



SWPAG NEWSLETTER

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USPHS Social Workers Honored At the 117th AMSUS Meeting

Submitted by LCDR Todd Lennon, LCSW

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2012 SWPAG Meetings

Watch for the upcoming dates by email in the year to come

SWPAG Newsletter
created by
LCDR Julie Niven
CDR Christopher Cline

Two USPHS Social Workers received individual professional awards at the annual awards banquet held at the 117th Annual Meeting of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States on 9 November 2011. These outstanding officers were selected through a competitive process that included nominees from across federal healthcare, other uniformed services, and allied health professions.



LCDR Anthony Johnson received the Allied Health Professional Award. This award recognizes the leadership role of federal allied healthcare professionals in the transformation of their practice(s) by working closely with other healthcare providers to optimize treatment in a safe, efficacious, and cost-effective manner. The award is intended to recognize sustained excellence in the provision of allied healthcare and to grant recognition and promote awareness of federal allied healthcare practitioners who distinguish themselves in the provision of care.

LCDR Johnson was cited for his proven leadership and cutting edge treatment modalities that contributed greatly to the facility mission accomplishment and population health.

LCDR Johnson is assigned to the ICE Health Service Corps in Florence, Arizona.



LCDR Anita Glenn-Reller received the Management and Administration Award. This award is presented to an individual who has made conspicuously outstanding contributions to federal healthcare or has demonstrated superior leadership or executive management ability.

LCDR Glenn-Reller was cited in recognition of her outstanding organizational and planning skills that produced validated local efficiencies and resulted in system-wide implementation.

LCDR Glenn-Reller is assigned to the ICE Health Service Corps in Tacoma, Washington.



A Spirit of Gratitude



"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." - Albert Schweitzer

My Fellow Social Workers,

As this year comes to an end, I would not want to miss the opportunity to thank you again for your support and dedication throughout 2011. It was because of your constant encouragement that I was able to perform my duties as Chair. I wish to express a special thank you to the SWPAG Chair Elect LCDR Todd Lennon and the SWPAG Secretary LCDR Jonathan White for their day to day assistance. I would also like to express my gratitude to the SWPAG subcommittee chairs: CAPT Kerima Gibbons; CDR Chris Cline; LCDR Carlos Castillos; LCDR Tarsha Cavanaugh; LCDR Scott Conner; LCDR Scott Eppler; LCDR Kristin Kelly; and LCDR Tracy Pace. I have gained considerable knowledge over the year and thus I shall always cherish my opportunity to Chair as one of the most satisfying phases in my career. I am grateful for your help.

Throughout 2011, we have seen many challenges. For starters, we are all doing more with less in our respective agencies. Despite this, you have managed to uphold the standards of social work and the Corps with your knowledge and hard work in your regular positions and found the time and energy to participate in work groups and meetings, volunteer for special assignments, and deploy. I am grateful for your allegiance.

We as social workers have confronted billet changes, license limited tour issues, and challenges related to maintaining cohesiveness in various DOD assignments. As we move towards resolution of these challenges, I am confident that our new leadership will continue the work of this year and bring successful closure to whatever difficulties we face. As we continue to build our social work community, technology will bring us information faster, minimize the challenges that distance creates, as well as make it easier for us to share resources to address whatever issues we may face. As we grow our social work community all over the world at various military treatment facilities, I know that you will continue to support each other as professionals, as friends, and as a social work family. I am grateful for your devotion.

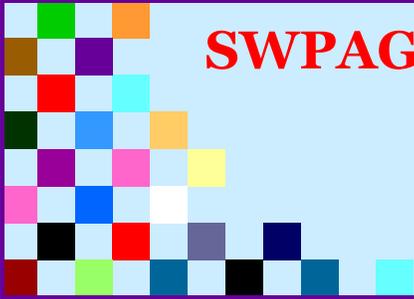
We learned about ourselves as a Social Work Professional Advisory Group this year. With the use of surveys, we asked what was important to you and how we could make the SWPAG better meet your needs. As such, the SWPAG has and will continue to make changes accordingly. The SWPAG plans to continue outreach efforts to insure that your needs are heard and to support you as a social worker and officer. I am grateful for your honesty.

Over the last year, I have been fortunate to have met many of you in person and discussed issues with you over the phone or through email. These opportunities have created special bonds. I intend to continue my involvement with the SWPAG and to be available to you as we move forward. Please let me know if there is anything I can do for you. I am grateful for your friendship.

May God bless you all with a safe and joyous holiday season.

CAPT Marina Banks-Shields Ph.D., LCSW, BCD

2011 Chair, Social Work Professional Advisory Group



SWPAG Members Attend USSW Conference

LCDR Todd Lennon, LCSW

Social workers from four uniformed services and the Veterans Administration (VA) gathered in San Antonio, Texas for the 26th annual Uniformed Services Social Work (USSW) Conference, 8-9 November 2011. The USSW Conference was held concurrently with the 117th Meeting of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS). At least eight SWPAG members attended the USSW conference, which was attended by approximately 100 active duty, civil service, and reserve social workers.

The first day consisted of plenary presentations, including service updates. Each service's "chief" social worker recapped the social work profession's status, accomplishments, challenges, and the way forward for social workers in their service. SWPAG was represented by CAPT David Morrissette, a former SWPAG chair. The service reports wrapped up with a panel of the chiefs which provided a forum for mutual support and information sharing.

The second day began with a moving plenary presentation by social workers—who are also combat veterans—from VA Vet Centers and an undergraduate social work student who is a beneficiary of the Vet Center program. The day wrapped up with a series of four concurrent sessions presenting the scholarship and work of social workers across the services. SWPAG members CAPT David Morrissette, CAPT Janet Hawkins, and CDR Chris Cline were among the presenters. CAPT Morrissette represented the USPHS and spoke on: "USPHS Social Work Community: Purpose/Possibility" on 8 November, 2011. CAPT Morrissette also presented on, "A Pathway to Recovery for Veterans in the Justice System" on the 9th of November, 2011. CAPT Janet Hawkins presented on: "Review of Clinical and Non-clinical Tools for Suicide Prevention" on the 9th of November, 2011. CDR Christopher Cline presented on: "ICE Health Service Corps (IHCS) Mental Health Mission in and Ever Changing Environment" on the 9th of November.

SWPAG members found the joint service and social work environments to be cathartic. There was ample opportunity to network with other USPHS officers attending AMSUS and USSW sessions and enjoy the scenic San Antonio Riverwalk together. LCDR Kari Harris served as aide-de-camp to Deputy Surgeon General RADM Boris Lushniak and OSG Chief of Staff RADM Christopher Halliday, who made it a point to attend USPHS officers' presentations.

The conference wrapped up with a formal awards banquet at which SWPAG members LCDR Anthony Johnson and LCDR Anita Glenn-Reller (*in absentia*) were honored with AMSUS awards.

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Fort George G. Meade Resiliency Fair 2011

LCDR Marivic Fields, MSW, Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center

Fort Meade installation held its first Resiliency Fair on September 20, 2011. As one of the Action Officers for the planning of the Resiliency Fair, it has been a true test of resiliency. This project was in partnership with the installation Chaplain's Office and the intent was to promote and foster resiliency among soldiers, family members and DA civilians who work and live in Fort Meade. Fort Meade currently is home to more than 50,000 tenants and residents. The Resiliency Fair is in keeping with the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program which is a structured assessment aimed at building and enhancing resiliency. As a prior US Army soldier, a Provider Resiliency trainer and a Behavioral Health provider for Kimbrough Ambulatory Care Center, resiliency is one of my special areas of interest. Upholding the US Army's initiative to promote resilience by adhering to the tenets of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, it was my vision to have a resiliency fair that will reach out to soldiers, families and DA civilians. The idea was easily embraced with motivation and enthusiasm by the Chaplains and the planning for the fair began.



LCDR Marivic Fields & LT
Michelle Tsai with Father Bogie,
Fort Meade
Chaplaincy Office

Planning this installation-wide fair was not as easy as I thought. Inviting keynote speakers to was not a small task due to last minute cancellations; therefore, rapid adjustments in schedules have to be made. In spite of these adjustments, key leadership and community resources that are instrumental in providing services that promote resiliency were responsive and participated well, bringing in various resources, brochures and informational materials for everyone to take home. Each component of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program was represented at the fair.

Our keynote speaker was LTC Alfred Rascon (retired) who is a Medal of Honor recipient - the United States' highest military decoration - which he earned for his heroic actions during the Vietnam War. The event was attended by Fort Meade's Installation Commander, COL Edward Rothstein, Hospital Commander, and COL Leon Moores, various faith-based groups in the installation, service members, family members and civilians.

The stress of combat and the constant wear and tear of the human body as a result of stress, depression, financial hardship, medical issues, family problems etc. can become very challenging and overwhelming. Developing resiliency skills that will allow individuals to bounce back after experiencing some traumatic event will greatly benefit the United States Army and all those who make up its work force. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness provides instruction on specific mental and physical skills that Soldiers can use to enhance performance when facing challenges, regardless of whether those challenges are in their personal or professional lives, in garrison or in combat.

If you wish to know more about Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, visit this website: <http://csf.army.mil/>

Continued from page 3...

USPHS participation in the planning for this year's USSW Conference was led by CDR Ivy Simmons. Next year's USSW planning is led by the U.S. Air Force. It is uncertain if USSW will continue to be held with AMSUS or if another venue might be more attractive to potential attendees. LCDR Todd Lennon, 2012 SWPAG chair, and LCDR Kristin Kelly, 2012 SWPAG chair-elect, will participate in the planning for next year's conference. SWPAG members are encouraged to attend and present at "our" conference. Stay tuned for announcements regarding the call for presentations and details on venue in the coming months.



L-R: CAPT David Morrisette,
CAPT Janet Hawkins, CDR Chris Cline

**Way to
Go!**



Mental Health Team 5 and adjunct officers from Tier 3 deployed in support of Administration for Children and Families Disaster Case Management (DCM) mission to Troy, NY on 19 October 2011. The teams' responsibilities included work in the implementation and monitoring of case plans for disaster survivors and their families affected by Hurricane Irene (Hit late August 2011) and Tropical Storm Lee (early September 2011). The deployment concluded on 2 November, 2011.



MORALE, RECREATION, & WELFARE Resource Guide



*Essential Resources to Promote and enhance the well-being of the
United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and their Families*

*Report from LCDR Sonjia Howard, the Co-Chair of MWR Sub-Committee,
JOAG, Inter-Services Collaboration Committee*

The team members of the MWR Sub-Committee have been working extremely hard this year. 2012 will be an exciting year for the USPHS Commissioned Corps and their families as we have thoroughly engaged in extensive research, synchronization, collaboration, and demonstration of a guide we believe will prove to very useful to all who choose to utilize it.

The information contained in the **Morale, Recreation & Welfare Resource Guide** is expected to achieve the following:

- Accentuate and preserve our four core values; leadership, service, integrity, and excellence
- Investigate and find no-cost or low-cost services, facilities, and programs that increase officers' morale
- Ensure real-time access to quality of life information and resources
- Endorse, manifest, encourage, support, restore, and expand both leisure activities that promote both individual growth and group development, while fostering recruitment and retention for those serving our nation

The Junior Officer Advisory Group's (JOAG) MWR Subcommittee, a committee under the Inter-service Collaboration Committee (ISCC), has created the first **MWR Resource Guide** as an important and practical tool toward making MWR resources, activities, and information more widely available to those who are looking for guidance in planning and accessing recreational related events and activities.

The **MWR Resource Guide** outlines the most common MWR resources while also providing quick links and tools that will connect the user with activities and locations of potential interest as well as include an appendix for easy understanding of terminology.

The most important feature of the MWR GUIDE is that it will be a living document meaning it will be continuously updated with the most current resources, events, activities, and information.

Our website WWW.MWRGUIDE.COM is expected to go live in early 2012. Stay tuned to the JOAG ISCC website http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/joag/index_files/JOAG_ISC_Home.htm for more information.

The website will entail a variety of resources to include but not limited to:

- COA
- Lodging
- Activities
- Transportation
- Special Events
- DoD Resources
- Outdoor Recreation
- Shopping/Discounts
- Other Links of Interest
- Travel / Space A Travel
- TRAVEL/TICKETS/TOURS
- Military Officers' Associations
- U.S. Armed Forces MWR links
- Military Pay Scales and Entitlements



For more information, contact **Chair** LCDR Janae Price - janae.price@foh.hhs.gov or **Co-Chair** LCDR Sonjia Howard - sonjia.howard@dhs.gov

Managing Grief During the Holidays

LCDR Julie A. Niven, Fort Lee Army Post, Fort Lee, VA

One of the most difficult life events we will ever encounter is the loss of a loved one or friend. What a void death leaves in our lives, not to mention the difficult days, months and years we spend grieving the loss! As the holidays approach, we need to mindfully increase our self-care as all the season's activities begin to swirl around us. Self-care is particularly important if we are grieving the loss of a friend or family member during the holiday season. This article will offer a few tips on how to cope more effectively when facing this difficult task.

In my work with soldiers, I meet many who are struggling with grief and loss. Their symptoms include mental distress as well as physical difficulties. The symptoms of depression frequently mirror those of bereavement. Depression can occur concurrently or can develop months after an individual's loss. Some of the most common mental symptoms associated with bereavement are sad mood, anger, feelings of helplessness, loneliness, guilt, fear, and anxiety. Physical symptoms often include disruption in one's sleep routine, stomachaches, headaches, difficulty breathing, and fatigue. The primary difference between depression and bereavement is that the grieving individual normally perceives his or her symptoms as "normal" whereas an individual who is experiencing depression doesn't always understand exactly what is causing his or her symptoms.



Despite the difficulty loss brings to our lives, we can learn how to cope and heal. The most important first step is to acknowledge our feelings of loss. Healing is accelerated when we allow our tears an outlet. Reaching out for help from friends, family, clergy, and/or a mental health provider is equally crucial. It is important to actively resist the inclination to isolate oneself from others. Engaging with those who care about us helps us strengthen bonds and feel more connected to life. Seeking out opportunities to share our feelings as well as memories about our loved one can help us find comfort and a sense of connectedness. Writing about our loved one, either by journaling or a letter to our loved one, can help us express more private feelings and thoughts. Exercise can help us sleep better and can increase the chemicals in our brains that elevate mood. Try to avoid using food as a means of comfort when all the holiday goodies are in such abundance. Too much fat or sugar isn't good for our mood. Drinking alcohol can also exacerbate our sadness or anger. It is important to accept that healing from grief and loss takes time and our emotions will ebb and flow. Be kind to yourself! Be kind to others, i.e. volunteer at a shelter or a soup kitchen. Above all else, seek peace and quietude when the busyness of the season feels overwhelming. A good book in a comfortable chair with a cup of hot tea and a photo of our loved one nearby goes a long way towards helping us find the serenity essential to healing especially during the holiday season.

My Experience Transitioning into a DoD Billet...

CDR Christopher Cline, LCSW, Lackland AFB, Texas



Transitioning into a DoD billet with the U.S. Air Force at Lackland AFB, TX has been like a walk down memory lane for me. I served in the USAF from 1999-2007 before commissioning into the U. S. Public Health Service in Sept '07. My Air Force career began in Grand Forks, ND after which I was stationed in Anchorage, AK (Elmendorf AFB) and finally settling in the San Antonio area.

My new office is only a few steps down the hallway from where I had served as the OIC for the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) program at Wilford Hall Medical Center. I'm now doing my old job again, only this time in a khaki uniform instead of my blues. I'm still wearing my old AF BDU's since they are still the uniform used by PHS. However, since the AF has recently (Nov 1) discontinued use of the Woodlawn Uniform I'm the only active duty uniformed officer still wearing the BDU's on the entire installation. This has presented many opportunities to talk about what USPHS stands for and why I'm wearing the unauthorized AF uniform.

It appears that working as a PHS officer in a DoD billet has the best of both worlds. The Armed Forces understands what it means to deploy. That's primarily what they train and prepare to do. On my second day on the job (Oct 18, 2011) I received a call from the Mental Health Team Chief of MH Team #5 with the task to deploy to Albany, New York to assist with disaster case management of individuals affected by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. I thought a moment about what to do, and then went into my new Squadron Commander's office informing her of the phone call I had just received. Needless to say, I was on an airplane the next day to NY not to return for two weeks.

A week after returning from NY, I presented in San Antonio at the AMSUS/USSW conference on ICE's Mental Health Mission in Immigration Health Services. Only as a PHS officer could this type of scenario have happened to me.

It feels good to be again contributing in the support of our Armed Forces. The Air Force, Army, and Navy have all seen the benefits of bringing on PHS officers. Their staffing is generally low with little hope for additional help within their own ranks. This situation provides many opportunities for PHS officers to work in a variety of DoD billets.



**Remember those who lost their lives and
those who worked to save lives:
September 11, 2001**



...Other News...



The SWPAG Career Development (CD) Subcommittee actively seeks and disseminates information on career opportunities for professional development, vacancies, and special assignments. In an effort to accomplish its mission the CD Subcommittee has created a calendar that lists various trainings/webinars, conferences and continuing education credit opportunities that might be of interest to our members. More current months will contain the most information. You should check back frequently as we will update the calendar as we learn of CD offerings around the country. Please email questions/comments, suggestions for making the calendar better and information about trainings/webinars, conferences and continuing education opportunities to LCDR Tracy Pace, Chair, SWPAG Career Development Subcommittee, at tpace@hrsa.gov. Requests for more specific information about any of the events on the calendar should be directed to the event host.

DECEMBER 2011

15: Webinar (NASW members): “Advocating for Inclusion and Independence: Ensuring the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, <http://www.socialworkers.org/ce/online/lunchtime/lcourses/home.aspx>

19-21: Workshop: “Cognitive Processing Therapy with a third day of Group Cognitive Processing Therapy,” Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, VA, <http://deploymentpsych.org/training/workshops>

30: USPHS/OFRD “Field Medical Readiness Badge” eligibility scan, <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/>

JANUARY 2012

11: Webinar: (NASW members): “The Cultural Context of Domestic Violence” <http://www.socialworkers.org/ce/online/lunchtime/lcourses/home.aspx>

11-15: Conference: “SSWR 16th Annual Conference Research That Makes A Difference: Advancing Practice and Shaping Public Policy”, Washington, DC. <http://www.sswr.org/conferences.php>

13: Workshop: “Integrating Spirituality Into the Clinical Setting”, Baltimore, MD <http://www.acteva.com/booking.cfm?bevalD=224722>

23: Training: “Cognitive Behavioral Approaches to Pediatric Anxiety Disorders”, Chapel Hill, NC http://ssw.unc.edu/programs/clinical_lecture_series/

23-26: Conference: “The 26th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment”, <http://www.sandiegoconference.org/>

24-25: Workshop: “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia Related to Deployment” Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, VA <http://deploymentpsych.org/training/workshops>

ANYTIME

Ethics: <http://www.aswb.org/education/courses/index.php>

Ethics: Boundary Crossings and the Ethics of Multiple Role Relationships
<http://www.continuingcourses.net/active/courses/course066.php>

Aging, Mental Health, and Long-term Care. <http://www.continuingcourses.net/active/courses/course041.php>

Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/TrainingCalendar.aspx>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: <http://learn.nctsn.org/course/category.php?id=3>



YOU CAN HELP!

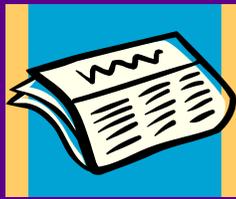
The SWPAG recently formed a workgroup to assist, advocate and provide support to fellow social workers who are on a Limited License Tour (LLT). LCDR Sonjia Howard is heading this workgroup. One of the ways the group is working to help those on an LLT is to identify available clinical billet openings. The hope is to advocate for social workers in non-clinical positions to be provided an opportunity to transfer to clinical billets so that they can accrue hours required for independent licensure. Please email maria.victoria.fields@us.army.mil if you are aware of available openings in a clinical setting as she is compiling a list of available positions.

If you would like to volunteer to help on the LLT Workgroup, please email LCDR Sonjia Howard at Sonjia.howard@dhs.gov



...Other News ...

...Other News...



The SWPAG challenge coin promotes esprit de corps and are a source of pride for Corps social workers. Coins also spread goodwill to members of other uniformed services and can be a great recruiting tool. One hundred new SWPAG challenge coins were struck late last year so we have plenty for officers to purchase for themselves or as gifts. Please use the order form in this issue of the newsletter or in the SWPAG section of the HS PAC website: http://www.usphs-hso.org/pags/swpag/swpag_coin.shtml.

SOCIAL WORK PAG COIN ORDER FORM

Ship to (please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail address: _____

Order

Number of coins ____ x \$12.00 per coin = _____ payment enclosed

Payment accepted

- Cash
- Check or Money Order made payable to COF
- No credit cards accepted

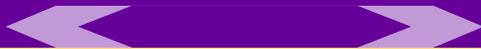


Mail this order form and payment to:
 Social Work Professional Advisory Group
 c/o LCDR Todd Lennon
 14403 Oakvale Street
 Rockville, MD 20853
 E-mail: tlennon@hrsa.gov

Please allow time for processing and delivery.



*The Mission of the U.S. Public Health Service
Commissioned Corps is to
protect, promote, and advance the health and safety
of our Nation.*



2012 SWPAG Meetings
Watch for the new year 's
meeting dates
and times via email

SWPAG Colleagues:

*The Communications Committee encourages officers to submit any news/events information about fellow social workers, something you've accomplished, clinical issues, job/agency opportunities, recruiting ideas or strategies, career enhancement suggestions, educational opportunities (CEU's), publicity events, deployment/CFRD training experiences, CCA events etc. for publication in the SWPAG newsletter. Please have submissions cut and paste ready.
Thank you!*

*Please respond to LCDR Niven at:
julie.a.niven@us.army.mil with submissions*