

Tarheel Tandem



Volume 77 | Fall 2023

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President's Message

By Meeti Nigam, NCMSA President; nigammeeti@gmail.com



It is my honor to serve as NCMSA president during its 100th year. As we enter the last months of our Centennial Celebration, I am sharing excerpts from my remarks at our celebration event on April 27 in Greensboro. For those of you who could not join us, it was a fun evening and we missed you. You can take a visual journey through past years of the Alliance making a difference. Just visit our website and look for the Centennial Celebration section. See how far we've come!

Our work continues and you are an integral part. Thank you for your continued support. This is your Alliance, rooted in the past, branching into our future.

Centennial Celebration Remarks

Thank you all for your presence tonight as we celebrate the centennial of the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance. In its 100-year history, the NCMS Alliance has evolved from a female auxiliary social and advocacy group to a diverse membership organization that includes male and female spouses and partners of physicians and medical students, as well as physicians and medical students themselves.

The Alliance is proud of its rich legacy and is committed to honoring its past by building on the core principles on which it was founded: to support and provide resources for physician families and advocate for healthier communities in partnership with the North Carolina Medical Society.

The NCMS Alliance brings a unique understanding and perspective to the significant challenges faced by today's physician families. The NCMS Alliance continues to build a thriving, growing, friendly, and strong organization that connects physician families for healthier communities. Our goal is to be a recognized leader in community health education resources and advocacy. If anything good has emerged from the global pandemic, it could be that we've all rediscovered the vital importance of WORKING TOGETHER within the practice of medicine and delivery of health care; working together to provide support and hope to others.



Centennial Celebration: An Evening of Remembering and Looking Ahead

By Kirby Sheridan, Centennial Celebration Chair; kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

The North Carolina Medical Society Alliance Centennial Celebration, held April 27 at the Greensboro History Museum brought together people from across the state and the country to honor the vision and accomplishments of the Alliance. It was a festive atmosphere as old friends greeted each other, executive directors were honored, and sponsors and North Carolina Medical Society staff members Chip Baggett, Pam Highsmith, Michelle Laws, and Shawn Scott attended in a show of support. Guests perused memorabilia displayed around the room while a DJ played fun tunes and attendees enjoyed food and drink from Pepper Moon Catering.

Highlights of the evening included remarks from current NCMSA president, Meeti Nigam (Mecklenburg County), Connie Parker, NCMSA past president (New Hanover County), Racheal Kunesch, AMA Alliance president-elect and NCMSA past president (Cabarrus County), and Jacqueline Nguyen Lee, then AMA Alliance president from Las Vegas. The night's ceremony ended with a toast from Chip Baggett, NCMS CEO, honoring the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance, our history and continued success. Connie Parker, as past president and attendee with the longest continuous NCMSA membership, received the toast.

I want to thank the members of the Centennial Celebration committee, a dream team of leaders who worked together to develop a vision of what our Centennial Celebration would look like and then worked efficiently to make that vision happen. I am grateful for their leadership, commitment, and guidance. Centennial Celebration committee members and their counties are:

Gay Bowman, Guilford
Ann Faris, Forsyth
Deborah Harrell Meehan, Wake
Susan Edens Hammer, Wake
Racheal Kunesch, Cabarrus
Barbara Lupton, Guilford
Carolyn Niemeyer, Gaston
Meeti Nigam, Mecklenburg
Rachel Pace, New Hanover
Sandra Pagano, Mecklenburg
Connie Parker, New Hanover
Barbara Savage, Wake
Pat Udekwu, Wake
Beverly Wright, Guilford



A special thank you to Cathy Ingram (Guilford) for her help publicizing the centennial and to Zohra Osman (Wake), who dedicated many hours to pursuing the proclamation from Governor Roy Cooper acknowledging our centennial. Many thanks, also, to Susan Hammer for her numerous hours of work on our Centennial Celebration project, especially chairing the sponsorship efforts and helping to organize and catalog the many items of NCMSA memorabilia in storage.

The NCMSA has much to be proud of in its 100-year history. Let us continue this momentum into the next century.



Scenes from the Centennial Celebration



Scenes from the Centennial Celebration



Editor's Note

As Centennial Celebration Chair, I spent time combing through the NC State Archives and NCMSA storage rooms looking for memorabilia to compile the historical highlights and augment the Centennial Celebration. I am in awe of what those Auxiliary and Alliance members before us accomplished. Reading in detail about the vision and accomplishments of Auxiliary and later Alliance members reinforced to me the value of the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance, and medical society Alliances in general. The Alliance advocates for and supports physician families. We are a vehicle to harness effort and talent to address health-related issues in the state. We monitor legislative affairs and health trends, all with a focus to improve the health of the citizens of North Carolina. Physicians and their families need advocates. The people of North Carolina need advocates to improve quality of life. Join the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance and become part of these efforts. Bring your energy and volunteer to join or lead a committee. Ask how you can help.

Kirby Pfeiffer Sheridan, VP for Program Development; Editor, Tarheel Tandem

Thank You to Our Centennial Sponsors

The North Carolina Medical Society Alliance thanks the following for sponsoring our Centennial Celebration.

We appreciate your support of our 100th anniversary and our mission to improve the health of the people of North Carolina.

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Deborah Harrell Meehan
(Past President 2015-2016)
Mona and Manoj Nigam

Donations

Cabarrus County Medical Society
Alliance
Ben and Racheal Kunesch
Rose Ameen
Carolyn Green
Duilla Harkins
Sheila Josilevich
Julie Newman

Annual Meeting Draws Many Past Presidents

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

Our 100th annual meeting, a special milestone for the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance, brought together seventeen past NCMSA presidents, fifteen at the Hubbard Memorial luncheon.

The meeting was held at the Starmount Forest Country Club in Greensboro. Morning speakers included Joseph P. Jordan, PhD, CEO of the NC Professionals Health Program, who discussed the services offered to medical health professionals who are dealing with substance use disorders and other conditions that could impair their ability to safely provide care for their patients. These services allow physicians to be treated successfully and then continue to practice, without stigma when they renew their licenses. Racheal Kunesch, past NCMSA president and then president-elect of the AMA Alliance also spoke at the morning session, updating attendees on the AMA Alliance's plans moving into its next 100 years.

Wiley Cash, *New York Times* best-selling author and North Carolinian, was the Hubbard Memorial lecturer at the Hubbard Luncheon. The audience enjoyed his descriptions of his writing process and how his experiences in North Carolina, growing up in Gastonia for example, shaped his writing. Thanks to members of the Greater Greensboro Alliance for their help in planning the annual meeting and to Connie Parker, for securing Wiley Cash as our Hubbard Lecturer.



NCMSA past presidents at the Hubbard Luncheon. Seated, Martha Martinat (1976-77), Standing, left to right: Racheal Kunesch (2010-11), Meeti Nigam (current president), Susan Edens Hammer (2003-04), Rene Kikel (2013-14), Connie Parker (1991-92), Julie Newman (2006-08), Beverly Wright (2008-09), Deborah Harrell Meehan (2015-16), Gay Bowman (1993-94), Anne Kahn (2009-10), Ann Siva (1996-97), Carolyn Niemeyer (1988-89), Mary Frances Forrester (1995-96), Kirby Sheridan (2017-18)

(Barbara Savage (2019-21) and Ann Faris (1992-93, 2005-06) attended the Centennial Celebration the evening before, but were unable to attend the annual meeting.)



Racheal Kunesch



Wiley Cash and Meeti Nigam



Left to right: Martha Martinet, Ann Siva, Carolyn Niemeyer, Mary Frances Forrester



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Alliance Southern Region Meeting

Featured Speaker:

DOREEN STEENLAND

Mental Fitness for Medical Professionals and Their Spouses



In recognition of the women from Wake County who served as president of the North Carolina Medical Society Alliance during its 100 years

Lucy Eldridge, 1935-36
Melissa Smith, 1941-42
Shirley Fox, 1954-55
Helen Hitch, 1960-61
Ursula Wilkinson, 1962-63
Ruby Byrum, 1971-72

Susan Hammer, 2003-04
Julie Newman, 2006-08
Patricia Udekwa, 2011-12
Deborah Meehan, 2015-16
Barbara Savage, 2019-21
Gina Becherer, 2021-22

NCMSA Participates in NCMS LEAD Conference and Gala

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

Members of the Wake County Alliance Board of Directors created a beautiful display table for the NCMS Alliance at the North Carolina Medical Society LEAD Conference and Golden Stethoscope Gala in Greensboro. Designed to attract attendees' attention and highlight the work of the NCMSA, the display served as the launch of the Let's Walk Together campaign (*see below*), an effort to support health advocacy efforts through participation in organized or impromptu walks around the state while building connection among members of the physician family community. Those who stopped by picked up water bottles labeled with the NCMSA logo and website address.

The table was staffed by NCMSA members, most from Wake County, as well as AMAA President and NCMSA past president Racheal Kunesch and NCMSA Executive Director, Vicky Elias. Attendees were enticed to learn more about and join the NCMSA. Two beautiful baskets were raffled during the event. Winners of the baskets were Tracy Eskra and Ayorah Pharanibota.



Dr. Osi Udekwa, NCMSA past president Pat Udekwa, AMA Alliance president and NCMSA past president Racheal Kunesch and Dr. Ben Kunesch at the Golden Stethoscope Gala.



Tracy Eskra, winner of the Wellness/Exercise Basket

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LEAD

HEALTH CARE CONFERENCE



Dr. Marilu Thordsen at the NCMSA table at the LEAD conference

The NCMS Alliance Kicks Off ... Let's Walk Together

We invite you to walk and connect – building friendships.

Let's walk and connect with each other making friends along the way. If the location allows, bring your family along.

We will be walking in parks and at museums, as well as forming teams for organized charity walks.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

- **Check our website www.ncmsalliance.org for recent walks.**
 - Triangle area: Our team name is NCMSA - WCMSA - W5
 - Greensboro area: Our team name is NCMSA - GGMSA
- **N.C. Down Syndrome Alliance Triangle Buddy Walk – October 22**
View the team page at: <https://bit.ly/3QuaV5G>
- **American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Greensboro – October 21**
View the team page at: <https://bit.ly/46TtEgs>

Grassroots Generosity and Community Action are Powerful Forces

GivingTuesday was created as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. This idea has grown into a global movement that inspires people to give to nonprofit organizations working to improve our world, our country and our communities.

With so much attention given to what divides us, generosity brings people together across races, faiths, and political views. Even in times of economic uncertainty, we each have a deep reserve of generosity. There are so many ways to make a difference.



November 28, 2023

Please consider donating to the NCMSA Health Education Opportunity Fund so that we may continue to support the health of our NC communities. Look for the **GivingTuesday 2023** option under Donate on the NCMSA website.

Membership Drawing Winner

Those joining the NCMS Alliance by August 31 were entered into a random drawing for a \$50.00 Amazon gift card. This year's winner is Trudy Krege from the Greater Greensboro Alliance. Trudy is a local, state and national Alliance member. Congratulations, Trudy!



Health Education Opportunity Fund Donations

Donations

Leigh Bruner

Mary Frances Forrester

Linda-Lee Hanrahan

Karen Harper

Kathy O'Brien

Patsy Reames

Susan Shereff



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Share the Gift of Health by Supporting Community Outreach – NCMS Alliance Holiday Sharing Card 2023

Share greetings by donating to the Health Education Opportunity Fund of \$50 or more to the NCMS Alliance.

The holiday season is approaching, and we would love to welcome you to participate in our Holiday Sharing Card Project. Last year the Alliance began a new tradition gathering donations for this project and raised funds to support several nonprofits across the state. This year we are excited to announce the donations will support the Health Education Opportunity Fund! By donating, you will help assure the success of programs to build effective public and private partnerships. This will undoubtedly effect positive change across our state.

NCMS Alliance is a charitable volunteer organization of physicians' spouses and physicians dedicated to building healthy communities and supporting the family of medicine. Your tax-deductible donation will

help the NCMS Alliance make their strong representation in the family of medicine, local communities, and our current focus of rural healthcare needs across North Carolina through partnerships and grants. In recent years, we partnered with the N.C. Association of Free and Charitable Clinics and the Poe Center of Health Education. Our health-related grants assist county Alliances with their projects and local community needs.

Donors will receive a personalized Holiday Sharing Card, which will be distributed electronically across the state's medical community. Donations can be made online at NCMS Alliance Donation Page or mail your check with your name as you would like it displayed on the Sharing Card by November 30, 2023. Address: NCMS Alliance, 3739 National Drive, Suite 202, Raleigh, N.C. 27612

Sharing is Caring and your charitable gift will make a difference!

Kunesh is New AMA Alliance President

Rachael Kunesh being installed as the 2023-24 AMA Alliance president by Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld, AMA president on June 4 in Nashville. Looking on are Rachael's husband, Dr. Ben Kunesh and her sons Isaac (left) and Adam (right).



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County News

Cabarrus County

By Kirby Sheridan, CCMSA Past President and NCMSA Board Member;
kirbypsheridan@gmail.com

The Cabarrus County Medical Society Alliance is proud of Racheal Kunesh, one of our own, who is serving as AMA Alliance President for 2023-24. CCMSA members, along with other North Carolina Alliance members worked to plan an inauguration celebration at the AMA Alliance annual meeting in Nashville on



Saturday, June 4. The party, "Barbecue and Blue Jeans," featured Martin's Barbecue and bluegrass music from the band, Wolfpack, with cardiologist Dr. Thomas "TJ" Johnston on bass. Carolina-blue checkered tablecloths and centerpieces highlighting North Carolina traditions decorated the tables. Guests assembled 300 mental health kits for middle schoolers in the Nashville area as a service to the community.



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Healthy Charlotte Alliance

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

We have been busy over the summer and into the fall as our members learn more about health services in Mecklenburg County and how we can help.

Mitchell's House

On June 14, members were inspired while learning more about the impactful services offered by Mitchell's House, which provides therapy services for children diagnosed with a terminal illness and their parents and siblings. Members toured the bright and beautiful playrooms used for counseling and participated in an art therapy activity.



Dilworth Center Site Visit

Members participated in an informative site visit with grant recipient, Dilworth Center on August 23. Dilworth Center's experienced team has supported more than 15,000 individuals suffering from alcoholism and substance use disorder, unlocking their recovery! With outpatient treatment programs offered in the evenings and weekends, patients and their families are able to maintain their home, school, and work routine while working their individualized treatment plan.



Camino Tour

On September 12 members participated in a site visit at Camino, touring the health clinic, food pantry ("The Food Farmacy"), thrift store, soccer pitch, and Camino Vida, which provides one-on-one coaching and support to clinic patients with a chronic disease to help them



manage symptoms through lifestyle changes. Camino Vida helps participants establish consistent exercise routines and plan nutritional meals that fit



continued on page 11

their cultural needs. Camino Contigo provides behavioral health and substance use disorder support as well as social navigation services to connect clients to community partners based on their specific needs. Camino Arriba works with individuals to overcome barriers to employment, including language and literacy, and resume writing, then partners with employers to recruit, train and hire.



Yoga Program

Members gathered for an Intro to Mindfulness and Yoga for Stress Reduction on September 28. We stretched, we breathed, we moved, we meditated! Through a high-level introduction to yoga with the amazing Suzanne Bergen, we learned wonderful techniques for stress reduction and managing anxiety.

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Greater Greensboro Alliance

By Swati Patel, GGMSA Past President and NCMSA Board Member; swatijay@gmail.com

Our Alliance has a team scheduled to walk in the Make Strides Against Breast Cancer walk on October 21 in Greensboro. On October 24, members will also attend the annual dinner in support of the free medical clinic, The Mustard Seed, which our Alliance has supported for many years. Titled, How Long We Live Shouldn't Depend on Our Zipcode, the dinner will include a community discussion moderated by NPR station, WFDD. We know that life expectancy is 10 years shorter in east Greensboro than in west Greensboro. The question is, what can we do about it?



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Wake County

By Zohra Osman, WCMSA President and NCMSA Board Member; medicalalliancewakecounty@gmail.com

You know it takes a village, right?

However, Wake County for several reasons has not yet had a kickoff for the year. With so many of us having retreated into our homes for many reasons and others who have such packed schedules it has become difficult to fit in time to get together and connect or reconnect. However, folks tell me they really want and miss the connection. Together we hope to rebuild our village.

So we are inviting our members to connect by walking together and help make our village strong. Our focus this year is Connecting and Living Healthy—mentally and physically!

We are inviting our members and you. If you are visiting Raleigh or the Triangle, please contact one of us to walk together and connect. Whether it is an organized walk or you are visiting the NC State Fair, Bridal Expo or the many parks and museums in Raleigh, connect with us. We can walk together or have a bottle of water or a cup of coffee together and build friendships and make a difference.

In supporting our state Alliance initiative of Let's Walk Together we will walk in The Triangle Buddy® walk to support the North Carolina Down Syndrome Alliance on October 22, 2023. Our Team is NCMSA-WCMSA-W5.

Our book club is going strong and meets monthly. See more below. Our service group SWAG does the monthly Meals on Wheels delivery and hopes to do more with Meals on Wheels with our past president, Deb Meehan now serving on the board of MOW.

Wishing you all a year of connections and reconnections.

Remember the story of the Sequoia trees—not deep roots but strong interlaced lateral roots make a strong lasting connection.

Fun at the Beach

To celebrate the end of the 2022-23 WCMS Alliance Book Club year, members enjoyed an overnight getaway to the North Carolina coast in May with a slumber party, easy conversation, great food and walks on the beach.



Our book list this past year included *All the Devils are Here*, *The Forest of Vanishing Stars*, *The Last House on the Street*, *The Personal Librarian*, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, *French Braid*, *West with Giraffes* and *Lessons in Chemistry*.

The 2023-24 Alliance Book Club year began in September with a meeting to choose the books and meeting locations. Thanks to our Book Club Contact Kathy Chiulli for helping us get organized every year!



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NC Hosts AMA Alliance Board Retreat in Davidson

In August, near the start of her year as national president, Racheal Kunesh held an AMA Alliance Board of Directors retreat in Davidson, NC where board members got acquainted and worked on year two of the current strategic plan. Finding our way out of an escape room was a good way to get to know each other and learn cooperation! It was a well-planned and productive weekend in beautiful Davidson.



2023-24 AMA Alliance Board Members by the shores of Lake Norman. L-R: Jacqueline Nguyen Lee, NV; Kirby Sheridan, NC; Julie Newman, MD, formerly NC; Dinah Goldenberg, NV; Nancy Fody, MI; Racheal Kunesh, NC; Ron Jagers, SC; Libby White, TX; Rick Knapp, OK; Pat Klettke, UT

A Word from Racheal Kunesh, AMA Alliance President and NCMS Alliance Past President

Are you a cleaver or a magnet? Local journalist Tommy Tomlinson discussed this on our public radio station here in the Charlotte area one morning during my drive to work—and this question has stuck with me.



In his “On My Mind” commentary, he states “Cleavers make a name for themselves by driving people apart and pitting one side against another. Magnets try to bring people together around common values and goals.” He paid tribute to Sarah Stevenson, the first Black woman to serve on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board and the leader of the Tuesday Morning Breakfast Forum. Tommy describes how Sarah could turn potentially divisive debate into more civil discourse with a quiet strength and giving heart. She drew people together rather than throwing up a divide and pitting them against each other. As you reflect on your own interactions and organizations, I encourage you to be a magnet in a time of cleavers.