

# Tarheel Tandem



Volume 75 | Spring 2021

## 2020-2021 Board of Directors

**Barbara Savage**, President

**Uma Avva**, Immediate Past President

**Gina Becherer**, President-elect

**Susan Edens Hammer**, Secretary

**Barbara Lupton**, Treasurer

**Meeti Nigam**, VP Membership Development

**Kirby Sheridan**, VP of Program and  
Resource Development

**Chrystal Harris, MD**, Pitt

**Deborah Harrell Meehan**, Wake

...

**Vicky Elia**, Executive Director  
velia@firstpointresrouces.com

### NCMS Alliance

1500 Sunday Drive, Suite 102  
Raleigh, NC 27607

**www.ncmsalliance.org**

Phone: 919-573-1316

Fax: 919-787-4916

...

## In This Issue

Navigating the COVID-19 Vaccine Pathway ... 2

Member's Point of View:

North Carolinians Need Expanded

Broadband Access..... 3

Opioid Crisis Intensifies During

Covid-19 Pandemic ..... 3

County News ..... 4

Meet our Membership Contest Winner ..... 7

## President's Message

### Keeping Our Ship on Course

By Barbara Savage, NCMSA President; [savageba0823@gmail.com](mailto:savageba0823@gmail.com)



Is it really spring? I can't tell by the weather. I am thinking I need to start building a boat. But to build that boat I need a team—a team of not just people who work at the same time in the same place. I need a group of very different individuals who enjoy working together and who share a commitment to working cohesively to help achieve the goal of building the boat and setting it to sail. They are most likely not all equal in experience, talent, or education, but they are similar in one vitally important way—their commitment to getting the boat built.

My apologies for rephrasing a quote from Leadership First. I liked the analogy between a boat and our organization. It is time to work on finding those individuals who want to join our NCMSA team for next year. We are looking for those individuals who enjoy working together and share that commitment to help us achieve our goals and fulfill our purpose.

You do not need to be in a leadership role in your county, you only need a willingness to board our ship and be a crew member. Help us to continue keeping this ship on course.

Contact me at [savageba0823@gmail.com](mailto:savageba0823@gmail.com) and say yes. You won't regret it.

## Volunteer Opportunities During COVID-19 Pandemic

By Gina Becherer, NCMSA President-elect; [gmbacherer@gmail.com](mailto:gmbacherer@gmail.com)

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected North Carolinians in unprecedented ways, but there are ways we can help our communities, neighbors and local organizations. Use the link below to learn more about how you can volunteer. Additional online volunteer centers may have more opportunities. Donate food, blood or medical supplies. Learn more about how you can volunteer or donate.

<https://www.nc.gov/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities>

# Your Membership Makes Us Strong

*By Meeti Nigam, NCMSA Vice President of Membership Development; nigammeet@gmail.com*

I hope you all started the New Year with good health, positivity and peace. Thank you for your membership in the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance. Our Alliance connects all of us in an organization of physician family leaders working to positively impact our communities. Working together, we all share our best knowledge and accelerate change through leadership and collective action.

I see membership as an important part of our Alliance's growth. Our members are our strong voice. Your membership is a huge part of our mission to fulfill a strong Alliance and support ongoing nonprofit works in our communities. If you have not yet renewed your membership, please renew now by returning the attached form or online at <https://www.ncmsalliance.org/Membership>.

Also, consider being a part of the upcoming 2021-22 NCMSA Board of Directors or serve on a committee. Communicate your

interest in serving to me or another NCMSA board member. We need your support and involvement.

Your participation and membership are very important for our mission and make you a leader in your North Carolina community. The Alliance needs your support to grow our membership. Please help to introduce the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance to other spouses of physicians and physicians.

Thank you so much for your support. You can reach us with any questions or concerns:

- Meeti Nigam, Vice President for Membership Development; [nigammeet@gmail.com](mailto:nigammeet@gmail.com)
- Susan Edens Hammer, Secretary and Past NCMSA President; [sjehammer@att.net](mailto:sjehammer@att.net)
- Deborah Harrell Meehan, Board and Committee member and Past NCMSA President; [dhmeehan@ncmcrealty.com](mailto:dhmeehan@ncmcrealty.com)

## Navigating the COVID-19 Vaccine Pathway

*By Uma Avva, NCMSA Immediate Past President; uavva@triad.rr.com*

Lying on her sofa with a fever, a sore arm and no energy, my daughter (an internal medicine resident) wondered, in passing, if she had COVID-19 or was this truly just the side effect of the vaccine. Thankfully, her symptoms faded within 36 hours and she was back on the wards. My husband, a participant in the Pfizer vaccine trials, complained of a sore arm and severe fatigue after his second blinded dose of the protocol. He was unblinded from the study so he could determine whether or not to request a vaccine from our local hospital. Fortunately, during the first phase of the vaccine distribution, medical providers and those 65 and older were the predominant recipients of COVID-19 vaccines.

As of February 24, more than 1.2 million North Carolinians had received their first vaccine dose. That brought to nine percent the number of people in North Carolina over age 16 who are fully vaccinated. However, it came as no surprise that, during the early months, vaccine supply was limited and implementation was difficult. There does not appear to be a coordinated plan in place at either the federal, state, or county level. Distribution modalities change as you cross county lines. In my own county, the system crashed on the first day and the communication was haphazard. The supply of vaccines to our major medical center was temporarily halted and vaccination appointments were cancelled. (They have since resumed.)

Some cities, such as Charlotte and Raleigh, held mass vaccination events. In other counties, people waited outside in

the cold for hours or procured vaccinations outside their county of residence. To date, there is no accurate timeline outlining when vaccines will be available for everyone. Until we reach that critical tipping point, even for those who are vaccinated, the Three W's are still in effect . . . wash your hands, wear a mask, and wait six feet apart.

The rollout in North Carolina has illustrated the fragmented nature of our "public" healthcare system. With the overlay of Operation Warp Speed, Emergency Use Authorization protocols, the appearance of new virulent strains of COVID-19 and the slow rollout of the vaccine, communication has not always been clear. Some citizens do not believe what is being communicated. Their disbelief regarding the efficacy and the safety of the vaccine may stem from politics or may be due to wariness given the dark history of medical studies performed on people of color.

Local Alliances and members certainly have a mandate to clarify misinformation and share community information on our websites as our communities deal with this pandemic. Here are some resources you may want to consider sharing on your website or with your friends:

- Links to county resources for COVID vaccinations
- Link to NC resources — <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov>
- <https://covidactnow.org/covid-explained/roundup-current-vaccine-progress>
- <https://digitalmedic.stanford.edu/our-work/debunking-myths/>

## Member's Point of View

*Editor's Note: This is a new Tarheel Tandem forum for members to express their views about health-related topics affecting North Carolinians. To submit your point of view, please email Kirby Sheridan at [kirbypsheridan@gmail.com](mailto:kirbypsheridan@gmail.com). The Tarheel Tandem is issued twice each year in the fall and spring.*

### North Carolinians Need Expanded Broadband Access

*By Kirby Sheridan, NCMSA Vice President of Programming and Resource Development, Tarheel Tandem editor*

As we learned that COVID-19 vaccinations were available, my sister and I began researching, in earnest, how to enroll our parents, who are in their late 80's, in a vaccine clinic. This proved to be a complicated task, akin to trying to buy concert tickets using telephone redial. I am happy to report that they were enrolled and did receive both their doses by early March. However, the process for enrolling them could have been much easier.

My parents live in a rural county. They do not have internet access except through cell phones and that service is spotty, at best. They do not use social media. Yet, the county they live in posted information about vaccination clinics on Facebook. Calls to the local COVID-19 vaccination line referred callers to Facebook. Neither my sister nor I use Facebook so we had to enlist other family members in the enrollment effort. Why, in trying to reach people 75 and older, would this county health department rely on Facebook? Why not also use public service announcements on radio, television and in the newspaper? Those media reach that age group.

The larger take-away from this experience is the importance of broadband coverage for access to health care. Currently, North Carolina ranks as the 18th best state when it comes to broadband access in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Just over 33% of North Carolinians have access to fiber-optic internet service. That is significantly better than the American average of 25%.<sup>1</sup>

However, consider that 394,000 North Carolinians do not have access to internet with sufficient speed and 118,000 people do not have access to a wired internet connection at all.<sup>1</sup> The communities with the worst broadband availability lie in the mountains and coastal plains of the state.

How can we help expand broadband coverage to our fellow North Carolinians? We can encourage local leaders to update and adopt laws and policies that foster broadband usage and provider competition.<sup>2</sup> We can urge our communities to partner with the private sector to expand broadband.<sup>2</sup> It is easy to take for granted 24-hour access to the internet. But all North Carolinians do not have this luxury. Scheduling a virtual visit with a healthcare provider or joining an online waitlist for a COVID-19 vaccine are not options for them. Let's use our voices to help expand broadband access and improve healthcare in North Carolina.

**Sources: For more information on this issue, please visit:**

- 1 BROADBANDNOW — <https://broadbandnow.com/North-Carolina#:~:text=North%20Carolina%20holds%20the%20title,with%20access%20to%20the%20same>
- 2 The NC Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) Broadband Infrastructure Office — <https://www.ncbroadband.gov/data-reports/connecting-north-carolina-state-broadband-plan>

## Opioid Crisis Intensifies During COVID-19 Pandemic

*By Kirby Sheridan, NCMSA Vice President of Program and Resource Development; [kirbypsheridan@gmail.com](mailto:kirbypsheridan@gmail.com)*

As North Carolinians focus on the spread of the COVID-19 virus and ways to mitigate it, the opioid crisis has worsened, in large part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing measures, loss of employment, disruptions in access to medical treatment and other factors have led to an increase in the risk of fatal and nonfatal overdose. According to the North Carolina Division of Public Health's Injury and Violence Prevention branch, emergency department visits related to overdose have increase by 22% compared to 2019.<sup>1</sup>

This upward trend in opioid misuse is a sober reminder of the importance of disposing of medications properly, including opioids, so they do not fall into the wrong hands. Look for local medication drop-off points, often at law enforcement stations. Some are permanent sites while others are scheduled events. Creating safe

medication drop-off points makes an effective local project for county Alliances.

It is also important to know what mental health and substance abuse treatment resources are available locally. The North Carolina Attorney General's office and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services have taken steps to connect North Carolinians to treatment and recovery support services. To read more about these measures, use the link below to connect to the North Carolina Institute of Medicine's website.

**Source**

- 1 North Carolina Institute of Medicine website — <https://nciom.org/covid-19-and-the-opioid-crisis/>

# County News

## Cabarrus County Medical Society Alliance

By Kirby Sheridan; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

Each year, the Cabarrus County Medical Society Alliance and the Cabarrus County Medical Society award a joint scholarship to a student at the Cabarrus College of Health Sciences. This scholarship, which was traditionally and informally called the nursing student scholarship, expanded a few years ago to include the other fields of study offered at the Cabarrus College of Health Sciences. Applicants must meet certain threshold requirements and then write an essay about why they chose their course of study. In each of the past few years, the CCMSA scholarship committee has received more than 30 applications for the \$2000 scholarship. The CCMSA would like to congratulate our 2020 scholarship winner, Melissa Ronzo, who is studying to be an occupational therapy assistant.

...

## Greater Greensboro Society of Medicine Alliance

By Swati Patel, Co-President; swatijay@gmail.com

Our chapter continues supporting the initiative with Spartan Open Pantry (SOP), which is associated with UNCG and the Wesley-Luther ministries. This year we are collecting monthly themed items for the pantry. So far, this year we have donated desserts, socks, canned protein (beans) and gift cards. Last month, we collected canned soup and this month we are collecting dry pasta and pasta sauce.

Looking ahead, in March, scholarships will be given out to eligible high school students who will be pursuing a healthcare career. In May our organization, along with the Greensboro Medical Society, will be giving out grants to smaller non-profit organizations in the area. Also, in May, we are planning and sponsoring, in conjunction with The Mustard Seed Clinic, a "Sowing Seeds Rodeo" with proceeds benefiting their clinic in Greensboro. The clinic provides services to residents living in Guilford County at or below 200% poverty level without access to healthcare.

Alliance Angels have collected items and cash donations during our annual "Hope for the Holidays" event with proceeds benefiting the Children's Home Society. During pre-COVID times, we also have volunteering opportunities to help sort out all the different items for children's wish list. It has been one of the heartwarming events for our chapter over the past few years. This past Christmas members sponsored items for over 23 foster children and collected monetary donations totaling \$500.

The Greater Greensboro Society of Medicine Alliance has been trying to come up with ideas that will connect our members during this time of uncertainty. With COVID 19 restrictions, in-person events have been on hold, so we are trying to find virtual events that would benefit the whole group. In the fall, we had a virtual yoga session provided by a certified yoga instructor. It turned out to be a fun and relaxing session, so we are planning on another session for February 20.

In October and November we organized a community service day to help Healing Garden, adjacent to Cone Health Cancer Center & Wesley Long Hospital. Members joined along with their school-aged children, who needed service learning hours, to help clear and beautify the garden landscape. Our own chapter member Mary Magrinat has been

helping in managing the upkeep of the beautiful garden. The garden consists of two acres of area with a Wetland garden and a Meditation Garden to help provide comfort to patients undergoing cancer therapy. We have another service day scheduled in March.



During these unprecedented times, we are grateful for the support from our board and members who have contributed in making these events possible and successful.

...

continued on page 5



## Healthy Charlotte Alliance

By Erin Edwards, Executive Director;  
edwards@healthycharlottealliance.org

Healthy Charlotte Alliance continues to offer virtual programs to keep our members informed about pertinent health topics and health news. In

November, we held a program on nutritional supplements presented by Dr. Russell H. Greenfield, Physician Executive and Director of Integrative Medicine for Novant Health. In January, Dr. Brian Jerby, a gastrointestinal specialist with Legacy Health, talked with us about the link between gut health and optimal immune health. And in February, we met with Dr. Sandy Charles of the Novant Health Women's Heart and Vascular Center in a virtual presentation on heart health for women.



We have also held virtual site visits with some of the community partners we financially support. October brought us a virtual visit to Mental Health America of Central Carolinas where several people shared information with us including Executive Director, Kathy Rodgers, who discussed their mission and efforts to advocate for mental health parity and create a culture of mental wellness. In January, we visited with Care Ring, a community care organization offering a low-cost clinic as well as community health nursing and physician services for people most in need.

We are especially proud of our high-impact grants effort to celebrate Healthy Charlotte Alliance's 80th anniversary. Called "\$80,000 to celebrate 80 years of Impact", we asked members to nominate local health nonprofits that align with our four investment priorities—mental health, access to care, chronic disease prevention, and violence prevention to be considered for this award. The grants committee narrowed this group of deserving organizations to two. Our investing members will vote to determine the amount of the grant awards to these finalists.

• • •

## Wake County Medical Society Alliance

By Paige McLaurin, President; paigemclaurin@gmail.com

We celebrated the holidays together at Tara Farms on Saturday, December 12, from 1-4 p.m. The outdoor event was a huge success because we had mild weather, a warm fire and plenty of good tidings! We enjoyed Winter Harvest mason jar salads, thanks to all who contributed, and warm apple cider punch with pomegranate juice. We decorated oranges with cloves, played board games, and enjoyed a few sweets while listening to carols on the portable speaker. We are incredibly grateful to 50-year member, Fran Pugh, for hosting us at Tara Farms, a stunning venue any time of year!

Thanks to Gina Becherer and K Keener for opening their lovely homes for the annual blanket-making event to benefit the Green Chair Project. Check out all they accomplished in one setting — so comfy!



Thanks, also, to all who participated in our Kendra Scott fundraising event Dec. 10-11 online and in-store. We had the best shopping days of the season because so many ladies stopped into the store!

We launched a new online directory. It is so easy to use. Thanks to our board for guiding us to our new format. And thanks to Kimberly Durland for creating a keepsake guide to our online directory—very pretty card. We saved money by going online which frees up more for our Community Health Fund. Please see the website for grant applications.

In January, we focused on wellness and fellowship. On January 5, I hosted a smoothie-making demonstration by Zoom at 9:00 a.m. I put together a breakfast concoction featuring three fruits and three vegetables to start your day right—every day!

January 14, we hosted a Ladies Night Out. We met at Midtown Café in North Hills, outdoors under the heaters on the front patio.

January 26 at 9:00 a.m., members tuned in to Yes & Yoga, episode 3 on Amazon Prime TV for an Introduction to Kundalini Yoga. We met by Zoom afterward to discuss the sensations, body awareness and mindfulness that result from the practice.

The board met in early January to discuss our fundraiser and the events for the rest of the year.



1500 Sunday Drive, Ste 102 ♦ Raleigh, NC 27607

# MEMBERSHIP FORM

## Contact Information

☐ No Changes to Information Below

Prefix First Name Last Name ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ M.D. Medical Specialty

Spouse/Partner First Name Last Name ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ M.D. Medical Specialty

Address City State Zip

\*Mobile Phone Home Phone Email Address

May NCMSA contact you using the NCMSA \*text message system? (Rates may apply) ☐ Yes ☐ No

County of Residence County Alliance Name\*

\*If there is no County Alliance in your area, are you interested in forming or reactivating a County Alliance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

## Annual Membership Type & Dues

### Individual Membership

- ☐ Regular Member or Spouse/Partner - \$50
- ☐ Medical Student Member or Spouse/Partner - \$10
- ☐ Resident Physician Member or Spouse/Partner - \$10

### Couples Membership

- ☐ Regular Member Couple - \$100
- ☐ Medical Student Couple - \$20
- ☐ Resident Physician Couple - \$20

### Add County Membership

☐ \$ County Alliance Name

### Add AMAA Membership

- ☐ AMAA Dues - \$65

### Donation to NCMSA

Added to my dues payment is my tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the NCMSA Annual Fund which will support Alliance programs.

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Credit Card ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV: \_\_\_\_\_

Please visit our website to join or renew online <https://www.ncmsalliance.org/Membership>

NCMS Alliance is a 501 c3 charitable organization

## Information

Share your talents and interests:

- Areas of Talents/Expertise: \_\_\_\_\_
- Interests/Hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate your interest in serving with a group of other Alliance members in the following areas. Meetings are via Zoom now. No travel involved! ☐ Membership Development ☐ Program Development ☐ Resource Development (Fundraising Projects)

*Physician families advocating for the health of our communities*

## How Are You Right Now?

By Kirby Sheridan, NCMSA Vice President of Programming and Resource Development; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

How are you right now? In January I learned about a website sponsored by the CDC Foundation that asks that very question and allows visitors to answer the question in a variety of ways and receive feedback and resources. It's called HowRightNow.org.

You can reach it by this link: <https://howrightnow.org/>

We have all spent time helping our families and our communities live through the coronavirus pandemic and all the changes and losses it has brought to our lives. Whether we are helping our fellow citizens get their COVID-19 vaccinations, homeschooling our children or working to maintain a social connection among our friends and family, we are giving much of ourselves in a time of uncertainty. Take the time to do a self-check.

Visit HowRightNow.org and explore how you are feeling.

## Meet Vicky Elia, Our New Executive Director

Originally from Maine, I now call Clayton, North Carolina home with my husband, Lou. Prior to joining the NCMSA I worked for 15 years in various wholesale banking positions, the most recent being a business development manager.



I attended college in San Antonio, Texas.

I am active in our local church and volunteer in various positions in the local community.

I have one daughter and two grandchildren. In my free time, I love to run and participate in local charity road races as well as traveling to other states to participate.

I am thankful to have a small part in the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance and look forward to working with everyone.

## NCMSA Holds First Member Connect Virtual Discussion

Gina Becherer, NCMSA President-elect, hosted our first Member Connect discussion on February 15 via Zoom. Thirteen participants met to discuss *The Power of Vulnerability*, a TEDTalk by Brene Brown. The invitation and video link were sent to NCMSA members and guests ahead of time. Participants brought their lunch and made themselves comfortable in their own space. The discussion ranged beyond the thought-provoking message in the video to encompass the challenges that some are facing currently and how those have been exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was good to connect with others.

Member Connect is similar to a book club except the expectations are more flexible and it requires less of a time commitment. A group of friends and acquaintances meets, virtually, to talk about a chosen article or video rather than a book. Each session will have a host who will start the discussion by sharing their perspective and take-aways from the article or video. Stay-tuned for details about the next Member Connect.

## Meet Our Membership Contest Winner!

Congratulations to Beth Alley of the Wake County Medical Society Alliance. She won the \$150 Amazon gift card prize drawing from the names of members who paid their NCMSA dues by December 1, 2020. Watch for details on the 2021 Contest and you could be a winner!

Thanks for joining, Beth!



## 97th Annual Fund Recognitions

### Donation

by Judy Lupse

**In memory of Micki Washington**

**In memory of Leslye Ann Edinburg**

**In memory of Wilma (Jackie) Thompson**

**In memory of Eva Thompson**

by Patricia Udekwa



1500 Sunday Drive, Suite 102  
Raleigh, NC 27607

## Health, Equity and Race During COVID-19

Use the link below for findings from a national, ongoing poll reported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The survey explores views on the connection between race and health among those with low and middle incomes:

[https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2021/01/survey--attitudes-views-and-values-around-health-equity-and-race-amid-covid-19.html?rid=0034400001rm5R3AAI&et\\_cid=2361053](https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2021/01/survey--attitudes-views-and-values-around-health-equity-and-race-amid-covid-19.html?rid=0034400001rm5R3AAI&et_cid=2361053)

## NCMSA Planning Second Virtual Annual Meeting

The NCMSA will hold a virtual annual meeting again this year. The date is set for May 19. Please look out for an annual meeting notice soon with more details on the program and how to register. We hope you will join us.

## Calendar of Events

### March 24

Board of Directors Meeting (virtual)  
10:00 AM

### April 21

Board of Directors Meeting (virtual)

### May 19

NCMSA Annual Meeting (virtual)

