
HCFA/CMS

ALUMNI NEWS

FALL 2013 (Vol. 19 No. 4)

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Were oh were did the summer go! The Holidays are right around the corner. Speaking of which, enclosed with this newsletter is a flier for the Alumni Holiday Luncheon at the Turf Valley Country Club on Thursday, December 12. Cut off the sign up sheet and send it in to register to attend. Everyone always has a great time and we look forward to seeing many of you there.

I am pleased that the association continues to attract new members. On page 2 you will see a list of 14 new members, bringing the current membership to 709.

We normally would initiate the membership renewal process with this issue BUT we are holding that off until the WINTER issue and will include renewal forms then. If your membership expires 12/31/13 you will NOT be terminated so don't worry about it. The Alumni Office has been at the Governor's Court Building for many years but CMS has ended the lease with that building and we temporarily do not have an Alumni Office. CMS is trying to figure out where to relocate our office and a severe space shortage is making that difficult. We are still functioning, but the lack of an office is making that more difficult. We are hopeful that we will have an office by the time the WINTER issue of the HCFA/CMS News rolls around and processing renewals will then be easier. Do NOT call the Alumni Office until further notice, as we do not currently access that telephone line. If need be call Bill Engelhardt at (717) 235-0976.

This issue of the HCFA/CMS Alumni News is being issued via e-mail to the Internet connected members and printed and mailed in hard copy only to the members for whom we do not have an e-mail address.

I want to wish you all a Wonderful Holiday season and continued happiness, good health and prosperity in retirement.



William L Engelhardt

HCFA/CMS ALUMNI NEWS

Published four times a year for the members of the Health Care Financing Administration /Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (HCFA/CMS) Alumni Association

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DUE DATES FOR FUTURE ISSUES

Winter Issue – December 31, 2013

Spring Issue – March 31, 2014

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NEW MEMBERS

The Association extends a hearty "Welcome Aboard" to the following new members:

Edward L Berends
Adam Block
Betty Burrier
Frank Cipolloni
Peter Hickman
Lynda Jacobs
Glynis Johnson
Susan Muse
Kathy O'Brien
Janet Samen
Robert Sears
Jim Sklenar
Charles W Simms, Esq.
Sharon von Paris

We now have 709 active members.

MEMBERSHIP SEARCH

As always, we acknowledge that there are many HCFA/CMS retirees that we have not been able to reach to tell them about the Alumni Association and invite them to join. We continue to ask for your assistance in spreading the message about us to them. If you know of any retiree that is not a member, please let them know about us and tell them how to contact us by telephone, snail mail or e-mail (all of that information can be found on page 2 of this issue). We will be very happy to send, either electronically or via snail mail, anyone the enrollment form and further information about membership. And Bill Engelhardt says you can always e-mail him personally at wlengelhardt@comcast.net for faster response (as the office e-mail is only accessed weekly).

SOCIAL SECURITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

We'd like to again remind members that we also have a link to our sister alumni, the Social Security Alumni Association, web site on our web site. The actual URL for it is "<http://www.ssaanational.org>" but you can just click on the link on our page. Many HCFA and/or CMS retirees also worked for the Social Security Administration somewhere along the line, and are eligible for membership in both alumni associations.

And don't forget to check out the Social Security Alumni Association blog at <http://ssaanews.blogspot.com/> periodically.

FEAA

We'd like to remind members that we do have a link to the Federal Employee Activities Association (FEAA) on our web site. The actual URL for it is "<http://www.federaleaa.org/News1.html>" but you can just click on the link on our page. The people listed as "Our Team," EAA Directory of Employees, are all at CMS. The web site also says, "The EAA was formed in 1942 for the welfare and recreation of our employee-members. The EAA supports and donates to many Federal sponsored charities and programs. The EAA strives to provide our members with many different benefits. We currently have an EAA service center within the CMS building."

That office is located near the Copy Center in the Lower Lobby area of the Central Building.

HCFA/CMS retirees are eligible to participate in discount purchases and to take advantage of everything the EAA has to offer.

COLA COUNT – 1.5%

Through all twelve months of the counting period toward the January 2014 federal retiree cost of living adjustment, the inflation index used to set that adjustment stands at 1.5 percentage points. The new CPI-W figure for September, 2013 was 230.537, 1.5% percent higher than the average CPI-W for the third-quarter of 2012, which was 226.936. The 2012 third-quarter average is the reference figure for determining the 2014 COLA. The annual COLA count measures the change in the index's average from one-third calendar quarter to the next. October, November, and December saw modest drops in the COLA count but January, February and March each saw a gain. April saw a decrease of 0.2%, May saw an increase of 0.2%, June saw an increase of 0.3%, July saw an increase of 0.04%, August saw an increase of 0.1%, and September saw an increased of 0.08%, ending up with a net gain of 1.5% for the counting period. So, we have a 2014 COLA of 1.5%.

OKTOBERFEST

Some 42 Alumni members and friends came to the Oktoberfest at the home of alumni member Lillian Lehnert in Fulton, Maryland on September 18 and everyone had a wonderful time. As usual, Lillian was a most gracious host and we can never thank her enough for her hospitality. Although not required, some of the partygoers brought hot or cold covered dishes and/or desserts. Food was plentiful and fantastic and the liquid refreshment was in good supply. Per the theme of the day, the menu consisted of wursts, hot dogs, potato salad, sauerkraut, beer, and German desserts. The weather was great for the entire day, picture perfect. A lot of reminiscing, story telling and just great conversation filled the air. We hope to repeat the wonderful experience with another great Oktoberfest next year. We hope to see even more of you next year.

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

As mentioned in the President's Message and the enclosed flier, the Holiday Luncheon will be on Thursday, December 12, 2013 in the Cameo Room at the Turf Valley Country Club. Last year some 137 alumni members and friends came to the Holiday Luncheon and everyone had a wonderful time. Everyone enjoyed the event and the place was abuzz with happy people renewing old acquaintances. We hope to have a similarly great experience and see even more of you at this year's Holiday Luncheon.

As it was last year, the luncheon will be a buffet. The menu follows.

Starters: Salad Maison, Classic Caesar Salad or Seasonal Crab Soup.

Entrées: (One fish, one beef, one poultry – exact preparation subject to change)

Desserts: 3 or 4 different Chef's Choice of Desserts Displayed.

The buffet provides a wide choice of selections so there is something for every taste and it is not possible to entertain special requests.

FEHB OPEN SEASON

Fedweek.com & OPM

The Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) program open season will be from Monday, November 11 through Monday, December 9, 2013. The open season applies to health, dental, and vision insurance and flexible spending accounts. The annual open season gives federal employees and retirees the opportunity to review their 2014 health plan choices and make changes. It also allows eligible employees to enroll for coverage. FEHB enrollees are advised to review the benefits and premiums for their health plan choices and decide what coverage will best fit their healthcare needs in the coming year.

2014 FEHB PREMIUMS

2014 FEHB premium rates will increase by an average 3.7 percent for the enrollee share of premiums. This increase is only slightly higher than last year's premium increase of 3.4 percent.

According to OPM, on average, enrollees with self-only coverage will pay \$3.28 more per bi-weekly pay period; enrollees with family coverage will pay \$7.90 more. Premiums for Health Maintenance Organizations will increase an average 6.5 percent, while Fee-for-Service plans will see an average increase of 3.1 percent.

However, as always, within the FEHB average there is substantial variation, with some plans substantially raising premiums and others reducing premiums.

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Basic Self Plan is increasing by \$4.10 to a monthly cost of \$132.09, and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Basic Family Plan is increasing by \$9.60 to a monthly cost of \$309.30. The share paid by the government for us will be \$396.27 and \$927.91 respectively for the two plans. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Standard Self Plan is increasing by \$4.14 to a monthly cost of \$190.28, and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Standard Family Plan is increasing by \$10.49 to a monthly cost of \$444.12. The share paid by the government for us will be \$426.14 and \$948.18 respectively for the two plans.

The new premium rates for 2014 for all health plans can be accessed at the OPM web site (<https://www.opm.gov>). Just click on “OPM Announces 2014 Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Premium Rates” on the home page and proceed from there. The rates will come up in Adobe Acrobat Reader format.

Information about Dental, Vision and Long Term Care coverages and premiums is also available at the OPM web site.

MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT SEASON

The Medicare program's Open Enrollment Period, during which you can enroll in or switch plans, began October 15 and ends on December 7.

During this period, you may enroll in a Medicare Part D (prescription drug) plan or, if you currently have a plan, you may change plans. In addition, during the seven-week period you can return to traditional Medicare (Parts A and B) from a Medicare Advantage (Part C, managed care) plan, enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan, or change Advantage plans. Beneficiaries can go to medicare.gov or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to make changes in their Medicare prescription drug and health plan coverage.

Beneficiaries should consider reviewing their options for 2014. Prescription drug plans can change their premiums, deductibles, the list of drugs they cover, and their plan rules for covered drugs, exceptions and appeals. Medicare Advantage plans can change their benefit package and their provider network.

2014 SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS TEST

The earnings test threshold applying to Social Security beneficiaries aged 62 through “full retirement age” -- in 2013, 66 -- is increasing to \$15,480. Those beneficiaries lose \$1 in Social Security benefits for every \$2 in earnings through employment or self-employment above the

limit. A separate earnings test applies only to earnings for months in the year an individual reaches full retirement age prior to the individual attaining that age. One dollar in benefits will be withheld for every \$3 in earnings above \$41,400. There is no limit on earnings beginning the month an individual attains full retirement age.

RETIREE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CFC

Retirees from the government are eligible to contribute to the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) if they so desire. The URL to the retiree section of the CFC web site is:

<http://www.cbacfc.org/index.php/donors/retirees-and-contractors>

A retiree may give electronically using a credit card via the online giving system, CFC Nexus. Another option is to use the searchable online charity database (or PDF of the guide) and print out the pledge form and mail in a check. The third option is to contact the CFC at info@cbacfc.org asking to be on their retiree list, and they will automatically send you a hardy copy guide and pledge form each year – the hard copy can be filled in and sent back with a check.

DHHS DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS

The DHHS Departmental Awards program includes five (5) award categories to recognize employees from all grade levels throughout the organization. The categories with CMS winners in them are:

Secretary's award for Meritorious Service

Zabeen Chong – CMS
Michael Treitel – CMS

Hubert H Humphrey Award for Service to America

Medicaid Eligibility Expansion – CMS

An Awards ceremony was held on October 31 at the Great Hall Auditorium of the Hubert H Humphrey Building in Washington DC.

PROUD ALUMNI GRANDPARENT

HCFA/CMS Alumni Member James Barnett is as proud as a peacock over the fact that his twin 17-year old granddaughters, Becca and Rachel Barnett, accomplished Viola players, recently

completed The National Symphony Orchestra National Trustees' Summer Music Institute. During the program, designed for students age 15 to 20 years old, they performed twice in free concerts on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage in Washington, D.C.

They were among 60 students picked, representing 28 states and three countries.

All participants randomly were put into small performance groups. Rachel was in a quintet that performed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Quintet for French Horn and Strings" July 19 and Becca was put into an octet that performed Felix Mendelssohn's "Octet in E-flat major" July 20. These performances were considered chamber concerts.

The NSO program concluded with the students put into new groups that had a second performance July 26. Rachel and Becca were in the same group and performed "The Holberg Suite" by Edvard Grieg.

Read all about it and see pictures on the Carroll County Times web site, at:

http://www.carrollcountytimes.com/features/westminster-twins-perform-at-kennedy-center-for-nso-summer-program/article_f2df6cc0-fe93-53df-ab5d-831408eac36d.html

SENIOR MANAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

CMS PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ADMINISTRATION

Jon Blum has been appointed to the position of Principal Deputy Administrator of CMS. Jon has been serving in the role of Acting Principal Deputy Administrator during the past year.

CENTER FOR PROGRAM INTEGRITY (CPI)

Lis Handley has been appointed to serve as the Acting Director of CPI. Lis has been serving as the Deputy Director and replaces Peter Budetti, who has been serving as Deputy Administrator and Director of CPI. Peter Budetti has left CMS.

CENTER FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID INNOVATION

Dr. Patrick Conway has become the Deputy Administrator for Innovation and has assumed the role of Director of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. He also remains as the Director of the Center for Clinical Standards and Quality (CCSQ) and Chief Medical Officer for

CMS. Patrick joined CMS in May of 2011 as the Director for CCSQ.

To support Patrick in this dual leadership role, **Wes Perich** will continue as Deputy Director of CCSQ and **Sean Cavanaugh** as Deputy Director of CMML.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE REGIONS?

As Ripley would say, "Believe It Or Not," we have many alumni members from the regional offices and would like to hear from you. We would like to know if HCFA or CMS retirees are getting together and what they are up to. We'd be happy to publish short articles and there are no restrictions or limits (unless you are involved in criminal activities, ha).

We used to occasionally have "Whatever Happened To..." articles updating what retirees were doing but haven't had any input along these lines in a long time. If you think your retirement life is noteworthy we'd love to hear about it too.

KOMEDY KORNER

A GRANDPARENTS ANSWERING MACHINE

By Mike Blank

At present we are not at home, but, please leave your message after you hear the BEEP BEEEEEEPP...

If you are one of our children, dial 1 and then select the option from 7 to 8 so we know who it is.

If you need us to stay with the children press 1.

If you want to borrow the car, press 2.

If you want us to wash your clothes and do your ironing, press 3.

If you want the grandchildren to sleep here tonight, press 4.

If you want us to pick up the kids at school, press 5.

If you want us to prepare a meal for Sunday or to have it delivered to your home, press 6.

If you want to eat here, press 7.

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If you want/need money, press 8.

If you are going to invite us to dinner, or take us to the theater, start talking.

We Are Listening!!!!

RETIREMENT PROJECT

As we slowly move through retirement we need to keep ourselves occupied with small projects, like this guy!



I know, I saw it right away too, No Safety Glasses or Hearing Protection. And I caught something else that is really important too, he has no Gloves on. I might be up there in age but I'm still sharp as a tack!

MEMORY

My forgetter's getting better,
But my rememberer is broke
To you that may seem funny
But, to me, that is no joke

For when I'm "here" I'm wondering
If I really should be "there"
And, when I try to think it through,
I haven't got a prayer!

Oft times I walk into a room,
Say "what am I here for?"
I wrack my brain, but all in vain!
A zero is my score.

At times I put something away
Where it is safe, but, Gee!
The person it is safest from
Is, generally, me!

When shopping I may see someone,
Say! "Hi" and have a chat,
Then, when the person walks away
I ask myself, "Who was that?"

Yes, my forgetter's getting better
While my rememberer is broke,
And it's driving me plumb crazy
And that isn't any joke.

THE NATURAL GOLFER

A retiree was given a set of golf clubs by his co-workers. Thinking he'd try the game, he asked the local pro for lessons, explaining that he knew nothing whatever of the game.

The pro showed him the stance and swing, then said, "Just hit the ball toward the flag on the first green."

The novice teed up and smacked the ball straight down the fairway and onto the green, where it stopped inches from the hole.

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"Now what," the fellow asked the speechless pro?

"Uh... you're supposed to hit the ball into the cup" the pro finally said, after he was able to speak again.

The retiree replied, "Oh great! NOW you tell me!"

NEW TEETH!

A local minister had all of his remaining teeth pulled and new dentures made a few weeks ago.

The first Sunday, his sermon lasted 10 minutes. The second Sunday, he preached only 20 minutes. But, on the third Sunday, he preached for an hour and a half.

He was asked about this. He then said, "Well, that first Sunday, my gums were so sore it hurt to talk. The second Sunday, my dentures were still hurting a lot. Now the third Sunday, I accidentally grabbed my wife's dentures AND I COULDN'T STOP TALKING!"

IN MEMORIAM

The Alumni Association respectfully acknowledges

the passing of the following

Alumni/Employees/Spouses and expresses its

sympathy to family members:

MARGARET KAREN BLAIR (6/25/13)*
LAWRENCE “LARRY” BOWEN (6/29/13)*
ROSE ELLEN CONNERTON (8/30/13)**
ELMER JOHN REICHEL (9/10/13)***

*HCFA/CMS Retiree

** HCFA/CMS Alumni Member

*** Husband of HCFA CMS Alumni Member Annabelle Reichel

If you are aware of any other deaths of Alumni please notify the editorial staff
Oct 2013