

JULY 2026 | ATLANTA COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION



The Signal is here to raise up the voices of our members and the community. We want to hear from you.

If you have a specific topic that you would like to research, a passion that you would like to highlight, and etc. reach out to ACOACommunications@gmail.com

Inspiration Corner

We are the ones we've been waiting for, We are the change that we seek. -Barack Obama



Communication Lead:

LT Tiffany Addison
LCDR Charissa Cooper

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In Officio Salutis

President's Corner

Atlanta officers,

As we close the 2025–2026 operational year, I am proud of what the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) has achieved together. This year has been marked by growth, strengthened partnerships, and a deepened commitment to our officer community and public health mission.

A defining accomplishment was ACOA's first-ever Legislative Advocacy Day at the Georgia State Capitol, which elevated USPHS visibility, and was featured in the [COA/COF Frontline Newsletter](#). This initiative also led to presenting our model at the 2026 USPHS Symposium for replication across COA branches.

We expanded community engagement through two Invisible Corps film screenings in partnership with [Emory University](#) and [Morehouse School of Medicine](#), reaching over 100 participants and strengthening awareness of the USPHS mission.

Internally, ACOA made key structural advancements to ensure sustainability. We are transitioning from 501(c)(6) to a 501(c)(3) organization, we've updated our bylaws and standard operating procedures across all committees and extended the Treasurer role to a two-term position to support continuity. We also improved accountability through the launch of a structured uniform and merchandise store.

Supporting officers remained central to our work. We established a care package program for officers on long-term deployments and those serving with Indian Health Service, provided four officers with scholarships to attend the 2026 COA Symposium, and enhanced communication through an updated membership roster and expanded listserv access.

Professional development and readiness were strengthened through training opportunities such as the "Deployment Preparedness" and "Proper Uniform Wear" Lunch and Learns, as well as events like the Officer Portrait Session and Uniform Pop-Up.

We also prioritized connection and morale through social events, promotion ceremony planning, and engagement with Flag Officers via Q&A sessions, fostering transparency and esprit de corps. Our commitment to service remained strong, with volunteer efforts supporting the Atlanta Community Food Bank, MedShare International, and a Back-to-School community initiative, reflecting our dedication beyond our primary duties.

It has been an honor to serve as your president. Thank you for your leadership, service, and continued commitment to one another and to the mission of the U.S. Public Health Service.

LCDR Cashmere Miller



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JULY 2026 | ATLANTA COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

ACOA Executive Committee

2025-2026

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<https://atlantacoa.com/the-signal>

Making the Invisible Visible: Inspiring the Next Generation Through the Invisible Corps Screening

By: LCDR Shifawu Odunsi, MPH, MCHES and LT Marcus Dumas, PhD, MPH

On April 6, 2026, members of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) partnered with the Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) Master of Public Health (MPH) Program to host a screening of *Invisible Corps: In Officio Salutis* as part of National Public Health Week. Held on MSM's campus in Atlanta, Georgia, the event brought together students, faculty, public health professionals, and officers for an evening centered on service, leadership, and the work that protects the nation's health.

More than a film screening, the event provided attendees with a deeper understanding of the efforts that sustain and improve public health across the country. Co-led by LT Marcus Dumas and LCDR Shifawu Odunsi, Vice President of ACOA, the event aimed to inspire attendees to envision their place within the broader public health mission. The evening began with a networking reception that fostered meaningful engagement among officers, students, and faculty. Conversations were so engaging that many attendees lingered afterward, reflecting the value of connection and mentorship. Notably, discussions at the table hosted by RDML Lisa Delaney continued well past the start of the program, highlighting the depth of insight and dialogue.

Following the screening, a panel discussion featured officers representing multiple stages of service and diverse professional backgrounds, including LT Christian Cervantes, LCDR Alexis Roberts, CAPT Francisca Abanyie, retired CAPT Christye Brown, and RDML Lisa Delaney. Moderated by LT Dumas, the panel provided attendees with a comprehensive view of service in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps across various career stages and experiences. Audience engagement remained high, with thoughtful questions reflecting both curiosity and a growing interest in public health service pathways.

A meaningful highlight of the evening was the recognition of former U.S. Surgeons General Dr. David Satcher and Dr. Regina Benjamin, both honorary trustees of the Commissioned Officers Foundation. Although unable to attend, both expressed their support for efforts to increase awareness of the USPHS Commissioned Corps. Dr. Satcher was further recognized for his leadership in advancing health equity and for founding the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at MSM, which celebrates 20 years of impact this year.

The program also recognized Dr. Valerie Montgomery Rice, President of MSM, for her leadership in advancing health equity, and Dr. Stephanie Miles-Richardson, Associate Dean and Director of the MPH Program, for her continued contributions to public health education and mentorship.

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With approximately 40 attendees, including Atlanta University students, MSM faculty and staff, ACOA members, and public health professionals, the event demonstrated the value of intentional engagement and partnership. One MSM MPH student later reflected that the screening served as a timely reminder of the leadership and infrastructure required to protect and serve communities at scale.

As a partner in this initiative, ACOA continues to play a vital role in connecting officers with the communities they serve. The Invisible Corps screening reinforced a powerful message: Public health is not only about what is seen but also about the professionals working behind the scenes to protect and improve lives every day.



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The card features a gold border and a background with a stylized American flag. At the top, a row of five stars is flanked by horizontal lines. Below this is the U.S. Public Health Service Seal, which includes an eagle, a caduceus, and the text "U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE" and "1798".

PLEASE
SAVE *the* DATE

U.S. Public Health Service
**ATLANTA-AREA
PROMOTION CEREMONY**

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 18, 2026
1300 HOURS

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Roybal Campus, Building 19, Auditorium A

RSVP Information to Follow

For questions, contact:
LCDR Danielle Gilliard Pella (dgilliard@cdc.gov)

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Making a Difference, One Pound at a Time

by: LT Kiwanda Mclemore

In a powerful demonstration of service beyond the uniform, officers from the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) recently volunteered at the Atlanta Community Food Bank, one of the nation's leading hunger-relief organizations. The event reflected the enduring commitment of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps to community health and well-being.

About the Atlanta Community Food Bank

The Atlanta Community Food Bank is the fourth-largest food bank in the country and serves as a critical lifeline for vulnerable populations across the region. Through partnerships with food pantries, community kitchens, childcare centers, shelters, and senior centers, the organization helps ensure food and essential resources reach those in need. Together, these efforts support more than 715,000 people facing hunger and food insecurity.

The Work: Inside the Product Rescue Center

On May 8, 2026, USPHS officers and local volunteers served in the organization's Product Rescue Center (PRC), where donated food is inspected, sorted, and repacked before distribution to more than 700 partner agencies and local pantries throughout the region. Every volunteer shift plays a direct role in helping community members receive the food and support they depend on.

The Impact: By the Numbers

The ACOA team and local volunteers made a meaningful impact during their shift:

- 14,307 pounds of food sorted
- 11,972 meals made possible

These results demonstrate what a dedicated group can accomplish through teamwork and community service.



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by: LT Kiwanda Mclemore

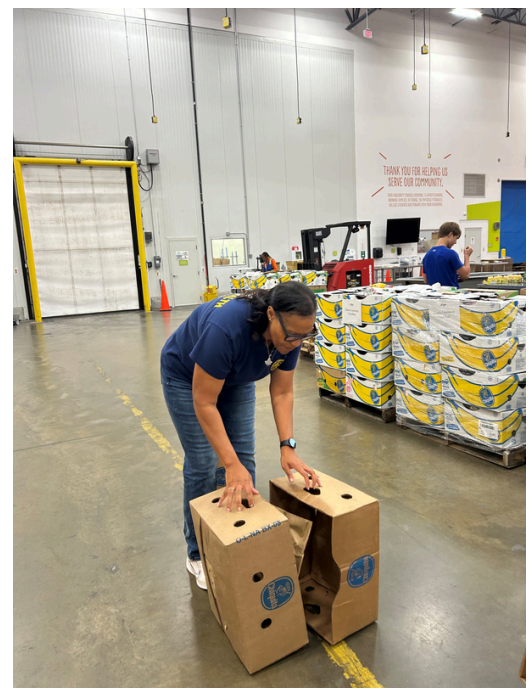
A Reflection of the USPHS Mission

The USPHS Commissioned Corps has long been recognized for protecting and advancing the nation's health, and events like this demonstrate that the mission extends well beyond federal agencies and laboratories. By volunteering at the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the officers embodied the Corps' core values of service, integrity, and excellence.

Food insecurity remains a significant public health issue, requiring the kind of hands-on, community-centered engagement these officers demonstrated. The ACOA looks forward to continuing its tradition of service and encourages officers to seek opportunities to give back to the communities they serve.

Officers Who Answered the Call: LCDR Xia Michelle Lim, LT Kiwanda Mclemore, and LT Gabriella Wuke. Their participation reflects the spirit of volunteerism and public service that defines the USPHS Commissioned Corps mission.

Reference: <https://www.acfb.org/about-us/>



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ACOA Uniform Store Pop-up

The Men's and Women's ACOA Uniform Stores will be hosting a **\$5 and below** pop-up event!
All uniform items will be \$5 and rank pieces will be \$1.

Sunday, August 9, 2026, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

2878 Haven Ln

Decatur, GA 30030

The event will be hosted outside in the community pavilion.

Park on Craigie Ave and follow the signs

Please contact CDR Jessica Tomov (413-329-0160) if you have any trouble.



We have ODU, khakis, covers, and limited SDB or summer white

Dressing rooms are not available

Uniform donations are welcome

Contact ACOAWomenUniforms@gmail.com or ACOAMensUniforms@gmail.com with questions.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://atlantacoa.com/uniforms>

Uniform Store Committee

Did you know ACOA has a Uniform Store? Did you know the ACOA Uniform Store offers used uniforms at 50% off of Navy NEX prices? If you're in need of new or gently worn uniform components, visit one of our pop-up events to get the uniform items you need at discounted prices. ACOA hosts quarterly pop-ups for officers to shop our inventory.

Retired? Promoted? If you have uniform and/or rank devices that you no longer wear or need, the ACOA Uniform Store accepts donations! Donations must be within regulation and in serviceable condition. You can also exchange your donation for the same item(s) in other sizes/ranks in the inventory.

Contact Us:

Women's Uniform Store - ACOAWomensUniforms@gmail.com

Men's Uniform Store - ACOAMensUniforms@gmail.com

Membership Committee

Atlanta COA Membership: Strengthening Connections, Building Community

The Membership Committee of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) is on a mission to grow and sustain a strong network of Atlanta Public Health Service (PHS) officers. Together, we foster camaraderie and collaboration through vibrant events, effective recruitment drives, and re-engagement of inactive members. By working together, we ensure that Atlanta's PHS officers remain united under the shared vision of service and excellence.

Making Membership Matter

Membership in ACOA means being part of an association with fellow PHS officers in the greater Atlanta area. The COA operates on a fiscal year from July 1 to June 30 to make your membership seamless. Please note that COA does not prorate annual national dues or life membership dues. Annual dues—\$25 for Atlanta COA and national COA dues ranging from \$120 to \$200 based on officers' rank—secure your access to a wealth of benefits that include:

- Discounted PHS Pride Merchandise
- Access to the Used Uniform Store
- Networking Events
- Community Service Opportunities (e.g., USO, Habitat for Humanity)
- Professional Development through Lunch & Learns on readiness, uniforms, award opportunities, and promotions
- Monthly COA newsletter—Frontline—and a quarterly newsletter—The Signal

Staying Engaged

To maintain active membership, officers receive friendly reminders at least two months before their membership expires. If dues aren't received, we follow up with bi-weekly emails to remind officers to renew their membership. In 2025, ACOA successfully engaged 326 officers in renewing their commitment. Join us as we build on that momentum. Together, we keep ACOA strong.

Celebrating Our Members

ACOA thrives because of you. Each year, the committee sends personalized thank-you letters to active members, recognizing your contributions to our events and initiatives.

Join Us Today

Becoming an active member is easy. Join the Commissioned Officers Association (COA), including joining or renewing your local COA membership by creating an account at <https://www.coausphs.org/>. Let's strengthen our community; together, we're better!

Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) Membership Guide

Benefits of ACOA Membership

Every year ACOA sponsors events that provide members a variety of professional development, community service, and networking activities. As a member of the ACOA local branch, you also have access to membership benefits for the national Commissioned Officers Association (COA).

Benefits of ACOA membership include:

- Discounted PHS Pride Merchandise
- Used Uniform Store
- Anchor & Caduceus Dinner
- Community Service Events (e.g., USO, Habitat for Humanity)
- Professional Development Lunch & Learns on topics such as readiness, uniforms, & promotions
- Athletic events
- Quarterly publication of our newsletter, The Signal

How to get involved with ACOA:

- Email atlantacoa@gmail.com to be added to the ACOA Listserv
- [Join the ACOA Facebook Group Today!](#)
- Write an article for the Signal.
 - The Signal is for members, by members, and is published on a quarterly basis.
 - Email acoacommunications@gmail.com to submit articles and/or provide topic suggestions.
- Volunteer with the ACOA Community Service Committee.
 - To find out about upcoming opportunities please email acoacommunityservice@gmail.com

How to join ACOA:

1. An officer must be a member of the national Commissioned Officers Association (COA). The COA membership year starts July 1st and ends June 30th though you can join at any time. Dues are based on rank and newly commissioned officers are eligible for complimentary membership in COA.

Join COA Today! Visit www.coausphs.org

2. Join Atlanta COA: When joining or renewing your National COA membership, you have the option to add Atlanta (ACOA) as your local branch. Annual dues are \$25 in addition to the National COA dues.

If you have already joined or renewed your National COA membership for the year and would like to add the Atlanta branch (ACOA), email coamembership@coausphs.org to be added.

If you have questions about ACOA or about how to become a member, please contact the ACOA Membership Committee at ACOAMembership@gmail.com

The Signal and FRONTLINE Publication Guidelines for COA Members

CRITERIA:

Frontline is a publication for and about COA members and COF donors. It is National COA policy that all officers mentioned in articles, authors of articles and “photo courtesy of” individuals must be current COA members or COF donors; it is imperative that this be confirmed prior to submitting an article to COA; requests for exceptions to this policy should be addressed to COA/F’s Executive Director.

FORMAT:

- Submit as an email attachment
- Word format using Calibri, font size 10 (no exceptions)
- Title of article: Century Gothic, font size 14, italic and bold
- Body of article: Calibri, 10 point font
- Review articles for spelling, grammar, sentence flow and variety, truth in numbers, and etc.
- Limit articles to 1,000 words or less
- Include your rank, name, and credentials (if you have them)
- Email or preferred contact information
- Clearance approval by OP/DIVI (if applicable)

Each submitter will receive an email confirming receipt of the article; this is not an acceptance of your article.

PHOTOS:

Submission of photos is encouraged; action photos are preferred. All photos accompanying submissions must be in jpeg file format and attached to the same email submission (*please do not embed photo in word document*); provide a suggested caption, if a caption is desired. Caption sizes should be limited and are subject to editing by COA.

Send all article submissions to ACOACommunications@gmail.com