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Association of VA Audiologists

3rd Quarter

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## President's message:

As I end my term as your AVAA president, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on what a great year we as an organization have had. Throughout my time as president one of my key areas of focus was on collaboration with our sister organizations. I have been working with both ASHA and AAA particularly in the area of government relations. Christine Ulinski, the incoming president, is our liaison to ADA. The strong relationships we have established with these organizations was of particular help to us at a time when we were in need of their assistance spreading the word about the high level of care that we as VA Audiologists are able to provide. I know that the board will continue to work diligently to maintain these positive partnerships.

The AVAA board worked hard this year to represent and promote VA Audiology on the local, state, and national level. It is an honor to work with a group of individuals that possess such a strong commitment to the advancement of AVAA's professional standing within the field of audiology. Members of the AVAA board attended the Audiology Organizations Reimbursement and Coding meeting at ASHA in November with AAA, ASHA, ADA, DoD, HCE and others. This group continues to meet monthly to address the coding needs for all of audiology. AVAA members promoted VA audiology at the National level by presenting 3 hours at AAA re: C&Ps, Choice and Health technicians. Our MAL presented at the American Geriatric Society conference this spring. At the state level, Members of the board were asked to speak at state audiology association conferences as well as lecture to the local Au.D. programs. They presented on the topics of Tele-Audiology in the VA, Health technicians and Choice.

I encourage all audiologists to be advocates for our profession. It is vital that we continue to educate others on the importance of hearing healthcare and demonstrate why we are the gold standard as the primary providers for hearing and balance disorders. We must remember while our role as a VA audiologist might differ than those of audiologists in the private sector, we are one profession. We will continue to stand together with our sister organizations and through these partnerships we can make a real difference in the field. Education and advocacy begins with each one of us. It is crucial we continue to volunteer, get involved be it nationally, regionally, locally and even just within your VA.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve AVAA and audiology. It has been my honor.

*R. Hope Gillison, Au.D*



## Meet your new board members

### President-Elect:

Dr. JR McCoy is an Advanced Practice Audiologist in the Central Arkansas Veteran's Healthcare System where he has worked since 2003. Prior to this he worked in private practices and state government in California. His undergraduate degree is from the University of Oklahoma, his master's degree from the University of Kansas, and Au.D. from the University of Florida. Since 2004 he has taught classes in aural rehabilitation, professional issues and vestibular diagnostics and rehabilitation at the University of Arkansas for the Medical Sciences/ University of Arkansas- Little Rock's Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) program. He has published in the area of vestibular evaluation which is his primary clinical interest. He is a native of St. Louis, MO but currently calls Hot Springs National Park, AR home.

Dr. McCoy has been a board member of both the California Academy of Audiology and the Arkansas Academy of Audiology as well as active in national organizations. He is eager to bring his experience and passion for advocacy of the profession to the AVAA board.

### Secretary:

Dr. Anna Black is the TeleAudiology program manager for the San Francisco VA Healthcare system and manages the Pacific Islands Community Care/Choice hearing aid orders. She has been an audiologist with the VA since the beginning of her career. She completed her externship at the Washington D.C. VA and her first position as a VA Audiologist was at the Livermore CBOC under the Palo Alto System. In 2013 she transferred to the San Francisco VA.

From the very start she has been committed to the success of her clinic as well as the growth of our profession. Anna demonstrates initiative in creating opportunities for access to care through her TeleAudiology and choice work. She is committed to the growth of our profession both within the VA and outside, and is an advocate for connected care. She will be an excellent addition to the board and will provide a forward thinking perspective which is the direction we as professionals always need to be moving

The AVAA board would like to say thank you to the Past President, Denise Goforth, Au.D., and the Secretary, Erica Dombrowsky, Au.D., as they complete their terms on the board. We appreciate all your hard work and dedication to the growth of our organization.

## Spotlight on: Scott Forbes, Au.D., Receipt of the first Robert Pluta Distinguished Service Award

The JDVAA board awarded the first Robert Pluta Distinguished Service Award at this year's Joint Defense VA Audiology Conference. This reward was created in honor of Major Robert S. Pluta and is presented to an audiologist who has demonstrated outstanding service to both the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs in support of the audiology and/or hearing conservation professions. Candidates for this award have made significant contributions to the field while seamlessly crossing between the Tri-Service and Veteran domains.

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Forbes, Au.D. was selected as the recipient of this award for his outstanding contributions to both Military and VA Audiology.

Dr. Forbes recently completed his 28th year of military service and his 19th year of service as a VA clinical audiologist. His military career began when he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps following high school. That initial enlistment included six years of active duty with combat deployments to Desert Shield/Desert Storm and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. Following his release from active duty service, Scott enrolled as a student at Louisiana State University. While completing his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Audiology at LSU, he continued to serve in the Marine Corps Reserve as a platoon leader in a heavy weapons company. Dr. Forbes completed a paid traineeship at the New Orleans VA Medical Center during his final year of graduate school and upon graduation he accepted a permanent position with the Michael E. DeBakey VAMC in Houston.

Following completion of his clinical fellowship year, Dr. Forbes was commissioned in the U.S. Army Reserve. He has twice been mobilized to active duty as an Army Audiologist and Hearing Conservation Officer in support of the Global War on Terror; first to Fort Hood, Texas (2003-2004) and then to Fort Knox, Kentucky (2006-2007). In addition to his assignments as an Audiologist, he completed assignments as a company commander, a battalion operations officer and as a command and control observer-trainer. In his current assignment, Lieutenant Colonel Forbes serves as the Army Reserve Audiology Staff Officer to the Army Surgeon General. His work in this role supports the development and implementation of strategic Army Audiology and Army Hearing Program Policy. Additionally, he supervises the selection of Army Reserve audiology officer candidates, develops reserve component audiology and hearing conservation staffing models and training materials, and evaluates and implements initiatives and strategies for system-wide hearing conservation compliance for the U.S. Army Reserve Command.

Dr. Forbes has made numerous contributions to VA and DoD Audiology. He is a past president of the Association of VA Audiologists and a former Vice President of the Joint Defense Veterans Audiology Association. He has been a strong advocate for collaboration between VA and DoD Audiology and has demonstrated that commitment through his many years of volunteer work with the Joint Defense Veterans Audiology Conference, having ultimately served as conference education chair and conference program chair in past years. Dr. Forbes was an important contributor to the early work of the DoD Hearing Center of Excellence. He provided ongoing technical consultation to HCE leadership concerning VA hearing loss and tinnitus disability issues and DoD Separation Health Assessment evaluations, edited the HCE's clinical education online resource site and assisted in the implementation of the HCE's Comprehensive Hearing Health Program in VA clinical settings. Dr. Forbes currently serves as a VA advisor to the HCE's Joint Hearing and Auditory Systems Injury Registry.

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Dr. Forbes has also made meaningful contributions to VA Audiology through his participation in numerous committees and working groups. He currently serves as a member of the national hearing aid contract technical team. This group is responsible for defining criteria and writing the national hearing aid contract, as well as evaluating and approving all devices considered for contract inclusion. Dr. Forbes currently serves as Secretary of the Southeast Region Audiology Professional Standards Board, is a member of the Audiology Health Tech Education Working Group and is a VA Manager for DOEHRSHC. He was also a member of the VA working group that developed current best practice recommendations for tinnitus management. Dr. Forbes was also recently appointed to the Field Advisory Council.

Lieutenant Colonel Forbes and his wife Kellie reside in Kingwood, Texas. They are the parents of four sons: Jacob, Caleb, Adam and Daniel and recently became grandparents with the birth and adoption of their granddaughter, Liliana.

In regards to receiving the Pluta award, Dr. Forbes stated *“I was both honored and touched to receive this award. Rob was a friend, which makes this all the more special. When you listen to people who knew Rob speak about the kind of person he was, you will consistently hear words such cheerful, kind, selfless and humble. Rob had many talents, was always willing to use them to help others, and never wanted any credit or attention for his efforts. Rob lived his life serving others and it’s appropriate that we remember him by honoring that legacy.”*

