

# Tarheel Tandem



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

### NCMS Alliance

3739 National Drive, Suite 202  
Raleigh, NC 27612

Mailing Address:

PO Box 30939  
Raleigh, NC 27622

[www.ncmsalliance.org](http://www.ncmsalliance.org)

Phone: 919-573-1316

Fax: 919-787-4916

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## In This Issue

Centennial Celebration Details.....	2
Annual Meeting Highlights.....	3
North Carolina's Aging Population.....	5
Membership Contest Winner.....	5
County News .....	6

## President's Message

*By Meeti Nigam, NCMSA President; nigammeet@gmail.com*



Hello everyone,

I am Meeti Nigam. I am honored to serve you as the 2022-2023 president of NCMS Alliance. I have been a board member of the NCMS Alliance for

the last three years, since my husband and I moved to Charlotte from Virginia where I was very active with the Medical Society of Virginia Alliance and county Alliances for a long time in various positions.

My husband is a practicing anesthesiologist with Atrium Health, and for the last 34 years he has been busy. There were some stressful days as a physician's spouse and mother of three boys but my friendships through the Alliance gave me inspiration and energy to come out and meet with some amazing people.

My Alliance friends are those friends who understood why I participated in events and attended a few parties alone. They understood the loneliness of spending holidays without your other half and why we drove separately everywhere we went! We laughed at the craziness and supported each other through it all.

I was born in India, completed my bachelor's degree in science and master's in sociology.

I married a wonderful man who was working as a cardiothoracic anesthesiologist in Caen (Normandy area), France. After the wedding I moved and lived in France for 6 years, then moved to the U.S. in 1994 with our two older boys. My husband's medical career moved us to Augusta, Georgia in 1994, Boston in 1999, Danville, Virginia in 2002 and now Charlotte.

My oldest son, Manas Nigam, just completed his fellowship in hand reconstruction at Baylor College of Medicine after his plastic surgery residency and is now practicing plastic surgery with Sentara in Virginia Beach. He lives there with his wife, Komal and his four-year old daughter, Shreya.

My second oldest, Aradhya Nigam, just returned to his residency in surgery at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. after completing his research fellowship with Memorial Sloan-Kettering in New York City. He and his wife, Jackie, are newlyweds and live in Washington with their dog Hobbes. My youngest son was born in Boston and now is a junior pre-med/economics major at the University of Virginia.

As our children grew older, my involvement in Alliance leadership grew. The Alliance provided opportunities for personal growth that I would not have experienced elsewhere,

*continued on page 7*

# North Carolina Medical Society Alliance Celebrates 100 Years

By Kirby Sheridan, NCMSA Vice President for Program Development; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

The North Carolina Medical Society Alliance is proud to celebrate our centennial in April of 2023. For almost 100 years, the NCMSA has worked to meet health challenges of the citizens of North Carolina and improve our state's overall health. From fighting tuberculosis,



to mounting support for our service people during World War II to helping bring the polio vaccine to the people of our state, and on and on — NCMSA volunteers have logged hundreds of thousands of hours working to improve the health of their communities.

We hope you will join us as we celebrate our efforts and the positive impact the Alliance has had on our members. Our Centennial Celebration will take place Thursday, April 27, 2023 from 5:30-8:30pm at the Greensboro History Museum. The NCMSA annual meeting will follow on April 28. **A block of rooms has been reserved at the Greensboro Marriott Downtown for a limited time. If you would like a room please contact Barbara Lupton at bvlupton@gmail.com by November 30.**

Please look for upcoming details regarding the Centennial Celebration and Annual meeting to come. The NCMSA website will have the latest information, along with a series of articles highlighting our history by decade. We hope you will visit the site often.



## Share the Gift of Health by Supporting Community Outreach – NCMS Alliance Holiday Sharing Card 2022

**Share greetings and select the recipient of your donation of \$50 or more to the NCMS Alliance by November 20, 2022.**

The holiday season is right around corner. As the year comes to a close, we think back and consider how we can be helpful to our less fortunate community members. Why not simplify our busy lives and join hands of like-minded friends by participating in our Holiday Sharing Card project (<https://www.ncmsalliance.org/>).

Donors have the privilege of selecting the recipient of their donation from the provided list. Your selected nonprofit receives a donation; and Alliance members and donors receive an Alliance greeting card with your name listed.



Your greetings will be shared across the state's medical community. The non-denominational holiday greeting card lists the names of participating donors. Donors will receive a greeting card in the postal mail. Our Alliance database will receive an electronic greeting card.

As a tribute to our Centennial Celebration, the 2022 Holiday Sharing Card is raising funds to support several non-profits across the state, past recipients of NCMS Alliance donations including

- NC Association of Free and Charitable Clinics for diabetic health care in rural areas
- National Alliance on Mental Illness of North Carolina
- Poe Center for Health Education, Raleigh - Drugs Uncovered: What Parents Need to Know
- Mustard Seed Community Health, Greensboro

You may make your donation online at NCMS Alliance Donation Page (<https://www.ncmsalliance.org/Donate>) indicating your chosen recipient from the list provided OR mail your check, your name as you would like it displayed on the Sharing Card, and your selected recipient by **November 20, 2022** to: NCMS Alliance, 3739 National Drive, Suite 202, Raleigh, NC 27612.

Your charitable gifts will be greatly appreciated and are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law. The funds collected will be distributed by January 2023 to selected nonprofits. Thank you for considering this way of connecting with Alliance members and supporting community outreach.



# NCMSA Annual Meeting Held in Person in Greensboro

By Kirby Sheridan, NCMSA Vice President for Program Development; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

The NCMSA held its first in-person annual meeting in three years on May 17, 2022, at the Starmount Forest Country Club in Greensboro. Gina Becherer wrapped up a successful year as president, turning the position over to Meeti Nigam. Heather Rifkin, AMA Alliance President traveled from Mississippi to install Meeti and the rest of the 2022-2023 officers and board.



AMAA President Heather Rifkin installing Tia Opyd and Susan Hammer as members of the NCMSA Board of Directors.



Swati Patel

During the morning, attendees were welcomed by Swati Patel, Greater Greensboro Society of Medicine Alliance Co-president, heard from Chip Baggett, Executive Vice

President and CEO of the North Carolina Medical Society, Heather Rifkin, who gave an AMAA update, and Nancy Dixon, Surry Medical Ministries board president, who spoke to the group about the challenges facing a free medical clinic in a rural North Carolina county. Access to medical care in rural areas will continue to be the focus of the NCMSA in 2022-2023. During the Hubbard Memorial luncheon, author Sara Fleming, a Wake County



Heather Rifkin

Alliance member, spoke about her book, *Fitness Without Fear*, and simple strategies for adding more fitness efforts into your daily life.

The day before the meeting, on May 16, participants were given the chance to learn more about two nonprofits doing work in the Greensboro area who are supported by the Greater Greensboro Society of Medicine Alliance. Andrew Mails, Director and Campus Minister of the Spartan Open Pantry gave attendees an overview of their services and a tour of the pantry, highlighting ways in which the GGSMa has supported them. The Spartan Open Pantry offers meals and groceries, as well as counseling support and worship services to college students in Greensboro.



Andrew Mails, Heather Rifkin, Racheal Kunesh and Gay Bowman on tour of pantry.

Participants also toured the Mustard Seed Community Health Clinic where Dr. Beth Mulberry, Medical Director, spoke about the work they do there, introduced other staff members, and described the impact that the HbA1C machines and test supplies donations from the NCMSA have had on patients at the clinic. As an answer to AMA Alliance President Heather Rifkin's challenge to conduct book



Dr. Mulberry and staff member receiving books.

drives during her term, those attending the NCMSA Annual Meeting were asked to bring children's books as donations for the patients at the Mustard Seed and participants gladly complied. Mustard Seed pediatric patients can go home with a book after their visit.



It was good to meet in person, once again. The NCMSA thanks the Greater Greensboro Society of Medicine Alliance for their work to make our annual meeting a success.



Past presidents at annual meeting (l-r): Barb Savage, Beverly Wright, Gay Bowman, Kirby Sheridan, Susan Edens Hammer and Racheal Kunesh



Barb Savage welcomes Meeti Nigam as new president.

# Celebrating Physician Families: Scope Anesthesia Physician Family Summer Bash

By Meeti Nigam, NCMSA President; [nigammeeti@gmail.com](mailto:nigammeeti@gmail.com)

On August 6, 2022, I held a pool party for Scope Anesthesia physicians and their families as a way to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of our physicians and thank them on behalf of the NCMS Alliance. The NCMSA aims to promote physician connections with colleagues, friends and family.

Throughout this pandemic, I have witnessed the strength of our physicians pushing through in even the toughest of times. They have devoted themselves wholeheartedly to their work in the midst of unforeseen human crises, upholding the Hippocratic oath to care for people. Because of their dedication, when even one patient benefits with better health, the effects are felt throughout families and eventually throughout our society.



For the physicians showing up to make a positive difference in Charlotte, there is, no doubt, a family waiting a little longer for their physician spouse or parent to come home for dinner as that doctor takes care of patients in need of care. I understand the challenges our physicians face daily and my heart goes out to them.

On behalf of the NCMSA I wish our doctors the same reciprocity for the best of health and care that they wish upon their patients, their very own families and friends. We thank all physicians and their families and supporting pillars for helping them continue delivering life-saving care in the toughest of times. The summer bash was a day well-spent, enjoying the pool, good food and fellowship and expressing gratitude for our hard-working physicians.



## State Alliance Exhibits at NCMS LEAD Conference

By Sandra Pagano, NCMSA Vice President for Membership Development; [sandra612017@gmail.com](mailto:sandra612017@gmail.com)

It was a fun-filled weekend at the North Carolina Medical Society LEAD Conference, October 14-15, 2022, at the Marriott Crabtree in Raleigh.

Volunteers representing the NCMS Alliance participated in this event with an exhibit table displaying information about our mission, service through community support and programs, membership information, promotional handouts and copies of *The Tarheel Tandem* newsletter along with historical highlights from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.



Sandra Pagano, Barbara Savage, Vicky Elia and Shawn Scott

Volunteers at the exhibit representing the state Alliance were Barbara Savage, Gina Becherer, Vicky Elia, Sandra Pagano, and Zohra Osman. Many thanks to Susan Edens Hammer, NCMSA board member for building a relationship with the NCMS and also planning and organizing our exhibit so that we can continue to grow and connect with physician families.

## 99th Annual Fund Recognitions

### Donations

Laura Thompson

Sophie Wachter

Corrine Yip

Rachel Pace

Susan Shereff

Lillian Poole

Patricia Henson

Patsy Reames

Michelle Kroll

Linda-Lee Hanrahan

### In Honor of Doctor's Day 2022

**Dr. James Chester Alexander**  
Martha Bedell Alexander

**Dr. Benjamin Kunesh**  
Racheal Kunesh

**Dr. David James Sheridan**  
Kirby Sheridan

**Dr. Ken Karb**  
Ginger Karb

**Unspecified**  
Gina Becherer

**Unspecified**  
Barbara Lupton





# North Carolina a Top Ten State in Terms of Aging Population

By Gina Becherer, NCMSA Immediate Past President; gmbecherer@gmail.com

## Every Day in the United States 10,000 People Turn 65

The aging, baby-boomer generation is reframing the healthcare industry. While the youngest of the baby boomers (those born in 1946) turned 76 in 2022, the full impact on the healthcare system will not be felt until 2030 when the youngest of the baby-boomer generation (those born in 1964) will turn 65.



The baby boomer phenomenon did not sneak up on us. In 1965 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services established the Administration on Aging. A direct result of the Older Americans Act, the role

of the Administration on Aging (AOA) was to promote the well-being of older individuals by providing financial support for services and programs designed to help them live independently in their homes and communities. Since that time, the AOA has been a consistent source of funding for transportation services, adult day care, caregiver support, and health promotion and nutrition programs. Unfortunately, funding has not kept up with the demand.

## What Does the Aging Population Look Like for North Carolina?

Believe it or not North Carolina ranks eighth in the United States for residents over the age of 65. In 2020, one in six people were 65 and older. By 2028, one in five people will be 65 and older. The largest growth segment of those over 65 will be those reaching the age of 85 and beyond.

The North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) has created a task force with representatives from state and local government, healthcare, and community-based programs to identify policies and practices to make North Carolina a great place to grow older. The work of the taskforce will focus on four specific topics related to aging in the community setting – **social connections, falls prevention, food security, and mobility.**

At first glance, the areas of focus for the task force may seem odd choices; there is no mention of healthcare services. However, in

recent years it has become widely accepted that the social and economic conditions (social determinants of health) within our communities are often more important than the actual physical health of those who live in those communities. If there is lingering doubt, the COVID pandemic should have put it to rest.

When asked, most older adults prefer to “age-in-place”, to continue living in their own homes and communities, places that are familiar to them. In North Carolina, 97 percent of those over the age of 65 are living in households with one or more people. Of that, 43 percent live alone.

Other characteristics of the North Carolina aging population are further evidence that the focus of the NCIOM task force is on target:

- 35% have a disability
- 81% have one or more chronic diseases
- 12% reported having at least one fall and 19% reported 2 or more falls
- 8% self-reported their health is poor.

I will share the work of the task force as it progresses.

### Nationally, North Carolina ranks:

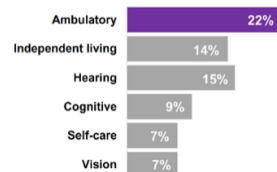
**9<sup>th</sup>** in total population

**8<sup>th</sup>** in population 65 and older



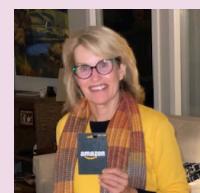
### Nearly one in four people 65 and older report trouble walking

#### Disability status among adults 65 and older



## Membership Contest Winner Announced

Congratulations to Carol Puente for winning the NCMSA membership contest for 2022! Carol, who is a Wake County and NCMS Alliance member, won a \$50 Amazon gift card. To be eligible for the membership contest, state dues must be paid by August 31 of that membership year. We thank Carol for her membership.



# County Alliance News

## Cabarrus Alliance Meets in Person Once Again

By Kirby Sheridan, CCMSA member and NCMSA board member; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

After several years and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cabarrus County Medical Society Alliance plans to meet in person once again. We will gather on November 17, 2022, at the home of Karen Byrd to socialize and catch up with fellow Alliance members and meet new members. One of our members, who supervises school nurses in the county's two school systems, will demonstrate the Welch Allyn spot screener vision screening device which allows for socially distanced and less labor-intensive vision screening and will enable us to commence vision screening in the elementary schools again. We look forward to gathering before the holidays.

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## Greensboro Alliance's 31st Annual Physician Social

By Tia Opyd, NCMSA board member and GGSMA Co-president; tiabrooks25@gmail.com

This year the Greater Greensboro Alliance was excited to partner with the Greater Greensboro Society of Medicine to organize the 31st Annual Physician & Associate Social, held on September 29, 2022. In the past this has been an annual anticipated event to help new physicians get acquainted with the Greensboro area medical community. This event is significant because it gives these hard-working professionals time to enjoy themselves and build relationships with one another outside of their usual work environment and, when applicable, introduce their spouses to the members of our Greensboro Alliance. In the past the soiree was known as the New Physicians Social but was renamed the Physician & Associate Social this year because organizers thought that it was important to use this time to show our appreciation for physicians, both new and experienced. The goal was to express how vital they have all been to our community in the pandemic, and to make up for social time lost during quarantine.

Postponed from 2019 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the beautifully organized social recommenced this year and was a great success. The Greensboro Alliance decided to provide name tags for guests, which ended up being a marvelous idea so that the new physicians could be easily recognized, and since the requirement



L-R: Tia Opyd, Harsha Mirchandani, Cathy Ingram, Swati Patel, Angela Olalere, Mary Truslow and Christy Outlaw.

of masks makes it hard to recognize other medical professionals outside of the work setting. Guests started the night on the roof of the barn at Summerfield Farms. The weather was

perfect, the drinks were flowing, hors d'oeuvres were at every turn, and a tranquil sunset painted the evening sky. This was only the beginning of the night. After sunset, the guests trickled down to the first floor of the barn at Summerfield farms, where they were met with great music from the Bridge Brothers and more delicious food catered by Greensboro restaurant 1618. Guests mingled, and then the Greensboro Society of Medicine introduced several of the new physicians. At the end of the night the GGSMA set up a table that provided information about Greensboro Alliance's upcoming events and answered questions for those interested in joining the Alliance. Overall, this was a night to remember, and a night to lookforward to next year.

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## Healthy Charlotte Launches Busy Fall Schedule

On October 12, 2022, Healthy Charlotte Alliance convened 130 Alliance members, nonprofit partners, healthcare professionals, educators and parents for the 2022 Community Health Classroom on the timely and critical topic, *Community Violence Prevention: A Public Health Crisis*.

Dr. David Jacobs, Atrium Health, and Dr. Sam Pullen, Novant Health, examined community violence as a disease and explored treatment and prevention strategies, as well as the impacts of mental health on community violence.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department school safety expert, Lt. Stephen Flatt, who manages school resource officers, presented information on a variety of school safety issues ranging from bullying, to criminal social media challenges, to targeted violence and threats. Lt. Flatt shared strategies and actions to prevent violence in our schools.

Despite focusing on the most sensitive and politically charged topics, participants maintained open minds and open hearts, empowered and emboldened to impact our community for better.

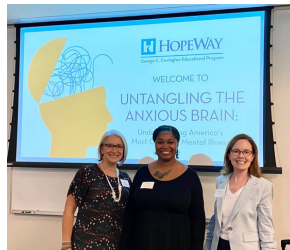
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## County Alliance News *continued from page 6*

We also gathered on September 15 where 47 members and general community members participated in an informative program on *Untangling the Anxious Brain*. Dr. Taren Coley, psychiatrist and Director of Outpatient Services at Hopeway, discussed the differences between anxiety, which is a normal, natural reaction to stress, having a starting point and an endpoint as compared to an anxiety disorder, which can include constant worry or an irrational fear, that's ongoing and interferes with daily life.

Music therapist, Kaitlin Wightman-Ausman, noted our tendencies to catastrophize situations, mentally jumping to the worst case scenario, and shared techniques to practice to better cope in situations of heightened anxiety.



We look forward to our next program – *Improving Sleep Quality and Sleep Health*, with Atrium Health Medical Director of Sleep Medicine, Douglas Kirsch, MD on November 9.

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## Wake County Meets to Plan for the Future

By Zohra Osman, WCMSA President;  
zohra.wcmsa@gmail.com

We started the year off with our Annual Welcome Coffee at the beautiful home of Marilu Thordsen. Unlike at past meetings, when we would present our calendar for the year, we had a brainstorming session instead. With the 'new normal' we wanted to know the present-day needs of the medical family for us to better serve and fulfill these needs. We thought we may need to realign our purpose to suit the changing landscape and to stay current and grow in the next decade. Many sound suggestions were made by members.



Deborah Meehan  
(seated) and Anna  
Hattaway



L-R: Dorothy Nance, Zohra Osman, Virginia Scanlan, Ginny McKay, Paige McLaurin, Karen Coates, Kathy Hayes and Marilu Thordsen

### Interest groups:

**SWAG - Service with an Attitude of Gratitude:** Since last winter, Alliance volunteers have been delivering Meals on Wheels once a month.

**KITS - Keeping in Touch Socially:** Notes of appreciation have been received by members of this interest group for the 'thinking of you' cards sent by them to long time members whom we may not see as frequently.

## President's Message *continued from page 1*

and gave me the confidence of having served as a leader in the Alliance. My interest and involvement in community events, public health and advocacy helped me grow in my role as an Alliance leader. I was lucky to serve on several boards and organize many events for the Alliance and community, including health fairs for the public and charity events for a shelter for the sufferers of domestic abuse. These leadership roles will help me this year with the challenging role of president for the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance.

As I have described from my own experiences, the Alliance supports the professional and personal goals of each one of our members. The Alliance provides opportunities for its members through community service projects, philanthropy, and educational programs. As we celebrate our centennial year, our mission and goals will continue to promote friendship and support medical families, community health and education, and promote sound health care legislation.

The focus of our work last year was to improve diabetic health among the uninsured, including a \$50,000 donation to support the North Carolina Association of Free and Charitable Clinics in the purchase of point-of-care HbA1C machines used in the diagnosis and screening of diabetes and prediabetes as well as to monitor blood sugar levels. These funds will also purchase supplies needed to run these tests. Fifteen clinics in rural counties in North Carolina were identified as a starting point. Our Alliance researched the interactive map on the NC Association of Free and Charitable Clinics website to find the clinics closest to you where you can volunteer as an individual or as a group. This year, we will continue our partnership with the NC Association of Free and Charitable Clinics to create positive change across our state.

Another big focus this coming year is to grow our membership to achieve our goal of community work, as COVID-19 slowed membership development the last two years. But our leadership is now focused on taking advantage of our ability to finally come together and meet in person.

The Alliance will continue to support county Alliances, provide leadership opportunities and offer grants for health-related programs.

I wish to work collaboratively with all of you and uncover partnerships to reach our potential. Share and explore your passion, and join us in leadership through the Alliance. Answer the call to be in this extraordinary group of community volunteers. We will develop lifelong friendships.

During this, our 100th NCMS Alliance year, I invite you to enjoy this ride with me as we work together to explore ways to support our medicine families, our state and communities.

**Alliance Book Club:** To the delight of members, the book club has met a couple times now in-person and is currently reading *The Forest of Vanishing Stars* by Kristin Harmel. In November we meet at the local independent bookstore, Quail Ridge Books, for our holiday tradition of hearing book recommendations by the staff.

In November we plan to visit the Governor's Mansion and then in December we look forward to our annual holiday luncheon.



## North Carolina Medical Society Holds Golden Stethoscope Awards Gala

*By Barb Savage, NCMS Alliance Past President; savageba0823@gmail.com*

After several years of virtual meetings, the NCMS LEAD Health Care Conference returned to its origins as an in-person event—a time to gather and celebrate with colleagues and friends and to learn more about the emerging issues that are impacting health care.



L-R: Pat Udekwa, Gina Becherer, Barb Savage, K Keener, Dorothy Nance and Marilu Thordsen

In true celebratory fashion, the North Carolina Medical Society honored its members this year with the inaugural Golden Stethoscope Awards Gala. The NCMS thought it only right that we celebrate all the health care heroes who made a huge impact on our state. Dr. Michael Utecht was honored for his service as NCMS president this year and Dr. Arthur Apolinario was installed as the 169th president.

The North Carolina Medical Society Alliance was a table sponsor at the gala. Those representing the Alliance at the table were Dr. and Mrs. Paul Becherer, Dr. and Mrs. Keith Keener, Dr. and Mrs. Osi Udekwa, Dr. Marilu Thordsen, Dorothy Nance and Barb Savage. After the reception, ceremonies, and awards, it was time to dance.



Barb Savage