

MCREA

Montgomery County Retired Employees' Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 73 • Rockville, Maryland • 20848-0073

YOUR VOICE IN ROCKVILLE

September 2007

MCREA's 30th ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting was held on Wednesday, June 6 in the Council Office Building in Rockville. The meeting began with a warm welcome to a room crowded with retirees. Art Spengler was recognized and thanked for his six years of service on the Board of Investment Trustees representing retirees.

Belinda Fulco, Benefits Manager, Office of Human Resources, reported on several items. First, she said that Eric Wallmark, who usually attends our annual meeting, is temporarily working on a county-wide computer project with the goal of one computer system that will link every system in the county government.

She mentioned that CareFirst, Kaiser and Optimum Choice had all responded to the inter-agency request-for-proposals to continue administering our medical insurance plans.

Of special concern to some retirees was a decrease in their monthly pension amounts and an increase in their medical insurance costs. Belinda apologized for not notifying the affected retirees of this change. She said that Human Resources (OHR) realized that there was an error in the split-rate health insurance premium being charged to individuals where one family member had Medicare as their primary insurance and the other member did not. The change was identified in the Transfer Season packet indicating that on January 1 of 2007, rates would change. However, the cost change did not happen for five months. When the cost error was fixed, OHR could not figure out who was affected. So, some retirees were shocked when their pension checks decreased without any warning. Those retirees were not charged the cost difference because it was OHR's fault.

During the Business portion of the meeting, the Association's Treasurer, Bob Wolpert, compared last years funds to this years and stated that all checks received were deposited and all bills had been paid. President Suzanne Hudson gave her report highlighting some of the past years activities: four newsletters were published, Carol

Maryman, Editor; annual County Council luncheon; refunding of over-paid dues; updating of the membership data base and transition to the new Data Base Manager, Margaret Knill Spengler. Under New Business, a retiree asked if we would look into joining the school systems retirees who offer travel opportunities. Another retiree asked about long-term care insurance and the information that MCREA had provided. Retirees were encouraged to seek information from AARP and look for seminars on the issue.

BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS

Current Board Members standing for re-election for two-year terms were: *Carl B. Edelin, Jr., Albert Gruber, Margaret Knill Spengler, Carol Maryman, Bill Mitchell, Clara Shipe and Pat Scissors*. There were three Presidential appointments for one-year terms: Marilyn Mitchell, Bob Wolpert and Joe Sparacino. All were unanimously approved.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO YOUR HEALTH COVERAGE WHEN YOU MOVE OUT OF THE CAREFIRST AREA

The out-of-area plan is as similar to the in-area plan as OHR can offer. Before the County contracted the out-of-area plan with Blue Cross, the only benefits available to retirees out of the area were the out-of-network part of the Point-of-Service Plan. The out-of-area plan in place is an off the shelf product offered by Blue Cross which is their national PPO plan. Unfortunately, we are not able to tweak or customize that plan. However, the coverage is very similar, and the retirees have been happy with it, especially those who formerly only had out-of-network coverage where they lived.

In cooperation with the Public School system, the County requested competitive bids for medical and prescription plans earlier this year. In addition, OHR intends to look at various disease management programs as well as wellness programs offered by the medical plans.

HOW MEDICARE AFFECTS INSURANCE COSTS FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Question - Since spouses are now separated for health insurance selection, are there any efforts to separate the payments for the individual cost of spouses when one of them becomes 65 years old and Medicare is the primary insurance?

The County provides some cost allowance when one spouse is Medicare and the other is not. On the issue of the spouses, the County has separated them out for coverage purposes. The County utilizes a set of business rule programming to isolate those situations where the retiree has one Medicare designation and their spouse has another. In those cases, OHR is able to direct the cost to a table in its system that contains a hybrid rate that is part Medicare and part non-Medicare.

RETIREMENT PLANNING & INVESTMENT SEMINARS

CitiStreet is offering a series of free retirement planning and investing seminars. Topics include Pre-Retirement Planning, Investing for Retirement Overview, and

Enhancements to your Plan's web site. To register, contact Steve Wright, CitiStreet's representative, @ 240.777.5054.

RIDE WITH US - RIDE ON BUS

Bus fare for seniors (65 years and older) and persons with disabilities is free on Ride On and Metrobus Monday through Friday 9:30 am - 3 pm. Rush hour fare is 60 cents with a valid Metro Senior ID Card [or](#) a valid Medicare card and photo identification. Ride On's fare is now consistent with that of Metrobus and makes your transit travel easier and less costly. All buses are wheelchair accessible. For fare and schedule information call 240-777-7433. *Look more for news about Ride On fares in January 2008.*

FROM OUR MEMBERS. . .

We always appreciate hearing from our members. Here're a few recent notes received by MCREA.

Ray D. Absher, retiree, wrote a letter recommending his dentist who is in the network for United Concordia. The dentist is Dr. H. David Allick, White Flint Dental Association, 11125 Rockville Pike, Suite 204, N. Bethesda. Ph: 301.881.6666

Mitilda Pecoraro writes about the cost of prescription drugs. For those retirees with indemnity coverage, remember to use your **Caremark discount drug card** for all your prescriptions. In Montgomery County, there is the County's discount drug plan. Check both plans for the lowest cost. The difference occurs with the indemnity portion of the CareFirst plan - you can use the Caremark discount card, **and then claim your drug charges at year end for reimbursement from them based on your cost sharing**

COUNTY LAUNCHES WEBSITE TO HELP OLDER ADULTS FIND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

Online Resource Launched During Active Aging Week - Montgomery County has teamed up with the National Council on the Aging to create an online resource guide listing more than 70 local physical activity programs. The website, found at www.activeoptions.org, is searchable by zip code and type of activity. For more information go to:

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/press/PR_details.asp?PrID=3909

FLU SEASON IS HERE – REMINDER – GET YOUR FLU SHOT

Vaccine supplies are plentiful this year so remember to get your flu shot early and protect yourself against this year's flu strain.

OPEN HEALTH INSURANCE ENROLLMENT BEGINS OCTOBER 22ND.

Mark your Calendars! Open Enrollment starts **Monday, October 22nd and ends at 5pm Tuesday, November 13th** – Please read the materials mailed to your home carefully. If you do not plan on making any changes, you do not have to return the form. There are changes for the 2008 plan year. See page 6 for details.

CATASTROPHIC HEALTH INSURANCE

If you are interested in applying for this insurance which available from Blue Cross Blue Shield, call 1-800-544-8703 for an application. You may apply for this coverage if you are under 65 years of age.

REMEMBER TO UPDATE YOUR BENEFICIARIES

Please keep your address and beneficiary forms current with OHR. If you need the forms to update your address (Personal Data Form) or your beneficiaries, please go to the Resource Library at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/ohr/ResourceLibrary/RLMain.cfm> click on the Benefits tab and the forms can be found under Benefits Forms link. Or, call OHR for the forms.

Also, remember to update beneficiary information for any IRAs, insurance policies, various individual saving plans, and other important financial documents.

If your personal circumstances have changed, remember to update your will, power of attorney(s) and/or Advance Directives.

REMEMBERANCES AND CONDOLENCES

Richard J. Ferrara – Our dear friend, former colleague, and Director of the Department of Housing & Community Development passed away last month. Rick had Alzheimer's disease.

MCREA WEBSITE

MCREA is having its website redesigned and updated. By October, go to MCREA.net, take a look, and let us know what you think. We hope you like what you see and find the site easy to navigate.

SEND A CARD TO OUR TROOPS

XEROX is offering a great public service. Go to this web site, www.LetsSayThanks.com and pick out a thank you card. Xerox will print it, and send the card to a soldier currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to a member of the armed services. How AMAZING it would be if we could get everyone we know to send one!!!

Please send a card. It is FREE and it only takes a second. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the soldiers received a bunch of these? Whether you are for or against the war, our troops need to know we are behind them ...SO PLEASE SEND A CARD!

FROM OHR - Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How does the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) work?

A: A cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is applied to your retirement benefit each year. The increments become effective July 1st and will reflect in the August check for both the months of July and August. The annual COLA is based on the U.S. Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Q. What medical benefit changes will I see once I am eligible for Medicare?

A: Generally, when you retire and become eligible for Medicare, Medicare becomes your primary medical insurance and your County medical plan is secondary. Enrollment in Medicare Part A is automatic when you turn age 65. However, enrollment and coverage under Medicare Part B is *not* automatic; it is the retiree's responsibility to enroll in Medicare Part B. If you are enrolled under Kaiser Permanente, you are required to enroll in Kaiser's Medicare Plus Plan. You may want to coordinate benefits between Medicare and your County medical plan. If your County medical plan coordinates with Medicare, your retiree premiums will generally reduce when you become eligible.

Q. When and if my pension check reduces will I be notified by the County?

A: You were given copies of your chosen retirement option which indicates the reduction date. Also, you received your first pension check along with a letter from the County which indicates any future changes in the retirement option you chose. You may send a request for a copy of this letter by using the following methods:

email: benefits@montgomerycountymd.gov

fax: 240-777-5131

mail: Office of Human Resources

Attn: Benefits Team

101 Monroe Street, 7th Floor

*** NEW for 2008 ***

The Optimum Choice HMO is now the UnitedHealthcare (UHC) Select Plan (HMO) – The Plan offers the same coverage and services as the former regional Optimum Choice Plan and also includes direct access to the nationwide United Healthcare Network. Members of the Optimum Choice HMO will automatically be enrolled in the United Healthcare Select Plan and they do not need to select a new PCP. Information regarding the nationwide network especially for dependents living outside the Maryland/DC area may be found on the United Healthcare website at www.myuhc.com/groups/mcgov. United Healthcare representatives will be available at all Health Fairs to answer questions. There is a **UHC Open Enrollment Line (available between 10/22-11/13 only) phone #866-873-3903 that retirees may call with any questions.**

Dependent Verification – There are changes to the dependent eligibility requirements that apply to dependent children over age 19. Maryland House Bill 1057 may have an impact on your dependent children who are not full-time students. The Open

Enrollment Bulletin you will receive in the mail on or around October 20, 2007 contains additional information on this subject.

When you become Medicare eligible at age 65, Medicare Part A and Part B will be your primary insurance. The County's insurance carriers will coordinate benefits with Medicare and will pay as the secondary carrier. This means your coverage with the County's plan **does not pay** for services that would normally be covered by Medicare Part B – whether or not you elect Part B. If you do not elect Medicare Part B the result may leave you paying out of pocket for your medical expenses. **You are strongly encouraged to decide carefully whether or not to enroll in Medicare Part B when you become eligible for the coverage.** You do not need to notify us of your election; payment of claims will be processed automatically as if you have Part B – whether you do or not. The premium that you pay will also change when either you, or your dependent spouse, become Medicare eligible. When the first participant becomes Medicare eligible, the premium paid will decrease from the Non-Medicare rate, to a lower, intermediate Medicare/Non-Medicare Split Rate. This premium is approximately midway between the full cost Non-Medicare rate, and the even lower Medicare rate, which will be paid when the second participant becomes Medicare eligible.

If you become Medicare eligible prior to age 65, coordination of benefits with the County's insurance carriers will occur the same as above after OHR is notified in writing that you are covered by Medicare. You must notify OHR that you have Medicare Parts A and/or B and provide the effective dates. You can either mail or fax OHR a copy of your Medicare card. Your premiums will change as noted above.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

Montgomery County's Office of Human Resources at **240-777-5000** or toll free **1-877-613-5212**; **Benefits Team Direct Line 240-777-5120** or via email

benefits@montgomerycountymd.gov

CareFirst Blue Cross-Blue Shield: Indemnity Plan; HMO; and, Point-of-Service Plan.

Member Services: Toll Free number is **1-888-417-8385**; www.Carefirst.com

MCREA toll Free Phone number: **1-866-929-9339**

CitiStreet: **240-777-5054**

Kaiser Permanente: Washington Area: **301-468-6000**; Baltimore Area: **1-800-777-7902**

Optimum Choice Member Services: **301-738-7920**

Caremark: **1-866-240-4926**

United Concordia (Dental): **1-800-441-7150**; Email: www.UCCI.com

National Vision Administrators (NVA): **1-800-672-7723**; E-mail: www.npanet.com

Prudential Long Term Care Insurance: **1-800-732-0416**; E-mail: www.Prudential.com

Aetna Toll Free Number: **1-800-952-2700**

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