPH, FACHE  
Captain, USPHSR*

After 30 years of commissioned service, I retire from our Corps on July 1. My service includes a seven-year stint, mid-career, in the U.S. Air Force when the PHS reduction-in-strength behooved me to seek alternate service. Way back when, I even served in the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant during the Vietnam War. I have been asked to write a short article,

directed more toward junior officers, on what wisdom I may have to offer on how to get promoted. I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard someone say they had been wronged by a promotion board. I have also shared the hurt feelings of outstanding officers who, all agreed, should have been promoted but were passed over. What advice can I give to an aspiring young officer who hopes to advance quickly and smoothly through the ranks to become a lordly O-6?

You have probably read all the standard information in the DCP publications. To save time, get to the point, and have impact I will use simple declarative and imperative sentences. I will refer to your supervisor as your boss. I will use the generic he/him for male or female boss.

First things first. Do your job. Take pride in what you have done. This is good pride. More later on pride. Take an interest in your Corps. Consider a leadership position with the local branch of the COA. Become part of the CCRF. Wear the uniform impeccably and daily. Pass the physical fitness test. This next part may be painful so brace yourself. You are a Commissioned Officer in service to the United States of America. At some time during your glorious career you are expected to take a new job, in a new agency, in a new location. It is part of the sacrifice expected of us as men and women in uniform. For the Corps, this makes you a more valuable resource and broadens its impact on the health of the Nation. For you, it will be personally rewarding, professionally stimulating, and add to your employment potential. There is a second, technical reason why this is important. You greatly improve your opportunity for a good "score" from the promotion board reviewer if you are in a billet at one grade higher than your current grade. This helps demonstrate that you are performing at the level to which you are eligible for promotion.

But relocation will be hard on my family, you say. Have a talk with your family. Advise them that, to a certain extent, they are also in the service. If they do not understand this, ask them to tune in the news of the war in Iraq, for an update on how the servicemen and their families are faring. They are your brothers and sisters in uniform in harm's way in a distant land.

You need to learn your boss's expectation of what is required of you in your work. You must then exceed it, document how you have done so, and help your boss include this information in your file. More on documentation later. Your boss's primary job is the

*Promotions, continued.*

agency's goals and objectives. You are employed to help him achieve these goals. Nothing personal, but the reality is that he has very limited time to spend with you personally. You need to help him spend that time well. You are responsible for educating him on how the promotion process works. You are responsible for giving him information he can use to document your good work. In May, when he is about to write your COER, hand him a list of your extra work accomplishments with dates and achievement expressed in numbers. Ask for an award recommendation, hand him a draft of an award narrative. Some will say this is presumptuous, pompous self advocacy, and prideful. If it is prideful, this is bad pride. In your work, if you have done well, the world and the promotion board need to know of it. Your story is news, get it in the papers.

A few words on documentation. You work for the government. As far as governments are concerned if facts are not recorded, they may as well have never happened. For junior officers, especially, create your own version of your personnel file that contains a copy of everything related to your employment: published orders, COERS, training certificates, DD 214's, "atta boy" letters, payroll stubs, leave records. Keep it up to date, keep a copy of everything. Send a copy of key items, such as resume (keep it current) and training certificates, for inclusion in your official file. In May of every year you will need a list of "extra work" accomplishments to give your boss. Make life easy on yourself. In the back of your daily/monthly planner, keep a log of accomplishments. For example, "June 5, received a commendation letter from the XYZ Health Department on technical assistance provided", "September 10 had an article published on HIV/AIDS needs assessment in the ABC Journal of Public Debate". Do you know what a PIR is? You had better know. It is a summary of your entire commissioned corps life boiled down to three pages. It is the first thing the promotion board sees. With all the files they have to review, they have perhaps six minutes to study it. It behooves you to get a copy of it now to see what it says about you. Also, read the narrative comments your boss has written on your COER. The promotion board will, and they will have perhaps two minutes to do so. These must be substantive in character and must evoke at least some emotion that communicates how indispensable you are to the organization. You must convey the

importance of these words to your supervisor. Timing is everything. Be diligent in doing daily good work and in documenting it. But two years before your promotion board is blitz time. This moment begins your aggressive campaign to make sure your file sings your praises. Schedule a conference with your boss. Tell him how important it is to you to be promoted and educate him on his crucial role in it. The COER is approximately 80 percent of your promotion score. The promotion board routinely reads and re-reads the last two COERS and assigns big points for what they see. Be relentless in providing facts, drafts, and timing cues on what is to be done next to your boss. Be worthy of an award or medal. Have no shame. Ask for an award recommendation. Assume that it will take one year to be approved and included in your file. With your boss's approval, write the award recommendation draft yourself.

If all of the above sounds like its great advice but not for you then consider a career opportunity that does not involve uniformed service. What I have described, with all of its weaknesses, is our promotion system and our Corps. Many of us have found its varied roles to be professionally stimulating. Many have found the Corps work to be rewarding, have contributed to it, have succeeded in it, and take pride in it. Join us. Get promoted. Lead us.

*Editors note: The promotion process is currently under review by DCP. We are not certain of the "weight" the COER will have on the new promotion process. This article serves to provide valuable general guidance. Refer to the Commissioned Corps Bulletin and ACOA newsletters for updated information on the new promotion standards.*

## **COA Board Ballot Misprint in May *FRONTLINE***

Please note that on the COA Board of Directors Voting Ballot located in the May issue of *FRONTLINE* there is an incorrect Fax Number. COA's Fax number is (301) 731-9084. Remember that you can vote either online at [www.coausphs.org](http://www.coausphs.org), mail in your ballot to COA at 8201 Corporate Drive, Suite 560, Landover, MD 20785, or fax the ballot to (301) 731-9084. COA apologizes for any inconvenience and looks forward to receiving your vote.

## Support for the Troops

The Atlanta Branch of COA has received inquiries about what we are doing or what can be done to support the troops. In response, we have contacted the United Services Organization (USO), Military Wives, and Army Wives to learn how we can support our fellow uniformed officers serving overseas.

### Monetary Donations

If you would like to donate money for troops serving overseas, the USO is taking donations on-line at [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org). In addition, their homepage lists other support opportunities ([http://www.uso.org/pubs/8\\_20\\_1395.cfm](http://www.uso.org/pubs/8_20_1395.cfm)) including Operation Phone Home, which provides calling cards for soldiers to call home, Operation Care Package ([http://www.uso.org/pubs/93\\_325\\_1391.cfm](http://www.uso.org/pubs/93_325_1391.cfm)), funding for deployment centers, contingency travel, and child care. You may also want to contact the USO at Hartsfield International Airport at (404) 761-8061 to inquire about volunteering your time and services, make monetary contributions, or determine if the center would be able to use donated goods.

### Care Packages

Due to new Department of Defense rules for force protection, care packages must be sent to individual soldiers instead of to "A Soldier". The USO has polled the troops and combined a wish list of items that soldiers would most like to have in the field. If you would like to send a care package directly to a soldier in the field, contact LTJG Jennifer di Pietra at (404) 639-2476 for a list of desired items and names of soldiers and chaplains who are willing to accept care packages for distribution to their fellow soldiers.

## Uniform for 2003 COA Conference

During the COA conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, the Uniform of the Day will be the Summer White (SW). Authorized alternatives are the Summer Blue ("Salt and Pepper") and Service Dress Blue (SDB). Females may wear the authorized skirt or slacks with the uniform.

The Tropical Dinner Dress Blue is the only assigned uniform to attend the closing formal dinner on Wednesday June 18, 2003. There is no authorized alternative uniform. The civilian uniform equivalent for men is coat and tie, and for women, cocktail dress. The wearing of miniature medals on civilian attire by retired officers is appropriate. Retired

personnel may wear their miniature medals on tuxedo lapels for formal occasions.

Details on the Tropical Dinner Dress Blue uniform (pictured below) are provided in the May 2003 Commissioned Corps Bulletin, which is available at [http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF\\_docs/May03ccb.pdf](http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/May03ccb.pdf).



Tropical Dinner Dress Blue

## Becoming an ACOA Member

The mission of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) is to advance the PHS Commissioned Corps by uniting and serving Corps officers and advocating for their interests through leadership and communication. The Atlanta Branch is the only COA branch in the state of Georgia. ACOA membership provides you many opportunities to get involved with your local Corps community.

To become a member, complete the COA membership application on-line at <http://www.coausphs.org/memberapp.html>. When prompted, insert "Atlanta" as the name of the local branch you wish to join. The dues for the Atlanta branch membership are \$5.00 per year. The dues for National COA membership vary depending on your rank and PHS status, ranging from \$25 to \$105 annually. All members will receive a subscription to *FRONTLINE*, the National COA newsletter which is published monthly, and to *The Signal*, the quarterly ACOA newsletter.

If you have questions about ACOA or about how to become a member, please contact the chair of the ACOA Membership Committee, LT Dave Shoffner at 404-498-2687 or [dshoffner@cdc.gov](mailto:dshoffner@cdc.gov).