

AUGUST 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

“Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.” - William James



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In Officio Salutis

President's Corner

Atlanta officers,

We have endured a profoundly challenging year for all officers, most recently marked by the tragic shooting at the CDC campus, a tragedy that deeply affected our public health community and our sense of safety in our own environment. As we move forward into the upcoming operational year, the Atlanta Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) is committed to re-engaging with Atlanta-area officers and supporting one another both personally and professionally.

This past year has tested the resilience of Atlanta's USPHS Commissioned Corps like never before. The recent CDC shooting caused significant trauma, including the loss of a dedicated police officer, leaving a lasting impact on our community. Officers faced unimaginable moments of fear and uncertainty while fulfilling their vital mission to advance the nation's health. This tragedy, along with ongoing public health challenges, reminds us of the crucial importance of coming together to support and uplift one another.

The Atlanta Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association strives to advance the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps by uniting and serving approximately 1,000 Atlanta-based Commissioned Officers, while advocating for our interests through leadership and communication.

This new operational year brings a renewed focus on re-engagement—not simply by hosting events, but by fostering authentic connections and strong support networks. Officers will find increased opportunities to share their professional needs, contribute ideas, and connect through activities designed to build camaraderie, provide training, encourage wellness, and promote collective service. These efforts will help reaffirm our shared mission, allow us to acknowledge our challenges, and celebrate our many achievements as a team.

ACOA's commitment to support is demonstrated through a variety of initiatives, including annual events ranging from community service projects to wellness workshops and social gatherings that nurture esprit de corps. Additionally, pop-up events provide access to resources, such as affordable used uniforms, to ease the professional and personal lives of officers. Together, our collective resilience and solidarity will help us advance public health in Atlanta and beyond.

Every Atlanta-area officer is encouraged to get involved with ACOA and participate in service, professional development, and peer-support activities. Together, we can foster a culture of care, safety, and progress, united by the commitment and principles that define our service.

Let us face this new operational year with renewed unity and determination, carrying forward the mission we serve with pride and dedication.

LCDR Cashmere Miller



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FEBRUARY 2025 | ATLANTA COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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2025-2026

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

Community Service Committee

Serving with Purpose: Nourishing Families and Beautifying Our Community by: LT Emilie Bouda

The United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps officers partnered with local organizations to support underserved communities in Atlanta. The PHS officers participated in two key outreach efforts: serving 75 families at “Grace Community Food Pantry” and “Hands on Atlanta’s Operation Clean Sweep” on Whitehall Street. Aware of the city’s challenges with homelessness and poverty, officers were committed to addressing food insecurity, hygiene needs, and neighborhood conditions.

Fighting Hunger at Grace Community Food Pantry

In December 2024, USPHS officers collaborated with the Public Health Professional Advisory Group (PHPAG) Health Promotion and Health Education’s (HPHE) Community Health and Service mission to support individuals experiencing homelessness. Partnering with Grace Community Food Pantry, eight officers worked alongside staff and other volunteers to pack food, sort donated clothing, and distribute winter essentials to 75 families. The effort highlighted the crucial connection between food security and public health.

Beautifying Neighborhoods: Operation Clean Sweep

On March 29, 2025, USPHS officers joined Hands on Atlanta and other volunteers for Operation Clean Sweep, a citywide neighborhood beautification effort. That day’s work focused on the Whitehall Street SW corridor, from Tift Avenue SW to Dewald Alley SW. Equipped with gloves, rakes, and trash bags, volunteers spent three hours clearing litter and helping restore dignity to shared public spaces. The volunteers collected over 40 bags of litter. Beyond the cleanup, the experience fostered a sense of community, pride and solidarity.

Looking Ahead: A Commitment to Ongoing Community Service

These events demonstrate that public health extends beyond clinics and policies—it thrives through community outreach and everyday acts of kindness. As the Community Service Committee officers plan future efforts, they invite you to help create a positive impact.

Call to Action: Get Involved

We all can create positive change:

- **Connect** with local leaders to understand and address community needs.
- **Join** efforts that make a difference for vulnerable and underserved community members.
- **Volunteer** at a place of interest where there is a need.

FEBRUARY 2025 | ATLANTA COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Serving with Purpose: Nourishing Families and Beautifying Our Community

by: LT Emilie Bouda

As USPHS officers, let us continue to build stronger, more connected communities—one act of service at a time. Your time, compassion, and presence can be the gift that keeps on giving.

Acknowledgment of Volunteers: The following individuals contributed to at least one of the two community services events described in the article: LCDR Marie Cetoute, LCDR Leandra Jones, LCDR Taneshia Knight, LCDR Esra Toussaint-Barrett, LT Courtnee Bell, LT Emilie Bouda, LT Dali Davis, LT Shifawu Odunsi, LT Jelonia Rumph, and civilian Eric Harper.



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FEBRUARY 2025 | ATLANTA COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Serving Our Community: A Day at the Kings Table

by: CDR Sabrina Debose

On May 3, 2025, seven United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps officers, along with a family member, volunteered with The King's Table (TKT) Food Ministry at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, GA. This event had a profound impact on families facing food insecurity.

About The King's Table

TKT Ministry began its mission to combat hunger in January 2020 by distributing free food to those in need. Initially supporting 30 families each week, the ministry rapidly expanded during the COVID-19 pandemic and now serves over 1,000 households weekly. Since its founding, TKT has partnered with over 60 organizations and distributed more than 9.8 million pounds of food to more than 1.4 million people.

May 3, 2025: USPHS officers Day of Service

Volunteers packed and distributed food boxes in a drive-thru setup, ensuring families received essential groceries that included fresh produce, proteins, and pantry staples. On May 3rd alone, TKT distributed over 44,520 pounds of food, serving 3,318 people that included 1,152 children, 1,172 seniors (65 and above), and 1,162 adults.

Join the Effort

TKT distributes food on the first and third Saturdays of each month, except for July and January, when the ministry takes a sabbatical. To get involved, sign up to volunteer through Hands On Atlanta (www.handsonatlanta.org) or the Atlanta Community Food Bank (www.acfb.org).

Small Acts, Big Impact

The work of TKT shows how coming together as a community can bring hope and relief to those in need. Every food box distributed represents a small, but powerful, step toward fighting hunger.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Professional Development Committee

USPHS Officers Looking Sharp at CDC Portrait Day!

On April 7, the Professional Development Committee of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) hosted a Portrait Day for USPHS Commissioned Corps officers assigned to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The event, which has continued regularly for many years, was another successful collaboration with Photography Services in CDC's Office of Communication.

As a testament to the high quality of these studio services, 26 USPHS officers received professional photographs while looking sharp in their service dress blue uniforms. Several officers who had been recently promoted commented that this service was particularly helpful in helping them stay current with photos that reflect their current ranks. Appreciation for the Photography Services staff who consistently deliver the best representations of our officers was universal.

Because time slots for this service filled up rapidly, Photography Services has offered individual portrait session at officer's convenience throughout the year. USPHS officers assigned to CDC are welcome to submit a request for 'Photography Services' then select 'Official CDC Portraits' at <https://createit.cdc.gov/home>. Be sure to check the box indicating a Commissioned Corps officer. This request will prompt a follow-up notice for scheduling.

Based on the success of this event, another Portrait Day is sure to follow.



LCDR Marissa Hast



CDR Benjamin Silk

Lifestyle Medicine: The Power of Healthy Living for All

by: LCDR Cashmere Miller, DNP, APRN, FNP-C

In today's fast-paced environment, chronic disease rates continue to rise, impacting individuals across all walks of life. As we seek sustainable solutions for long-term wellness, lifestyle medicine is emerging as one of the most effective and empowering approaches to improve health and prevent illness. As U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Officers, we are uniquely positioned and expected to lead by example, inspiring healthy living through both our professional roles and personal choices.

What Is Lifestyle Medicine?

Lifestyle medicine is a medical specialty that uses evidence-based therapeutic lifestyle interventions to prevent, treat, and even reverse chronic diseases. These interventions focus on everyday behaviors such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep, stress management, avoidance of harmful substances, and fostering positive social connections.

Unlike conventional medicine, which often emphasizes a pharmaceutical or surgical approach, lifestyle medicine addresses the root causes of disease, supporting lasting change that enhances quality of life.

Why It Matters Now

Chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and obesity continue to place a heavy burden on individuals, families, and our healthcare system. The good news is that many of these conditions are largely preventable and even reversible through healthy lifestyle changes. By making intentional choices every day, you can dramatically influence both your short-term and long-term health.

The Six Pillars of Lifestyle Medicine and How to Apply Them

Lifestyle Pillar	How to Incorporate It Daily
Nutrition	Choose more whole, plant-predominant foods: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Try to eliminate processed foods and added sugars.
Physical Activity	Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise (such as brisk walking), plus 2 days of strength training. Start where you are and build gradually.
Restorative Sleep	Adults need 7-9 hours each night. Create a consistent sleep routine: no screens one hour before bed, keep your room dark and cool, and avoid caffeine late in the day.
Stress Management	Try yoga, meditation, deep breathing, or journaling for 5-10 minutes each day. Find what helps you decompress and make it part of your daily routine.

Lifestyle Medicine: The Power of Healthy Living for All

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Avoiding Risky Substances	Refrain from smoking and limit alcohol. If you're struggling, reach out for help, and resources are available.
Positive Social Connections/Connectedness	Strong social bonds improve mental and physical health. Stay connected with others through regular check-ins, family meals, or group activities.

Tips for Making Lasting Changes

- **Start Small, Think Big:** Begin with just one change, like adding a vegetable to your lunch or taking a 10-minute walk after dinner. Build from there.
- **Keep It Simple:** Healthy doesn't have to be hard. A piece of fruit instead of chips or standing during phone calls can lead to big improvements over time.
- **Make It a Family Affair:** Get loved ones involved. Walk together, cook healthy meals as a team, and celebrate progress with non-food-related rewards.
- **Stay Committed:** Lifestyle medicine is a journey. Expect setbacks, and don't view them as failures. What matters is consistency, not perfection.

Your Health, Your Choice

Health is personal and profoundly powerful. You have more control over your future than you may think. Lifestyle medicine puts that power into your hands, offering science-backed tools to help you feel better, prevent disease, and live a longer, more fulfilling life.

As members of the broader Commissioned Officers Association community, promoting wellness isn't just about self-care; it's about setting the tone for those around us. When we lead healthy lives, we inspire others to do the same.

Let lifestyle medicine be your foundation, not just for health, but for a stronger, more resilient life.

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—\$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!

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