

# THE SEANC CONNECTION



District 19

Vol. 8, No. 3, May 2001

## Chair's Column

### BUDGET DEFICIT THREATENS STATE EMPLOYEES

By Martha Fowler



Finding money this year to pay for State employee salaries and benefits will be difficult at best. Governor Easley has taken steps necessary to avoid a budget shortfall and, at the same time, maintain a balanced budget. Part of this measure includes an order to halt payments into the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.

Recent reports have also indicated that there will be no Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) available to employees in the future, and the State Health Plan is in crisis.

SEANC is committed to protecting and enhancing the rights and benefits of current, retired and future State employees in the areas of salary, health care and retirement. Governor Easley proposed only a 2 percent raise for State employees this year. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for last year was 3.4 percent. We all understand that North Carolina is in a budget crisis but the cost of living for State employees and retirees continues to rise. We do not want the budget to be balanced once again on the backs of State employees.

Health care costs continue to rise. While it is critical that we get a satisfactory salary increase this year, it is equally as important that something be done to maintain the benefits provided by our health care system. Changes in the State Health Plan, such as the implementation of the prescription drug card and the cap of \$4 per prescription on the dispensing fees that pharmacies charge, placed additional burdens on the State Health Plan. Effective July 1, 2001 that cap will be reduced even further to \$1.50. Additionally, premiums for dependent care coverage are expected to increase 30 to 50 percent this year. The possibility of higher deductibles, higher co-pays, higher premiums and reduced benefits gives us cause for concern.

Another benefit of being a State employee is the promise of retirement benefits when we become eligible. We are concerned that reductions in the State's contribution combined with an invasion of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System, as proposed by Governor Easley, will affect our benefits adversely in the future. State employees contribute a portion of their salary into TSERS each year. We have been assured that the money from the retirement system that has

been placed in escrow will be returned if it is not needed to balance the budget shortfall this year.

Governor Easley's proposal of only a 2 percent salary increase will be erased if health care costs increase significantly. I encourage you to contact your legislators and express your concerns about the bills they are proposing. For the latest information on legislation that affects State employees visit [www.seanc.org](http://www.seanc.org). We will continue to work hard and keep watch for any legislation that could erode State employee rights and benefits.

## YOU'RE INVITED

### We Want You At Our Annual Meeting

We will elect officers and delegates for 2001-2002, recognize our scholarship winners, vote on policy platform items, and enjoy a good meal together.

Our meeting will take place Tuesday, June 19, 5:30 p.m. at the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA), 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, and is open to all SEANC members and interested State employees. The catered dinner will cost \$5. Please call Anthony Weaver at 962-6270 or Martha Fowler at 966-1289 for reservations.

Join us for this exciting event.

### STATE EMPLOYEES LEGISLATIVE RALLY AND BARBECUE

May 16

11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Halifax Mall, Raleigh

(Area between the Legislative Office Building and the Education Building)

Lunch Tickets \$5  
(must be purchased in advance)

*"If You Care, You'll Be There"*  
*District 19 will be there. You can count on it.*

## DISTRICT 19 OFFICERS

CHAIR  
Martha Fowler  
966-1289

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR  
Gerry Lawrence  
968-4120

1<sup>ST</sup> VICE CHAIR  
Anthony Weaver  
962-6270

2<sup>ND</sup> VICE CHAIR  
Marie Tate  
732-8126

SECRETARY  
Kay Daniels  
732-8126

TREASURER  
Pamela Siler  
843-8094

# THE EMPLOYEE FORUM AT UNC-CH PLAYS A VITAL ROLE ON BEHALF OF STAFF

By John Heuer



Greetings to the membership of District 19, and especially your Chair, Martha Fowler.

There is a lot of cross representation between the UNC-CH Employee Forum and Districts 19 and 25 of SEANC. I had the pleasure of getting to know Martha at the Forum annual retreat in January, and Martha is a member of our Presentations Committee.

The Employee Forum is now in its 9th year, and was made possible by former Chancellor Paul Hardin. I believe that the Forum is an extension of democratic opportunity for non-faculty staff at UNC-CH. (Note the small "d".) For almost 200 years, employees had no recognized voice on our campus. We now have a voice, and we were particularly pleased to hear our new Chancellor, James Moeser, endorse the concept of shared governance of the University by faculty, staff, and students.

I was eager to stand as a candidate for Forum Chair, in order to promote the idea that non-faculty employees can be educators. The role of staff as educator is two-fold. Last fall, the Carolina Environmental Program offered its first class in "the Sustainable University," and each student was assigned to a staff member who functioned as a mentor. There are all kinds of opportunities for staff members to play educative roles. There are also opportunities for staff members to direct their own education. I speak not only of a wealth of opportunity to upgrade job skills, but also the chance to choose new career directions. If staff members are to be considered as educators, then it is our individual responsibility to find the "right fit" for our interests and career potential. I believe that we are well along the path toward an era of perpetual retraining. That is why the Forum is asking the University to create a new position for a career counselor.

One of the most exciting prospects about being Forum Chair this year is that we have a whole new administration on board, and this is a good time to explain how the Forum's mission differs from that of SEANC. Whereas SEANC advocates for the interests of State employees, the Forum not only advocates for the interests of University employees, but also serves as advisory to the Chancellor, and embraces the mission of the University. Teaching, research, and public service are part and parcel of the Forum's mission, as well as playing the advocate role for staff. In this regard, we are different organizations, with overlapping concerns, but not always parallel objectives.

I believe that most of our long-term goals are held in common, although some short-term goals may differ. In any event, I look forward to collaborating with the good people of SEANC. I admire your dedication and determination.

Best wishes.

**SEANC LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE:  
1-888-732-6242**

# DISTRICT 19 MEMBER RECEIVES AWARD FROM UNIVERSITY MANAGERS ASSOCIATION



*Ned Brooks displays his plaque with (L to R) Sharon Grayden, head of the UMA Morale and Recognition Committee, and Provost Robert Shelton*

Associate Provost Edward "Ned" Brooks received the Manager of the Year award from the University Managers Association (UMA) at the group's annual meeting on April 16.

In his letter of nomination, Assistant Provost Timothy Sanford praised Brooks' "sense of fairness, his concern for helping his fellow employees, his fine sense of humor, and his genuine concern for employees at all pay levels...(in the spring of 1999) Brooks was named interim provost and found himself leading the University through a most difficult budget shortfall situation at a time when the campus also had an interim chancellor...he came through for Carolina!"

Congratulations, Ned. We're proud of you.

## MAY 7-11 PROCLAIMED STATE EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION WEEK

The Governor's Office has proclaimed the week of May 7-11 as State Employee Appreciation Week.

The Employee Services Department at the Office of Human Resources at UNC-CH has urged all departments to plan recognition activities for State employees during that week. They offer suggestions on how this can be done, including:

- Letters of appreciation from department head
- Staff awards presentation at recognition event
- Supervisors treat employees to lunch or sponsor a pizza party
- Picnic/cookout/social event
- Staff enrichment day.

There are many other ways to show State employees that they are special. Let's not stop after May 11. Keep on telling your staff how much you value them and what a wonderful job they do. (Give some of the appreciation to yourself too!)

The UNC Employee Appreciation Event for 2001, "Cool Your Heels," will be held May 23 in Carmichael Auditorium from 2 to 4 p.m. An ice cream social is planned.

# THIS STATE EMPLOYEE LIKES HIS JOB AND IT SHOWS

By Peggy Cotton



Servicing the needs of patients is important and satisfying work for Gary Cox, who has been a staff member of UNC Hospitals' Department of Social Work and Continuity of Care for more than two decades. Gary has responded to calls from patients' families all over North Carolina, providing them and the patients with the support they need from the time they are planning for admission through discharge and clinic visits. One patient lavishly praised Gary for his help, saying, "He makes you feel that you have known him all of your life."

Gary is a very energetic man who firmly believes in being involved in civic and community organizations. Gary, a Past Worshipful Master of Goldston Star Lodge #688, is an active member of the Chatham County Democratic Party, Chatham-Lee Credit Union, State Employees' Credit Union, Secretary of Twenty-Sixth District Mason, Correcting Racial Injustice For Success In Society (CRISIS), President of the Chatham County Fair Association, and the list goes on.

In addition, Gary is a notary public and has his own business (Professional Services) planning and coordinating activities such as weddings, parties, banquets, trips and family reunions. An active SEANC member, Gary encourages co-workers to become a part of this growing organization. He says that "SEANC provides a strong voice with the legislature to protect and enhance our rights and benefits as State employees." Gary's wife Carolyn works for UNC's Department of Physics and Astronomy and she shares her husband's enthusiasm for SEANC.

We are pleased to claim both Gary and Carolyn as longtime members of our district.

## COME TRAVEL WITH DISTRICT 19 TO ATLANTA

We're going to Atlanta, Georgia on July 14 to see the Atlanta Braves play the Baltimore Orioles. We leave on the morning of Saturday, July 14, and game time is 7:05 p.m. We will return on Sunday, July 15.

Seats are still available for this important fund-raising opportunity. The cost, that includes bus transportation, room, and baseball ticket, is:

\$144 per person, based on 2 people in room

\$122 per person, based on 3 people in room

\$110 per person, based on 4 people in room

Please make check payable to SEANC District 19 and mail to Pamela Siler, Treasurer, P. O. Box 1874, Sanford, NC 27331.

For more information, contact Marie Tate at 919-732-8126.



## Retirees' Corner

### YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO RETIRE EARLIER THAN YOU THINK

On April 11, the House Pensions and Retirement Committee considered House Bill 79, sponsored by Rep. Russell Tucker (D-Duplin), to allow State employees to retire with 25 (rather than 30) years of creditable service and unreduced benefits. Following the suggestion of Rep. Gene McCombs (R-Rowan), the Committee decided to postpone consideration until the following week, mentioning the possibility of a study commission to determine the cost this bill would pose to North Carolina if it became law.

It was brought to the House Pensions and Retirement Committee again on April 18 for further review. The Committee decided to adopt a substitute for H79 that creates a Legislative Study Commission to study early retirement for teachers and State employees and determine the benefit to employees, cost to the State and number of positions likely to be affected.

House Bill 1022, sponsored by Rep. Wayne Goodwin (D-Richmond), would allow all members of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System to retire with unreduced benefits after 28 years of service and it would establish a retention incentive program for members of the retirement system.

Stay tuned.

### JIFFY LUBE JOINS GROUP BUYING PROGRAM

Jiffy Lube now offers a 10 percent discount to SEANC members.

They are proud of their fast and friendly service. No appointment is necessary. They also provide a maintenance service history on every invoice to protect your vehicle's warranty and details of how your vehicle was serviced.

They offer a complete full service oil change as well as other services that include battery replacement, air filter replacement, fuel injections service, and tire rotations.

Their motto is "Jiffy Lube is more than just an oil change!"

We are happy to welcome Jiffy Lube to our ever-expanding Group Buying Program.

### JOYFUL NEWS FROM LYNN COTE



Matthew Raymond Cote was born to Lynn and David Cote on Friday, March 16, 2001 at 5:30 p.m. He weighed 9 pounds 1 ounce and was 21 inches long. Mother, dad and Matthew are doing fine. Lynn is the Piedmont District Services Representative for SEANC.

## DANA COPE KEEPS SEANC VISIBLE



Dana Cope, the Executive Director of SEANC, spoke at the monthly meeting of the Employee Forum on May 2 on the UNC campus. He is taking a very active and public role as he lobbies on behalf of State employees.

In an action illustrating this more assertive approach, SEANC has answered the call from Governor Easley and the Legislature for help in addressing the State budget crisis. Saying that front-line State employees may not have easy access to a special State commission on government efficiency, SEANC formed its own Government Efficiency Task Force.

The SEANC task force consists of rank-and-file State employees, who are members of the SEANC Personnel Benefits Committee, including Joe Totten from District 19. In addition, SEANC has invited Governor Easley, House Speaker Jim Black, Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight and Senate and House Minority Leaders Patrick Ballantine and Leo Daughtry to each appoint an individual to the task force.

Executive Director Dana Cope explained the SEANC action by stating, "We feel no one is really leading the effort to find government inefficiencies. This is not a slap in the face to others. This is just a forum for rank-and-file employees." The SEANC Government Efficiency Task Force will lead the effort in identifying government inefficiencies and focus on recommending cost-saving ideas and measures available within State Government.

We encourage all State employees to submit suggestions on cost-saving measures available within their areas of State Government. For more information on how you can submit a suggestion, contact Joe Totten at 962-2656.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

District 19 meets the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m., at the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA), 400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro. There is plenty of free parking and refreshments are served. All State employees are welcome.

May 15, 2001	Monthly Meeting
May 16, 2001	Legislative Rally, Raleigh
June 19, 2001	Annual Meeting
July 17, 2001	Monthly Meeting
August 21, 2001	Monthly Meeting
September 6-8, 2001	Annual Convention, Greensboro
September 18, 2001	Monthly Meeting

The Retirees' Chapter meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 8:30 a.m. at Bob Evans Restaurant. All retirees are welcome. For information, call Mariah McPherson at 919-732-2583.



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