

FEBRUARY 2025 | 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

"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." — Martin Luther King Jr.



Communications Leads:

CDR Robert Garcia
LT Tiffany Addison

Editors:

CDR Sylvera Demas
LCDR Erica Bussey-Jones
LCDR Esra Toussaint-Barrett
LT Arlene Page

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In Officio Salutis

President's Corner

Atlanta officers,

We are navigating a challenging time filled with many unknowns, and uncertainty can test even the strongest among us. However, it is in these moments that our unity and morale become most critical. We must remain steadfast, supporting one another and setting the example for those who look to us for guidance.

One of the defining aspects of ACOA is the esprit de corps that binds us together. As commissioned officers, we share a common bond of service, sacrifice, and dedication in support of the nation's health. This unity and camaraderie are at the essence of our chapter, and I encourage you to continue building relationships, supporting one another, and celebrating the successes of your fellow officers.

Our mission is not only about advancing the interests of Atlanta officers but also about contributing to the communities in which we live. I am proud of the charitable work and outreach initiatives that our branch has undertaken, and I look forward to continuing these efforts in the coming year. Whether through volunteerism, mentoring, or health education, we can leave a lasting positive impact on our surrounding communities.

As officers, we are uniquely positioned to lead by example and make a difference. I encourage you to consider how you can contribute to our ongoing community initiatives and share any ideas for new projects or collaborations that could further enrich the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your membership and the dedication you bring to ACOA. I look forward to continue working alongside you in 2025 as we advance our mission and strengthen our shared vision.

CDR Kristin Labar



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ACOA Executive Committee

2024-2025

President
CDR Kristin LaBar
AtlantaCOA@gmail.com

Past-President
CDR Marie Johnston
AtlantaCOA@gmail.com

Vice-President
LCDR Cashmere Miller
AtlantaCOA@gmail.com

Treasurer
CDR Brek Steele
ACOATreasurer@gmail.com

Secretary
LT Jamiko Cooper
AtlantaCOA@gmail.com

Events Planning
LT Alexis Roberts
LCDR Leigh-Ellyn Preston
ACOAEventsPlanning@gmail.com

Community Service
LCDR Marie Cetoute
LT Shifawu Odunsi
ACOACommunityService@gmail.com

Professional Development
CDR Ben Silk
ACOAProfessionalDevelopment@gmail.com

Membership
LCDR Chiazor Eziakor
LCDR Sunshine Jones-Chaney
ACOAMembership@gmail.com

Communications
CDR Robert Garcia
LT Tiffany Addison
ACOACommunications@gmail.com

Uniform & Pride Stores
LCDR Marisa Hast

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

Communications Committee

The ACOA Communications Committee leads of 2024-2025 are CDR Robert Garcia and LT Tiffany Addison. The Communications Committee is committed to providing articles of interest to officers, highlighting ACOA activities and membership spotlights, and we want to hear from you!

Send in articles for ACOA activities, photos, and officer spotlights to ACOACommunications@gmail.com.

All articles must be authored by ACOA members, and any officers highlighted by name must also be current ACOA members. If you're not already a member of ACOA, this is a great opportunity to sign-up now!

Select articles from The Signal will be submitted to the monthly national COA publication, The Frontline. ACOA members interested in writing an article for The Frontline should reach out to ACOACommunications@gmail.com.

In addition to publishing The Signal and submitting articles to The Frontline, the Communications Committee also maintains the ACOA website throughout the year. Be sure to visit the site to learn more about upcoming events, opportunities to volunteer and participate in ACOA activities.

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

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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—\$15 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 like the Anchor & Caduceus Dinner
- 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 2024, ACOA successfully engaged 265 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!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Community Service Committee

Volunteering To Give Back and Contribute to a Better Community
by: LT Shifawu Odunsi and LCDR Marie Cetoute

For the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) operational year of September 2024 to August 2025, United States Public Health Service (USPHS) officers LCDR Marie Cetoute and LT Shifawu Odunsi were elected to co-chair the Community Service Committee (CSC). The co-chairs are motivated to increase the visibility and engagement of USPHS officers in the Atlanta area to give back and make a positive difference in their communities.

Thus far, the CSC has completed two volunteer service activities: a December 2024 event with Trees Atlanta and a November 2024 collaboration with the Black Commissioned Officers Association (BCOAG) to support the 25th Annual Latino Youth Leadership Conference. During the Trees Atlanta volunteer event, a total of 14 officers and community members worked together to clear trails and parklands of invasive plants, thereby increasing usable outdoor space and promoting exercise within the community. In November 2024, three officers served as moderators and presenters for 200 high school students (grades 9-12) from various Georgia schools.

The CSC co-chairs are interested in continuing to offer various volunteer opportunities for USPHS officers in the Atlanta region. These volunteer events may be primarily led by the CSC or conducted in collaboration with other USPHS groups, such as BCOAG and Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE). The aim is to serve organizations that cater to underserved populations and promote environmental stewardship.

We encourage you to join the CSC and lead or participate in volunteer events. Meetings occur every third Tuesday of the month from 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. Eastern Time. By joining the CSC, you would become part of a committed group of officers dedicated to participating in various community service events that positively impact many individuals in the Atlanta region. For more information on how to get involved with the committee, please contact ACOACommunityService@gmail.com.

We conclude with this helpful reminder from Michelle Obama: "Volunteering is the lifeblood of our communities. It's not just about giving back; it's about giving forward and creating a better world for all of us."

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Sharing is Caring—A Visit to FOREST PARK High School by: CDR Myoshi Meshay Horne and CDR Hai Lien Phung

On October 29, 2024, CDR Hai Lien Phung and CDR Myoshi Meshay Horne visited Forest Park High School in Forest Park, GA to speak to students about PHS and shared their experiences as a PHS pharmacist and Public Health Services Officer, respectively. The student president of the Health Organization Students of America (HOSA) initially invited CDR Phung to present to the club during one of their monthly meetings. Seizing the opportunity to promote PHS visibility and public health, CDR Phung immediately accepted the invitation and recruited CDR Myoshi Horne, to join in the Prevention through Active Community Engagement event.

On the day of the event, there were approximately 40 students in attendance along with their teacher who also serves as the club's advisor. After a warm welcome by the HOSA student president, CDR Phung and CDR Horne began their presentation on public health, a brief overview of USPHS, and defined their roles at the Office of Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). To demonstrate PHS Officers' efforts to promote the Surgeon General's public health initiatives, CDR Phung and CDR Horne also provided the students an overview of the Opioid Overdose Response and Naloxone Training.

At the end of the presentation, the students actively participated in a Q&A session where they had the opportunity to ask questions related to the presentation and career advice. The advisor expressed her appreciation to CDR Phung and CDR Horne for the informative session and was excited to learn about USPHS. Overall, it was a rewarding and inspiring experience! The students were exposed to USPHS as they navigate their high school years and were inspired to start thinking about their career paths.

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

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