



Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona Chosen 2006 Health Leader of the Year

Landover, Maryland, April 26 – U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona, the nation’s chief health educator and the commander of the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, has been selected as the 2006 Health Leader of the Year by the Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service (COA). The organization’s members are 7,000 active-duty, reserve, and retired officers of the USPHS Commissioned Corps.

Today’s announcement, made by COA Executive Director Gerard M. Farrell, praised the Surgeon General for four years of extraordinary, charismatic leadership and credited him with reviving the legacy of the PHS Commissioned Corps as leaders in public health and emergency preparedness.

The Health Leader of the Year Award is COA’s highest honor. It is announced each spring just before the annual Public Health Professional Conference, which is co-sponsored by COA and its sister organization, the PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation for the Advancement of Public Health. Admiral Carmona will receive his award on May 3. The conference, at the Adam’s Mark Hotel in Denver, is May 1-4.

Farrell termed Admiral Carmona’s four-year tenure “extraordinary.” In particular, Farrell called attention to his organization and leadership of the Commissioned Corps in response to the devastating hurricanes of 2005. It was the largest deployment of USPHS officers ever. It began with an advance team that landed in Louisiana before the hurricane hit, and within 36 hours had established a fully-equipped field hospital ready to accept patients. Today, USPHS officers continue to lead recovery efforts; they are helping to rebuild and restore local health care systems in the hurricane-devastated areas.

A physician, medical educator, and hands-on emergency preparedness expert, Admiral Carmona was selected by president Bush in 2002 to serve a four-year term.

During his tenure, Admiral Carmona has advocated ceaselessly for increased U.S. involvement in global health issues and called for stepped-up health diplomacy on the part of the United States. He has facilitated participation of USPHS commissioned officers in overseas emergency relief operations. Admiral Carmona also has emphasized efforts to improve the health of people with disabilities, and he has focused the nation’s attention on oral health, and bone health and osteoporosis, through special reports and national “calls to action.” Like U.S. Surgeon Generals before him, he has continued the half-century tradition of educating the American public about the health consequences of smoking.

A native of New York City, Admiral Carmona dropped out of high school and enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1967. While in the Army, he earned his General Equivalency Diploma, joined the Special Forces, and served with distinction in Vietnam. After leaving active duty as a decorated combat veteran, he returned to school, first to Bronx Community College, and then to the University of California at San Francisco and its Medical School. He received his medical degree in 1979. He completed his residency in surgery at UCSF and won a fellowship in trauma, burns and critical care from the National Institutes of Health.