USU observes National Disability Month

By MC3 Jeff Hopkins
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences observed National Disability Awareness Month during a program Oct. 10 in the USU cafeteria. The keynote speaker, Barbara J. Kornblau, J.D., OTR/L, gave a speech entitled “Workers with Disabilities: Talent for a Winning Team.”

Dr. Charles L. Rice, president, USU, welcomed Kornblau to the university, and impressed upon those present that the topic had special relevance to the military’s current situation.

“With the types of injuries troops are returning from Iraq, it is very important to us, certainly an issue we will be dealing with for years to come,” he said.

Kornblau is the professor of Occupational Therapy and Public Health in the Colleges of Allied Health and Osteopathic Medicine, and adjunct professor in the Sheppard Broad Law Center at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Fl. As a practicing attorney, she specializes in health and disability related issues, including American Disability Act litigation and consultation.

Kornblau’s speech involved disability policy, and how it impacts employment and independence in the community.

“One of the biggest barriers is attitude,” Kornblau said. “I use a cane, I have arthritis; When I go to conferences I use a scooter. When I was president of the American Occupational Therapy Association, someone asked one of my colleagues if I was healthy enough to be president, if they should vote for me. We make assumptions, we put ourselves in other people’s shoes and wonder ‘how would I be if I was that person?’ and you can’t do that, because you can’t make assumptions about how people get along in life and what they’re able to do.”

The second barrier Kornblau addressed were the physical barriers people with disabilities encounter in their work environments, such as a lack of ramps, or doors that are too heavy for a person with disabilities to safely open.

“Most of the physical barriers are covered under Title II of the American Disabilities Act, and most of the changes get made if people complain, or unfortunately, sue people to get changes made,” Kornblau said. “I got a call from an attorney saying ‘You won’t believe what happened, my client just got sued because they said that the doors to this building are too heavy,’ and I asked, ‘how much do they weigh?’ The attorney said, ‘they’re about 15 pounds to pull,’ and I said, ‘they’re right. You can go to court, or you can fix them.’ If they’d fix it the first time someone complained, they’d have no problem, and because of this, a lot of the physical environment problems are being fixed.”

Another major barrier Kornblau cited was the lack of adequate support services for people with disabilities. She stated that to an extent, service members who are returning from war with traumatic injuries and disabilities are lucky, because of the great extent to which the military looks after its injured service members.

“If you have a head trauma or some other kind of serious injury and are not in the military, then you really don’t have a lot of support to help you,” Kornblau said. “That may be the difference between you working and living in the community, or living in a nursing home. When you’re a 19 or 25-year-old person, living in a nursing home is not exactly a pleasant environment.”

Kornblau also spoke of two bills currently in the House and the Senate, which would greatly improve the support services that disabled individuals would receive, but also standardize medical equipment so that all patients, regardless of their disabilities, would be able to use them, or have access to them.

“The first bill is the Community Choice Act, which would require the state to provide attendant care services for people who meet the criteria to be in the nursing home,” Kornblau said. “There are already programs in place in different states and areas that do this, but this will require that it be available everywhere, so that the 25-year-old with disabilities won’t have to live in a nursing home and can go to work, because they are able to get the attendant care that they need, and be able to go out in the community and be contributing citizens.”

“The second bill is the Health and Wellness Bill for individuals with disabilities, and it does three things: it creates standards of acceptability for medical equipment that would make it suitable for all people, to include those with disabilities,” Kornblau said. “Everybody needs access to the same diagnostic and treatment equipment. The second part of this bill creates plans for creating wellness programs for people with disabilities. This looks at how we can create model programs so that we can reach people with disabilities in an appropriate manner so that we can meet the needs of the disabled community.”

“The third part of the bill, which I think is really fascinating, requires medical schools and residency programs to teach medical students, dentists, and other professionals how to work with people with disabilities,” Kornblau said. “There are many ways to make accommodations for people as they age to keep good workers on the job, and hire people who are motivated and want to work,” she said.
CDHAM provides first-responder training to Chadians

By MCSN Raul Zamora
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs


Sometimes countries are in need of help. In March 2006 a group of seven of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) staff and faculty members went to Chad to teach first responder training. As a follow-up to that trip three staff and faculty members went to Chad to make sure everything was still running smoothly.

Chad is located in North Central Africa and is about three times the size of California.

The three USU members who went on the trip this year were Col. Charles Beadling, USAF, MC, Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Medicine (CDHAM); CWO (Ret.) Ray Handel, USCG, MEM; HM1 Ebenezer Atekwana, USN, MEM.

For nine days the trip consisted of lots of meetings with the chairman of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the U.S. Embassy personnel. These meetings were held so that the USU staff and faculty could find out important information about Chad, such as who to talk to and where the hospitals were located.

“We had to meet with the new chairman of the UNDP so that we could see what his actions were going to be with de-mining the area,” said Atekwana. “He had only been appointed the day before we got there and he seemed to have a good head on his shoulders. He wants to realign the program and be more efficient.”

Land mines are a serious threat in Chad. Many adults and children are injured or killed in explosions. Due to these injuries some of the locals have lost their limbs and have to use prosthetics.

“We spoke with a local prosthetics clinic who use obsolete prosthetics, and we helped them out by teaching them how to better their prosthetics and how to update their skills,” Atekwana said. “We are also thinking about donating better prosthetics that we no longer use in the U.S.”

The American Red Cross is also in Chad doing a lot of humanitarian work. Atekwana said that they got some good advice from the Red Cross.

“One was that we should not give the Chadians technology that is too advanced, we wanted to keep it simple for them. We want to give them physical therapy techniques or prosthetic technicians from Walter Reed Army Medical Center as soon as we can.”

“This experience changed me because it made me realize that we should go out there and help these people,” Atekwana said. “They are grateful that we would take the time from our busy schedules and families and help out some one we don’t know. We don’t get paid for it and the whole experience comes straight from the heart. It’s very heart touching, I didn’t realize the magnitude until we got there.”

Fit for duty

It’s that time again. Service members all over the country have been ditching the snack foods and lacing up their running shoes for the fall physical fitness testing. Sailors from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) enlisted Navy division performed their PFA as a group Oct. 10 on the USU softball field to promote unity and morale.
By MC3 Jeff Hopkins
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

On the evening of Aug. 15, at 6:41 p.m., a powerful earthquake measuring 8.0 on the moment magnitude scale hit the central coast of Peru. The Peruvian government reported 510 deaths, and the destruction of more than 58,000 homes. All of America heard the stories of confusion and chaos, but a few experienced it first-hand.

Eight first-year medical students from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) were in Peru as part of an annual trip for select students, during which the participants visit the Naval Medical Research Institute detachment and shadow various doctors and researchers to learn about the type of work done there.

The students were in a hotel on the shore of the small coastal village of Paracas, receiving a briefing on navigation, employing the use of global-positioning satellite (GPS) technology, when the powerful earthquake hit, lasting two minutes, and throwing the students into darkness and confusion.

“I grew up in Alaska, so I’ve been in earthquakes before. Some people ran out of the room or under the table right away,” said 2LT Hunter Winegarner, one of the medical students participating in the trip. “I’ve been in violent, short earthquakes where you don’t want to be the guy covering under the table while people laugh, so I was hesitant to get under the table right away. The lights went out pretty quickly, and the fellow next to me asked if we should get under the table, and at that point we did.”

“It was a modern style constructed hotel, and I believe that played a big part in our safety,” he said.

With the hotel’s proximity to the ocean, the students and instructors were worried about the possible dangers of a tsunami, and decided their best bet was to move inland.

“We all had images of the damage done by the tsunamis earlier in the year, and we all thought it would be a good idea to move away from the shore,” said 2LT Alain Abdellada, another student present. “Hunter had the presence of mind to go back and get a flashlight and the commander’s Blackberry phone. During our trek we picked up a lot of civilians; they saw our light and heard us speaking English, and they all sort of fell in with us.”

Fortune shined on the group that night; a short time after reaching the major nearby road, the bus driver who had dropped them off at the hotel earlier that day had felt the earthquake where he had been cleaning out his bus, and decided to return to the hotel to check up on the students.

“We all piled on the bus. It was crowded because of all the civilians, but we turned around and drove inland,” Winegarner said. “We pulled off to this half-collapsed restaurant. They fried up chicken in the dark with no electricity, and everyone was starving because it was 10 at night, and we’d been walking for hours. It was amazing.”

Winegarner said the group, along with the others they had picked up along the way stayed the night on the bus; although no one was prepared for the cold of the night, they had shelter and transportation for the next day.

“The bus driver really ended up being our hero,” he said.

Abdellada said that thanks possibly to the dedication of some hotel guards who braved the threat of a tsunami, the groups’ belongings were still in the hotel the next morning.

“The hotel was a wreck the next day, but all of our stuff, including our passports, was still there,” he said.

Winegarner said that although the group was shaken up, the mood was mostly light and jocular during the trek through the desert, but upon surveying the damage the next day, the jokes were over.

“The next morning we kind of saw the effects of what happened. The night before it was pitch black so we couldn’t see the damage that had been done,” Winegarner said. “We went to Pisco that day; it was only about five or 10 miles down the road, but it took several hours to get there because of the traffic. It was way more populated than where we were, and it was a poor area; the construction style was mud brick, and it really didn’t hold up to the quake.”

“The big news in the area was this one church, whose whole roof collapsed during a mass. The front stayed up, so it was difficult to get through to the injured people in the rubble. It was kind of surreal after we were back in Lima; people were talking and joking about how they felt the quake while they were at dinner, and none of them had any idea that an hour south, lots of people were dead.

Thanks to the efforts of the U.S. Embassy, the group managed to return stateside on schedule, and the consensus was that, despite the incident at the end of the trip, the experience was a very rewarding one.

“Thanks to the cell phone, we managed to contact the Embassy, and they got things straightened out for us. That night, most of us flew to Lima on a jet, while a few stayed on the bus; they flew out the following day. Then we got on our flight to return stateside,” Winegarner said.

“It was very reassuring to see how the embassy took care of us in a situation like that,” Abdellada said.

“It was a very interesting program,” Abdellada said. “We were working with the Naval Medical Research Institute detachment in Lima. We spent time getting lectures, touring the facility, and visiting a lot of the different research sites, like the jungle and the Amazon.”

“One of the things we participated in was a two day humanitarian effort for villages with no health care. It really helped remind me of why I want to become a doctor, because you realize that these people can’t pay you back. It’s absolutely free medicine. I would dare say some of the people we treated during those two days had never seen a doctor before our arrival.”

“There were a lot of lessons learned,” Winegarner said. “All the tours we took of the hospitals and the patients we visited were really special. You see diseases that you would never see here, and get a chance to cement your book knowledge of medicine with real experience.”

“These people are so experienced at what they do that they walk in and immediately know where to go,” Abdellada said.

The students recently received letters of appreciation from Ambassador P. Michael McKinley at the American Embassy in Lima, for the assistance they provided to the victims of the earthquake.
Most people have a hobby; something to keep them entertained, centered and sane in this busy, working world. Some people write short stories, some exercise, and others cook, clean or build models, for example.

Others, like Seaman Raul Zamora, assistant editor for the Office of External Affairs at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) creates various works of art, ranging from designs to cartoons, to painted vinyl figures.

Zamora, a 25-year-old sailor from San Diego, Calif. says his entire life revolves around his art, and his personality defines his style.

“Mostly I’m into a lot of graphic style artwork. Basically I like to work a lot on the program Adobe Illustrator, using a lot of clean lines, and flat colors,” Zamora said. “It can be cartoony, or an actual person, I guess almost as if it were just their outline.”

Zamora said he first gained an appreciation for art in the third grade, when he saw the graffiti-style artwork his cousin created. Zamora began imitating his cousin’s creations, and at his cousin’s urging began to create his own characters, based around his family’s pets.

“I had a pet rabbit, which I drew standing on his hind legs, and made him into my own cartoon. I started drawing all the other pets my family had, too,” Zamora said.

Zamora joined the Navy in April, 2005, and said his father’s 20 years of service in the Navy had a great influence on his decision.

“I saw how the Navy had treated my father for 20 years, and decided I ought to give it a shot,” Zamora said. “So I went in to the recruiter’s office and took the ASVAB to see where I fit in, and that’s when lithographer popped up. I interpreted (somewhat incorrectly,) that a lithographer was a graphic designer, and I decided on that. A lithographer in actuality does a lot of printing; making booklets, printing documents, punching holes, things like that. It’s earned us the nickname ‘Combat Kinko’s,’” he said.

“At USU, I write stories, take photos, design the newsletter, and write our newest addition to the newsletter, the comic strip, featuring Dr. DC,” Zamora said.

All of Zamora’s art comes together to form “PROJECT peach,” the company he created in 2002 to market his artwork.

“Project peach first started as a comic strip I drew. The concept was a lot like the Trix Rabbit, where he never gets his Trix,” Zamora said. “It was about this guy who really liked this girl, and no matter what he tried, he’d never get the girl. It always ended in a comical scene. Then I decided to expand it with more characters that were based on people I knew, and would carry their nicknames.”

From the comic strip, PROJECT peach evolved into a design company.

“Project peach is now just design work, paintings, some of the characters are still there, but I use them as more of a design element than a character. Zamora said he came up with the name PROJECT peach as a tribute to a former girlfriend.

“The original reason I chose that name was due to a girl that I was dating at the time who reminded me of a peach,” Zamora said. “Her face was round, and I started calling her ‘Peach’ a lot. When the whole idea for the characters for the strip came around, the original character, who was based on myself, had this project to get with Peach.”

Zamora is currently working with two other San Diego artists, to form a design/t-shirt company, which they call “Visual Mixers.” The partnership involves combining their styles into graphic designs for t-shirts and prints, which will be sold online as part of limited-edition sets.

“We keep our own personal styles and names, and create t-shirts, prints, and vinyl figures in limited edition,” Zamora said. “A unique feature is that we offer subscriptions. Let’s say you subscribe for a year, you’d get say five t-shirts, and we’d send you email reminders about your choice of t-shirts coming up, you pick the shirt and we send it off to you with other items that we offer.”

As a hobby, Zamora has recently focused on painting vinyl figures he orders online called “Munnys.” The seven-inch vinyl figures are purchased blank, and the artists chooses the way in which they want to paint them, allowing for creative expression.

“I paint basically what ever comes to mind or if the figure has a specific look to it, I’ll use one of the characters I’ve made up,” Zamora said.

Zamora cites several modern artists as his inspiration, but said he also enjoys famous artists from ages ago.

“My recent favorite artists are French artist TILT, Huck Gee from England, and some of the works of Frank Kozik,” Zamora said, “but I’m still a fan of the great painters, Leonardo and Picasso.”
USU staff profile: CAPT Mary Porvaznik, USPHS

By MCSN Raul Zamora
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) is represented by four uniformed branches: Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service (USPHS). Captain Mary Porvaznik, MD, USPHS, the USPHS brigade company commander, is the newest member of the USU family representing the USPHS.

Porvaznik is not only the USPHS Company Commander, but also a physician in the USU clinic, and works in the Office of Public Health Service for the Indian Health Service (OPHS/HIS) in Rockville.

“My responsibilities to the OPHS/IHS are recruitment for the Indian Health Service and include presentations about careers in the HIS.”

Porvaznik is also a USU alumna class of 1992.

“My career has gone full circle,” she said. “It started in USU and has come back. Several professors that taught me are still here and remember me.”

Porvaznik was born in Tuba City, Ariz., which is on the Navajo Indian reservation.

“My father was in the USPHS as a surgeon, and was stationed there when I was born,” she said. “I grew up there, on the Reservation and didn’t leave until I went to college at the University of New Mexico.”

“Growing up on the Navajo Indian reservation is much different than growing up in any other city,” Porvaznik said. “I am not a Native American, but while I was attending school, I didn’t notice a difference, I was easily accepted and was not treated as an outcast, despite my white skin. It was a wonderful experience; I learned a lot about the Native American culture and made many friends I keep in contact with who live on the Reservation.”

“I spent two years at the Charleston Navy Hospital in South Carolina for my family medicine residency. The program was shut down and I transferred to the Medical University of South Carolina to complete my training. It was a good experience because I got to see the military side of medicine as well as the civilian side.”

As the daughter of a USPHS surgeon, Porvaznik said she was greatly inspired by her father, who retired as a rear admiral in the USPHS.

“I noticed how happy my father was as a surgeon and the great life that the USPHS had given him, so I joined the USPHS,” she said.

Porvaznik said that after growing up with the Native Americans she knew she wanted to work with them again.” She has worked with the Navajo Indians since 1995.

“While working with the Navajo people, I was a family physician in a 60-bed hospital,” she said. “I did full spectrum health care. I took care of adults, children, and delivered babies. It was very challenging because we treated many diseases we don’t see around here, like tuberculosis, alcoholism, diabetes, and complications with pregnancies. The biggest challenge was that 30 percent of the patients did not speak English; they spoke their native language, so we had interpreters do the talking. A lot of the patients don’t trust our medicine, so they would seek a medicine man or traditional healer before they would come and see me or agree with their healer to partake in my treatment.”

After 12 years with the Navajo Indians she has returned to USU.

“As a graduate of USU, I feel very proud to be here,” she said. “I can see a lot of changes for the better. I would like to see more USPHS officers, and students in the School of Medicine. Right now there are six USPHS students; by the time I leave I would like to have eight. My goal is to increase the number of USPHS students at the university.

Happy Birthday, Navy

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) celebrated the Navy’s 232nd birthday Friday, Oct. 12 in the Building B Lobby. The Navy’s birthday is actually Oct. 13, but due to it falling on a Saturday this year, the brigade celebrated it a day early.

The ceremonial cake cutting, traditionally performed by the most senior and junior sailors at the command (by age,) was performed by CDR Rene Hernandez, MC, USN, and HN Gregory Curtis, USN.
USU News Briefs

2008 Field Exercises: Operations Bushmaster and Kerkesner will be conducted from July 10-25, 2008 at Fort Indiantown Gap, PA. These exercises are unique to our university and require the support of all university uniformed personnel. Only emergency leave will be granted during this time frame as there are over 135 uniformed personnel (not including evaluators) needed to support this mission.

NNMC Disaster Preparedness Conference: The National Naval Medical Center will hold a Disaster Preparedness Conference on Oct. 18 from 7:30 - 10a.m. Please see the USU website for the flyer on the conference at: http://www.usuhs.mil/vpe/CMAX07TRAININGPASSPORT.doc.

2008 Brigade Holiday Liberty Schedule: The 2008 USU Brigade Holiday Liberty Schedule has recently been published. To access this policy, go to http://www.usuhs.mil/bde/bdepolink.html.

Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Medical Honor Society: On behalf of the Maryland Gamma Chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Medical Honor Society, please join USU in congratulating the following individuals for being accepted into AOA: Steven Craig, Paul Drayna, Brent Feldt, Brian Fitzgerald, Phillip Flateau, Kelly Groom, Caroline Mans, Andrew McLaughlin, Sandra McLaughlin, Nicholas Orr, Marit Peterson, Lindsey Rath, and Kathleen Sarber. These individuals are selected to AOA for their scholastic achievement, leadership capabilities, ethical standards, fairness in dealing with colleagues, potential for achievement in medicine, and a record of service to the school and community at large.

CFC: Dr. Charles Rice, the USU President, will kick off this year’s USU Combined Federal Campaign, Oct. 16th, at 11:30 a.m. in the breezeway between Buildings B and C. Hamburgers, hot dogs, pulled pork, and refreshments will be served starting at 11:00 a.m. The USU CFC Committee would like to thank everyone in advance for making this kickoff a success. Door prize tickets will be distributed at the event, which is open to all, and presence is required in order to win door prizes. Door prizes drawings will be held towards the end of the barbecue at approximately 12:30 p.m. Please direct any questions or concerns to CPT Nick Horton at 295-9433 or nhorton@usuhs.mil.

Hockey: The USU Fighting Docs are playing the Hawks Oct. 16, 10 p.m. @ Resor; Blades of Steel Oct. 24, 10 p.m. @ Logsdon; The Rocks Oct. 30, 10:05 p.m. @ Logsdon; Killer Whale Nov. 7, 10:06 p.m. @ Patrick; Mayhem Nov. 15, 10:10 p.m. @ Logsdon; Moose Jaw Nov. 18, 2:50 p.m. @ Patrick; Starboard Sharks Dec. 8, 9:35 p.m. @ Resor; Eagles Dec. 10:10 p.m. @ Patrick.

USU Doctors You Don’t Want to Meet
By MCSN Raul Zamora

![Dr. Oid](You're alive.)

![Dr. Awing](Hello.)

![Dr. Agon](Eh...)
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