

AUGUST 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

“The future depends on what you do today.” - Mahatma Gandhi



ACOA
ATLANTA COMMISSIONED
OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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In Officio Salutis

President's Corner

Atlanta officers,

As we reach the midpoint of the 2025–2026 operational year, the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) continues to exemplify our commitment to esprit de corps, professional excellence, and community engagement. Our mission remains clear, to strengthen the bonds among Atlanta-area officers while serving others with integrity and pride.

Over the past few months, we have hosted and supported numerous events that reflect collaboration, leadership, and fellowship. In partnership with SciPAC and the Uniform Store, our “Proper Uniform Wear” Lunch and Learn (Dec 4) drew 70 officers, emphasizing professionalism and uniform standards. We also hosted the Officer Portrait Session (Dec 15), ensuring officers present their best selves in official communications. Our upcoming “Mission Ready: Security Essentials” session (Mar 4) will continue this focus on officer readiness.

Building camaraderie has been central to our journey. The Rank Swap Social (Oct 19) and Winter Social & Promotion Ceremony (Dec 6) brought officers together to celebrate milestones and reinforce our shared commitment. The State of ACOA & Q&A with RDML Delaney (Nov 6) reached capacity with 100 attendees, reflecting officers’ enthusiasm for engagement and open dialogue. Additionally, our Invisible Corps Documentary Screening (Oct 22), held in partnership with Emory University Rollins School of Public Health drew 70 participants and earned a letter of appreciation from Dean Fallin, an event that truly showcased the pride and purpose of our service.

Our dedication to service continues throughout the Atlanta community. Since September, ACOA officers have volunteered in numerous public health and outreach efforts including: the Million Meal Pack (Sept 27), Food Pantry Service (Dec 6) serving 215 households, and Wreaths Across America (Dec 13) honoring our veterans. In 2026, officers rolled up their sleeves during the Chastain Park Day of Service (Jan 3), delivering two tons of mulch for city beautification, and returned to give back at Lithia Springs Senior Center (Feb 5) and MedShare SE (Feb 7), each event marked by meaningful engagement and teamwork.

Looking ahead, ACOA is excited to support several upcoming initiatives, including HOSA Career Mentorship (Mar 13), the Senior Health Presentation for Lithia Springs (Mar 19), and the next MedShare International session (Apr 25). We are also preparing for the USPHS/NOAA Advocacy Day at the Georgia Capitol (Mar 4), an important opportunity to represent our officers and advocate for issues such as tax parity. Don’t miss the ACOA Uniform Store Pop-Up (Feb 28), where all proceeds from uniform items will support future officer events.

Thank you for your ongoing service and commitment. Together, we embody the true spirit of the U.S. Public Health Service.

LCDR Cashmere Miller



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ACOA Executive Committee

2025-2026

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Serving Beyond the Uniform: ACOA's Community Impact

By: LCDR Chiazor Eziakor

The Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) remains deeply committed to service beyond our professional roles. Through the Community Service Committee, officers consistently demonstrate leadership, compassion, and civic responsibility throughout the Atlanta community.

Over recent months, members have collaborated through monthly meetings to strengthen teamwork and plan meaningful community service events. These efforts have included supporting Wreaths Across America to honor our nation's veterans, participating in environmental stewardship initiatives at Chastain Park, and volunteering with the Million Meal Pack to address food insecurity. Through each activity, officers have met community needs with dignity, care, and respect.

Together, these initiatives reflect ACOA's enduring commitment to public service and meaningful engagement. Whether through large-scale projects or individual acts of service, each effort strengthens trust, builds connections, and reinforces the role of commissioned officers as purpose-driven leaders.

Looking ahead, the Community Service Subcommittee is eager to expand opportunities for member involvement and to welcome continued participation, collaboration, and new ideas. The monthly meeting is held on the third Tuesday of each month from 12:00 pm to 12:30 pm. We welcome officers to lead or co-lead community service events. Through collective effort, we will continue to uplift and support the communities we serve. If interested in joining the committee, please email acoacommunityservice@gmail.com.

ACOA Community Service Committee – Serving with Purpose. Building Stronger Communities.



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GA CHASM Serving the Community Beyond the Uniform: City Bridges Food Pantry by: LT Victory Whittaker, LCDR Shifawu Odunsi, and LT Lauren Williams

On December 6, 2025, we had the opportunity to participate in a meaningful service experience that reinforced the core values of the U.S. Public Health Service by volunteering at City Bridges Food Pantry in Atlanta, Georgia. We organized a team of five Officers to support the pantry's operations for the day. This volunteer effort was completed in support of the Public Health Professional Advisory Group (PHPAG) Health Promotion and Health Education's (HPHE) Community Health and Service Mission (CHASM), which emphasizes community engagement, service, and health promotion as essential components of public health practice.

City Bridges Food Pantry plays a vital role in addressing food insecurity within the Atlanta community. Like many communities across the nation, Atlanta faces persistent disparities in access to nutritious food, which directly impact health outcomes, chronic disease prevalence, and overall well-being. While food insecurity is often discussed through data, reports, and surveillance systems, volunteering at the pantry brought those statistics to life in a very real and human way. The experience reminded us that behind every number is a person or family striving to meet basic needs.

Our team of Officers assisted with several essential tasks throughout the day, including sorting donated food items, organizing inventory, and supporting food distribution efforts. These activities were critical to ensuring that the pantry could operate efficiently and serve as many individuals as possible—more than 200 families. The opportunity to serve together outside of our formal duty assignments strengthened our sense of camaraderie and shared purpose.

This volunteer effort also highlighted the importance of partnerships between public health professionals and community-based organizations. Food pantries like City Bridges are on the front lines of addressing social determinants of health, often with limited resources and a heavy reliance on volunteers. Supporting these organizations through service is one way we can contribute to sustainable community health solutions while gaining a deeper understanding of local needs. These insights can inform our work as Officers, whether we are engaged in policy development, health education, research, or emergency response.

We encourage fellow Officers to seek out opportunities to volunteer in their local communities whenever possible. Whether through CHASM initiatives or individual efforts, community service is a powerful way to stay grounded in the purpose of public health.

At a time when public health challenges are increasingly complex, maintaining a strong connection to the community is more important than ever. Experiences like volunteering at City Bridges Food Pantry reaffirm that public health is, at its core, about people—meeting them where they are, supporting their needs, and working collectively toward healthier futures. Together, through service, leadership, and compassion, we can continue to embody the mission of the U.S. Public Health Service, both in uniform and beyond.

Acknowledgement: The following officers volunteered at the food pantry, along with the authors of this article: LCDR Jannet Peroti, LT Marcus Dumas, and LT Sade Collins.

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USPHS Officers Honor Veterans at Wreaths Across America by: LT Courtnee' Bell and LT Leandra Jones

This year, officers from the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) and the Junior Officers Advisory Group (JOAG) proudly participated in the Wreaths Across America (WAA) remembrance at East Shadowlawn Memorial Gardens and Mausoleum. Alongside communities nationwide, they gathered to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans.

Co-led by LT Courtnee' Bell and LT Leandra Jones, the team included fellow officers LT Megan Mickum and LCDR Leigh Preston (CDC), as well as family members who volunteered their time. Together, the group paid tribute to more than 75 veterans laid to rest at the site.

The morning began with a formal remembrance ceremony honoring members of each military branch, followed by a moment of silence and a ceremonial gun salute. These tributes set a reflective tone as wreaths were placed, giving participants time to pause and remember the service and sacrifices of those interred. Over three hours, participants placed wreaths, shared stories, and ensured that each veteran was individually recognized and remembered.

Beyond wreath placement, the event offered a meaningful opportunity to strengthen civil-military relations and raise public awareness of the U.S. Public Health Service mission. Through conversations with families and visitors, officers highlighted the USPHS's role in protecting the nation's health and reinforced a shared commitment to service.

Participating in Wreaths Across America was both humbling and deeply meaningful. It served as a reminder that service extends beyond our daily duties; it includes honoring those who came before us and maintaining strong, visible connections with the communities we serve. Events like this reflect the heart of the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps—rooted in service, respect, and remembrance.

We are grateful for the opportunity to represent USPHS and remain committed to initiatives that strengthen community partnerships and honor our nation's heroes. We look forward to continuing our involvement with Wreaths Across America and invite officers from all agencies, as well as civilian volunteers, to join us at the 2026 WAA. For more information, please contact LT Courtnee' Bell (tqa7@cdc.gov) or LT Leandra Jones (xm2@cdc.gov).



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Making an Assist That Matters: Million Meal Pack Success by: LT Tiffany Addison

ACOA volunteered with State Farm Arena and the Atlanta Hawks to help improve our community at the State Farm Arena Million Meal Pack event.

Officers proudly participated in Shift 1 of the event, packing more than 480 meals and contributing to the 200,000 meals assembled during that shift alone. Their efforts were part of a much larger community movement that brought together more than 5,000 volunteers, all working side by side for a common purpose.

Throughout the day, volunteers packed an incredible **1,045,272 meals**, totaling more than 134,288 pounds of food, to support individuals and families facing food insecurity across Georgia. The impact of this effort cannot be overstated. During the event, officers learned that **1 in 7** Georgians and **1 in 5** children experience food insecurity. These statistics serve as a powerful reminder of the real need in our communities and the importance of stepping up to serve.

The energy inside State Farm Arena was inspiring. Volunteers formed assembly lines, packed boxes, and cheered one another on, demonstrating how collective action can drive meaningful change. Every meal packed represents hope for a family and support for a child who might otherwise go without.

We are incredibly proud of the officers and all volunteers who gave their time and effort to make this event a success. Their commitment reflects the very best of our community spirit: service, compassion, and collaboration.



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ACOA Serving Atlanta at Chastain Park

by: LCDR Marie P. Cetoute-Harper

On January 3, 2026, members of the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) Community Service Committee joined the Chastain Park Conservancy for a meaningful day of service at Chastain Park. The event was part of ATL Cares! A Day of Service, held to celebrate the inauguration of Andre Dickens, the 61st Mayor of Atlanta.

This three-hour volunteer initiative brought together nearly 50 participants, including two USPHS officers and one civilian volunteer, all working toward the shared goal of strengthening and preserving one of Atlanta's green spaces. This community service effort promotes active lifestyles, reduces environmental risks, and strengthens neighborhood connections.

About the Chastain Park Conservancy

This service event was organized by the Chastain Park Conservancy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enhancing Chastain Park for current and future generations.

Through volunteer coordination, environmental restoration projects, and advocacy, the Conservancy plays a central role in maintaining the park's natural beauty and functionality. Its work ensures that Chastain Park remains accessible, sustainable, and responsive to community needs.

Service in Action

The January 3 Day of Service demonstrated the powerful impact of teamwork and shared purpose. In just a few hours, volunteers improved park conditions, advanced environmental sustainability, and helped preserve a space that serves thousands of Atlanta residents each year.

Throughout the morning, volunteers focused on beautification and erosion control by spreading mulch and placing fallen tree branches along walking paths. By the end of the event, two tons of mulch had been distributed across the park's key areas.

These efforts helped stabilize trails, improve drainage, and create safer, more accessible walkways for visitors. Working side by side, participants demonstrated how collective action can make a visible, lasting difference in a short time.

Parks Support Well-Being

Chastain Park is a vital community resource, offering walking trails, recreational areas, and a children's playground that serve families throughout the city. Maintaining these spaces is essential to promoting physical activity, mental well-being, and social connection.

Well-maintained parks strengthen communities by encouraging outdoor engagement and fostering shared pride in public spaces. By investing time in the park's upkeep, volunteers helped ensure that children have safe places to play, families can gather comfortably, and residents of all ages can continue to enjoy a clean, welcoming environment.

A Commitment Beyond the Uniform

ACOA remains committed to supporting initiatives that foster healthy communities. For ACOA members, participation in this event reflected the U.S. Public Health Service's broader mission to promote health, resilience, and community well-being. Events like this also provide valuable opportunities for officers to engage directly with the community, build partnerships, and reinforce trust through visible, hands-on service.

One day. One park. Real impact. Join us in serving at local parks.

Participants: LCDR Marie Cetoute-Harper, LT Marcus Dumas, and Eric Harper

Reference:

Chastain Park Conservancy. (n.d.). Chastain Park Conservancy. <https://www.chastainparkconservancy.org>

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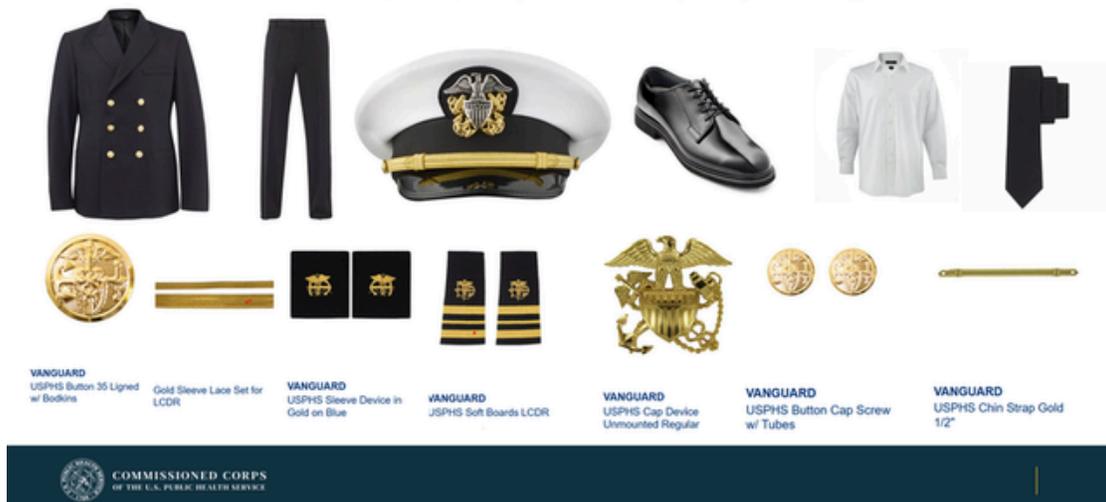
Professional Development Starts with the Uniform! By CDR Ben Silk and LCDR Marisa Hast

It’s been said that wearing a uniform reminds us that we are part of something greater than ourselves. To support uniformed officers with the USPHS Commissioned Corps, the Professional Development Committee of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) hosted two events in December 2025.

A “Proper Uniform Wear” seminar was held in collaboration with the SciPAC New CAD Seminar Team on December 4, with presenters CDR Jessica Tomov and LCDR Marisa Hast providing a comprehensive review of uniform standards for male and female officers. Seventy officers from at least seven agencies attended and benefited from the presentation. In fact, a post-seminar poll demonstrated that attendee knowledge increased by 187%, as measured by the gain in respondents who rated themselves as very knowledgeable. These gains were recorded among colleagues with ranks ranging from lieutenants to captains.

Service Dress Blue (SDB)

Service Dress Blue (SDB): <https://www.mynavyexchange.com/>.



Next, a Portrait Day for USPHS Commissioned Corps officers in the Atlanta area was held on December 15. A total of 15 USPHS officers from four agencies received studio-quality, professional photographs via another successful collaboration with Photography Services in CDC’s Office of Communication. Appreciation for the Photography Services staff who consistently deliver the best representations of our officers was universal.

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.

A Salute to Service: Celebrating Atlanta's Newest Promoted Officers

The U.S. Public Health Service Atlanta-Area Promotion Ceremony took place on January 23, 2026, honoring 31 officers who advanced in rank. The Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) hosted the event in partnership with the CDC/ATSDR Commissioned Corps Liaison Office, bringing the community together to recognize these officers' dedication to the nation's public health mission and their collective years of service advancing public health.

The ceremony opened with a presentation of colors by the Surgeon General's Honor Guard and musical performances by the PHS Music Ensemble Choral Group, establishing a tone of pride and unity for the proceedings. CDC Chief Operating Officer Ms. Lynda W. Chapman delivered opening remarks, followed by a keynote address from Rear Admiral Lisa Delaney, who emphasized the responsibilities and impact of leadership within the service while highlighting the continued promise these officers represent for the future of public health. Rear Admiral Althea Grant-Lenzy presided over the ceremony, with Captain Deborah Dee serving as adjutant and guiding attendees through a program that celebrated both professional milestones and the shared commitment to service that defines the Commissioned Corps.

The event celebrated the promotion of 31 officers: 10 captains, 14 commanders, six lieutenant commanders, and one lieutenant. Each promotion represented not only an individual achievement but also a shared victory for the families, mentors, and colleagues who have supported these officers throughout their careers. Commander Abigail, the USPHS mascot, attended the ceremony, adding a joyful element to the proceedings and reinforcing the sense of community and camaraderie that ACOA champions within the Corps.

The success of this memorable event was driven by dedicated volunteers who coordinated logistics, sponsored an elegant reception, and worked together to ensure every detail was executed seamlessly. Their teamwork exemplified the spirit of unity being celebrated and ensured that the ceremony served as both a professional recognition and a heartfelt tribute to the officers' achievements and the support systems that enabled their success. The event stood as a testament to excellence within the U.S. Public Health Service and to the strength of the Atlanta-area Commissioned Corps community.



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Atlanta Officers Gather for Winter Social and Fellowship

The Commissioned Officers Association is committed to engaging and supporting officers by fostering unity, promoting member well-being and professional success, and encouraging cross-agency collaboration. In furtherance of these objectives, the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association (ACOA) hosted its Winter Social on December 6, 2025, at Sceptre Brewing in Decatur, Georgia. The event brought officers and their families together for fellowship while strengthening the esprit de corps that defines the Commissioned Corps community.

Twelve commissioned officers and six guests attended the gathering, representing the VA, BOP, EPA, FDA, and CDC—a testament to the diverse composition of the Atlanta Commissioned Officers Association. ACOA socials are designed as family-friendly events, and members are encouraged to bring family and friends to participate. These gatherings create welcoming spaces where officers can meet colleagues from across the region, build meaningful professional connections, and learn about career opportunities within their agencies and throughout the U.S. Public Health Service.

ACOA is planning a Spring Social that will also serve as the biannual Membership Picnic, providing another opportunity for the community to come together. Details about this upcoming event will be announced soon. Members are encouraged to watch for updates and mark their calendars for this next opportunity to connect with fellow officers and their families.



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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—\$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!

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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