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## Conference To Focus on Public Health Infrastructure

The Commissioned Officers Association (COA) of the U.S. Public Health Service has announced that “Weaving Tomorrow’s Public Health Infrastructure” will be the theme of the 2003 U.S. Public Health Service Professional Conference

COA, a private, non-profit, professional association representing almost 7000 active duty, reserve, and retired commissioned officers of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) serves as primary sponsor of the annual conference.

The 2003 conference will be held in Scottsdale, Arizona from June 15-18, at the Westin-Kierland Resort and Spa, a brand new five star hotel and will feature a keynote talk by Surgeon General Richard Carmona .

“This really is the Surgeon General’s conference,” said Jerry Farrell, Executive Director of COA. “Our goal is to make it the pre-eminent public health professional conference in the country.”

The 2003 topic was carefully selected to acknowledge the Native American culture and heritage in the Phoenix-Scottsdale area, and the prominent role officers of the PHS play in the Indian Health Service, Farrell said. Some 40 percent of PHS officers serve in the IHS.

The topic also responds to the critical public health infrastructure issues, facing not only the Native American community, but the entire country as aging and increasingly fragmented public health institutions struggle to face the emerging new threats of bioterror warfare and the possibility of mass casualties in the U.S. Homeland.

“We are delighted to return to Arizona where we have had some of our most successful meetings,” Farrell said, “We also plan to expand the content and opportunities for participation this year to include regional, state, and local public health officials.”

The Commissioned Corps is a highly trained cadre of 6000 uniformed officers who are experienced, mobile health professionals working in the eight agencies of the PHS as well as other federal agencies that require their expertise. Members of the Commissioned Corps serve wherever there is a need for their specialized skills. Officers are stationed in all 50 states, at more than 550 locations including remote Indian reservations and Federal prisons as well as in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, National Institutes of Health and other operating divisions of the Department of Health and Human Services. Corps officers can be called to duty 24 hours a day and have responded on numerous occasions to public health emergencies including floods, hurricanes, the Olympics, and the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and the anthrax attacks in 2001.