

# Tarheel Tandem



Volume 78 | Fall 2024

## 2024-2025 Board of Directors

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**Susan Edens Hammer**, Secretary

**Barbara Lupton**, Treasurer

**Meeti Nigam**, Immediate Past President

**Uma Avva**, Greater Greensboro

**Cathy Ingram**, Greater Greensboro

**Anne Krishnan**, Greater Greensboro

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## President's Message

*By Kirby Sheridan, NCMS Alliance President; [kirbypsheridan@gmail.com](mailto:kirbypsheridan@gmail.com)*



Six years after my first term as state president, I have taken the role of NCMS Alliance president again. It is a familiar job and yet so much has changed. Chief among the changes is that our membership is not as large as it used to be and there are fewer local Alliances. That makes launching and supporting state-wide initiatives more of a challenge. One fact that has not changed is that the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance is guided by a strong and dedicated board of directors with good ideas and the energy and commitment to explore them. The board

is charged with being fiscally responsible and guiding the Alliance to continue to meet our mission, which you will see printed at the end of this message.

This year the board of directors is focused on strategic planning. We are working to better manage our finances so that more of the money goes to projects that improve the health of the people of North Carolina. We are also emphasizing our grants. We have had fewer applications for these grants recently and so we are examining our grant process and how we can increase its reach and attract more applicants. Watch for more information about grants and other changes to the business of the state Alliance in future communication. You, the members, will have a say in this at the annual meeting so please plan to attend. More information will be posted about the annual meeting as the details are available.

Mental health continues to be a focus of our programming, specifically the mental health of our healthcare providers. Unfortunately, we had to cancel an event on physician stress and suicide in Asheville due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Helene. However, we plan to hold at least one more of these events elsewhere in the state and we hope to reschedule our event in Asheville as they are able to host us. Please see more information in this edition of *The Tarheel Tandem* for news about how the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance is supporting the people of western North Carolina by helping to meet their immediate healthcare needs.

I thank you for being a member of the NCMSA. I encourage you to reach out to me if you have a question or comment about the Alliance. Thank you for supporting the work of the Alliance.

### Mission of the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance

The North Carolina Medical Society Alliance is a nonprofit organization of physician spouses and physicians dedicated to advancing the health of North Carolinians through advocacy and action.

# Putting One Foot in Front of the Other: Western Carolina Medical Society Helps Patients Recover After Hurricane Helene

By Karen Wallace-Meigs, Western Carolina Medical Society Executive Director; [karen@mywcms.org](mailto:karen@mywcms.org)

The most heroic thing you can do is put one foot in front of the other. That is what we have all been doing in western North Carolina in the weeks since Hurricane Helene hit.

It is amazing that our Project Access patients must navigate such difficult roads every day. Western Carolina Medical Society started Project Access in 1996 and, since then, has negotiated \$95 million in free care for the underinsured and uninsured of the region. The time post-Helene is particularly frightening for our patient-clients, but we are honored to partner with generous healthcare providers to serve their needs. We have a GoFundMe page to replace durable medical equipment, eyeglasses, and medications, as well as to meet other Social Determinants of Health needs made more dire by the storm and subsequent job losses. If you would like to help, please visit the Emergency Medical Needs Fund page at <https://bit.ly/3Csn1aE>. Your gift will brighten lives.

There are doctors volunteering 18 hours a day. A Madison County doctor set up a roadside first aid station. People are dropping off

medicine at clinics. Churches are pairing with retired physicians to care for those released from the hospital with no place to go. Our doctors and faith leaders want to keep as many patients as possible in our region. The effort is called *Almost Home*.

Together, we serve meals, distribute water, and manage toilet brigades. Empathy and love abound, and neighbors arrive on mountain bikes, in boots, riding mules or ATVs, bringing insulin, hay for livestock, and paella pans to feed 2500.

Our staff is calling partner and member practices. The practices are accounting for their own staff and figuring out everything from employee transportation to potable water to undamaged practice space rental. We will need mental health services as our region grapples with all we lost and begins to live our new normal.

Neighbors like our heroic first responders and medical community remind me that the most difficult of journeys are more manageable with the right people. We thank our friends at the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance for making the journey with us.

## North Carolina Medical Society Alliance Donates \$10,000 to Help Meet Critical Health Care Needs in Western North Carolina

After learning of the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina, the NCMSA board of directors wanted to contribute to efforts to support patients in that area who suddenly lost medications, medical supplies, means of transportation or even a house in which to live. After researching possibilities, the board decided to contribute \$10,000 to the Western Carolina Medical Society's Emergency Medical Needs Fund. This fund was set up to provide "immediate relief and life-saving care" to those patients affected by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina. The Western Carolina Medical Society states that the fund will help with the following:

- 1. Provide emergency medications and supplies**
- 2. Assist uninsured and underinsured patients** in accessing necessary treatments
- 3. Provide Durable Medical Equipment** (wheelchairs, walkers, oxygen, blood sugar monitoring devices etc.) to those in need
- 4. Address social determinants of health** (food insecurity, shelter, basic needs)

We are grateful to be able to help these patients recover from the devastating blow rendered by Hurricane Helene and to partner with the Western Carolina Medical Society. Please see above for more about what the WCMS is doing for western North Carolina patients.

## North Carolina Medical Society Raises Funds to Help Rebuild After Hurricane Helene

The North Carolina Medical Society announced an effort to raise funds for those impacted by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina through its Disaster Relief Fund. Money raised will help practices damaged or destroyed by the storm to rebuild so they can restore health care to those in the western part of our state. For more information, please visit the NCMS website at <https://ncmedsoc.org/>.

# Annual Meeting Returned to Greensboro

By Kirby Sheridan, NCMS Alliance President; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

On May 16, the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance held our annual meeting in Greensboro at the Starmount Forest Country Club.



Meeti Nigam with Keynote speaker, Michelle Ries

Members conducted the business of the state Alliance and heard from keynote speaker Michelle G. Ries, MPH, President and CEO of the NC Institute of Medicine. Her presentation, "Health Challenges in North Carolina: Forward-Looking and Focused on Solutions," provided members with ideas for programming as we continue to work to advance the health of the citizens of our state. Racheal

Kunesh, AMA Alliance President and former NCMS Alliance President gave an update on programs and other news from the AMA Alliance.

## During the Hubbard Memorial luncheon and lecture, Racheal installed the officers for the 2024-2025 year. These included:

President: Kirby Sheridan (Cabarrus)

Immediate Past President: Meeti Nigam (Mecklenburg)

Secretary: Susan Edens Hammer (Wake)

Treasurer: Barbara Lupton (Greater Greensboro)

## Racheal also installed the rest of the Board of Directors:

Uma Avva (Greater Greensboro)

Cathy Ingram (Greater Greensboro)

Anne Krishnan (Greater Greensboro)

Zohra Osman (Wake)

Barbara Savage (Wake)



Hubbard Luncheon author Jane Tesh with outgoing President, Meeti Nigam and Secretary, Susan Hammer

Author Jane Tesh served as our Hubbard Memorial lecturer. Ms. Tesh, author of the Madeline Maclin Mysteries and the Grace Street Mystery Series, described her writing process and how she broke into the field of writing fiction. Ms. Tesh, who lives in Mt Airy, had some special fans in the audience as she also spent many years as a favorite middle school media specialist in the area.



Past presidents at the annual meeting. L-R: Susan Edens Hammer, Rene Kikel, Racheal Kunesh, Meeti Nigam, Kirby Sheridan, Gay Bowman and Deborah Harrell Meehan.



Alliance members at the Hubbard Luncheon

## Calendar of Events

**November 19, 2024**

Board Meeting (virtual)

**January 28, 2025**

Board Meeting (virtual)

**November 30, 2024**

First deadline for grant applications\*

**February 17, 2025**

Spring Tarheel Tandem deadline for submissions

**December 1, 2024 - February 28, 2025**

Second grant cycle deadline\*

**February 25, 2025**

Board Meeting (virtual)

\*Grant application found online





# Alliance Program Tackles Physician Mental Health and Workplace Stress

By Kirby Sheridan, Editor, *The Tarheel Tandem*; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

The night before our annual meeting, the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance hosted a program on physician mental health with guest speakers Betsy Gall, author, speaker and physician spouse, and Dr. Joseph Jordan, CEO of the North Carolina Professionals Health Program. Betsy shared her heart-wrenching story of the death of her physician husband by suicide, what led to it, and what can be done to prevent



Swati Patel, Meeti Nigam, Kirby Sheridan and speaker Betsy Gall at the Greensboro History Museum

a tragedy such as this. Dr. Jordan shared the purpose of the NCPHP and how physicians can utilize these services to help them handle stress and find counseling for substance abuse, suicide ideation and other mental health issues. Those seeking help from the NCPHP do so anonymously. Their license renewal is not in jeopardy while they pursue treatment. The NCPHP gives physicians and other healthcare



professionals a path to wellness with an opportunity to return to their profession.

The program generated lively discussion from passionate physicians and physician family members decrying the state of practicing medicine in many workplaces where expectations to see more and more patients with fewer resources and more administrative duties have become almost untenable.

The NCMS Alliance hosted the program at the Greensboro History Museum. Plans to host a second event in Asheville in October were canceled due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene. Plans are underway to hold another physician mental health event in the eastern part of the state.



Mary Tyrey, Deborah Harrell Meehan and Racheal Kunesch catch up before the event.

**For more information, please see these additional resources on the physician workplace stress and help for physicians and their families:**

The North Carolina Professionals Health Program — <https://ncphp.org/>

The Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation — <https://drlornabreen.org/>

Disappearing Doctors — <https://www.disappearingdoctors.com/>

## Plan to Send Greetings Through the Holiday Sharing Card

By Susan Edens Hammer; sjehammer@att.net

**Share** the Gift of Health

**Support** your NCMS Alliance Holiday Sharing Card 2024

**Donate** by November 30, 2024

The holiday season is approaching and a great way to reach out to the Alliance community is to participate in our Holiday Sharing Card Project. Donations will support our Health Education Opportunity Fund. Your donation will help assure the success of programs to build effective public and private partnerships and effect positive change across our state.

Donors' names will be listed on the Alliance Holiday Sharing Card and shared electronically across the NCMS Alliance medical community. Donations can be made online on the NCMS Alliance Donation page or mail your check, to be received by November 30, 2024 with your name as you would like it displayed on the Sharing Card to: NCMS Alliance, 3739 National Drive, Suite 202, Raleigh, NC 27612

**Sharing is Caring and your charitable gift will make a difference.**

Your Holiday Sharing Card Project donation is tax deductible. NCMS Alliance, a 501 (c)(3), is a charitable volunteer organization of physicians' spouses and physicians dedicated to building healthy communities and supporting the family of medicine. Your donation will help the NCMS Alliance make a strong representation in the family of medicine, local communities, and our current focus of partnering with NC Professional Health Partners (NCPHP) in **Overwork, Stress, Depression: Where Do the Healers Go for Help?** events for healthcare practitioners on mental health and support resources. Also, our health-related grants are available to assist county Alliances with their projects and local community needs.

# County News

## Cabarrus County

By Kirby Sheridan, Cabarrus County Medical Society Alliance Past President; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

The Cabarrus County Medical Society Alliance continues to give out a scholarship each year to a student at the Cabarrus College of Health Sciences. This scholarship is given jointly with the Cabarrus County Medical Society. This year's scholarship winner is Brooke Dominguez, an associates degree in nursing student and a certified surgical tech.

## Healthy Charlotte

By Erin Edwards, Healthy Charlotte Alliance Executive Director; eedwards@healthycharlottealliance.org

On April 10, we enjoyed a fascinating session about pharmacogenomics, the study of how a person's inherited genetic makeup may affect how their body processes certain medications, from clinical pharmacogenomics specialists from Atrium Health Levine Cancer Institute, Sarah Morris, PharmD and Grace Nguyen, PharmD, BCPS.



Sherry Ward (right) receiving the 2024 Genie Hayes award



Newly installed Healthy Charlotte Alliance president, Jennie Carruth with outgoing president, Karen Chandler



Dr. Jonathan Fisher speaking at the annual meeting

### 2024 Annual Meeting

On May 15, Healthy Charlotte Alliance celebrated the successes from the year and awarded \$95,000 in high-impact grants at the annual meeting! The Alliance awarded a \$1,000 grant to Veterans Bridge Home in honor of 2024 James Gray Cannon award recipient Patty Norman's tireless volunteer efforts in the Charlotte community, including co-founding Veterans Bridge Home.

Sherry Ward was presented the 2024 Genie Hayes Distinguished Service Award to honor her leadership and selfless investment of time and talents in support of Healthy Charlotte Alliance.

Members and guests heard from cardiologist and well-being leader, Jonathan Fisher, MD, on Why Love, Laughter, and Kindness are vital. We thanked Karen Chandler for her 8 years of Board leadership and the countless hours she has invested to make Healthy Charlotte Alliance stronger. We celebrated the passing of the gavel to incoming Board President, Jennie Carruth, and look forward to her fresh ideas and the year ahead! Our future is bright!

## Skincare for Every Decade

On October 8, we engaged in an informative and fun program with Dr. Elizabeth Rostan at Charlotte Skin & Laser, learning the best ways to care for our skin and look fantastic at any age!

## Wake County

By Susan Edens Hammer, Wake County Medical Society Alliance Past President; sjehammer@att.net

Leading up to our WCMS Alliance Centennial in 2026, our board plans to spotlight organizations the Alliance has supported and medical families who volunteered with these organizations through the years. Organizations featured through May 2025 will include Urban Ministries, Meals on Wheels, Filling in Gaps, Life Transitions, and Poe Center for Health Education. The WCMS Alliance will collect monetary donations for the featured organizations during the months around their focus.

Recognition began at our September event at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh with recognition of the Urban Ministries Open Door Clinic, Food Pantry and Garden featuring Dr. Bob Majors (husband of member Helen

Majors) who shared information on Urban Ministries and the vegetable garden where several retired physicians volunteer. Urban Ministries was started by a group of Raleigh churches in 1981. The UM Open Door Clinic was started by Dr. Don Lucey in the 1980s to care for patients with chronic disease.



WCMS Alliance members enjoying the JC Raulston Arboretum with Doctors Majors and Hattaway

Volunteering in the clinic, Dr. Ben Ferdon and Dr. Majors saw a need in patients' diets for fresh vegetables. A garden was started ten years ago down the service road behind the clinic. Today this 166 by 55 ft. plot of land grows 8,000-10,000 pounds of produce for Open Door Food Pantry clients who live in a sea of food insecurity. Over the years, garden volunteers have included Bob Majors, MD, Ben Ferdon, MD, Paul Becherer, MD, Stan Wilkins, MD, Dean Leake, Charlie Smith, Ray Cheely, MD, Tom Eshelman, MD, and Sheppard McKenzie, III, MD among others.

Financial support for the garden is needed to pay the water bill, and purchase plants, seeds, compost, and wood chips among other expenses. Through November 2024 donations will be accepted to WCMS Alliance noting the donation designation for the Urban Ministries Garden.

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to Ginger Karb, Greater Greensboro Alliance member and winner of the NCMS Alliance membership contest. Those eligible for the prize had to renew their state membership by August 31. Ginger has asked to have her \$50 prize donated to her local Alliance.





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# SAVE THE DATE

## Annual Meeting 2025

The Queen City - Charlotte, North Carolina

**May 30 - June 01**



# ANNUAL MEETING

*North Carolina*

2025

