Chair's Column

DISTRICT 19 BRINGS HOME FOUR AWARDS

By Martha Fowler

District 19 delegates at the 17th annual SEANC Convention experienced firsthand the excitement of the meeting itself as well as being there when our district won four awards. I want to thank all delegates from District 19 who took time out from their busy schedules to attend this very important event as representatives of their fellow State employees. I am very proud to have represented you this year as your District Chair. Two of my goals were to develop a web site and maintain open communication with members of the district. These goals were accomplished.

Our district brought home three certificates and one plaque for our achievements in the Association this year. The State Awards Committee presented a certificate to District 19 in recognition of fulfilling the requirements for the District of the Year competition and member commitment to the mission of our Association. A Certificate of Recognition was presented to District 19 for its dedicated commitment to effective and innovative communication with its members through the development and management of a district web site. A third certificate was presented in recognition of dedicated commitment to effective communication with its members through the publication and distribution of two or more district newsletters throughout the year.

District 19 publishes THE SEANC CONNECTION, a quarterly newsletter designed to keep our members informed of issues affecting State employees. The Best Newsletter awards across the state were presented to districts in three different categories based on membership size. Category C districts consist of 1,500 members or more. In Category C, the winner was District 19’s newsletter. We are especially proud of Claire Miller for her work as Editor of our newsletter.

SEANC is committed to protecting and enhancing the benefits and rights for current, retired and future State employees. Each year we must work diligently to retain and uphold our most important resource in North Carolina State government, its employees. If you or any other State employee you know is interested in becoming an active participant in our Association, please contact me or any other District 19 member.

OUR TOP TEN POLICY PLATFORM OBJECTIVES FOR 2001

1. Request the General Assembly to fully fund pay plans prior to considering other appropriations.
2. Seek continuation of a fully paid individual health care benefit for all active and retired State employees.
3. Seek special appropriations totaling at least five percent of total payroll to be included in the continuation budget to enable the pay plan to close the gap due to inflation over the past six years.
4. Seek an increase in the retirement accrual rate to 2.0, which would translate into approximately 60 percent of average final compensation.
5. Seek a change in General Statute 126-7 to fully fund the Comprehensive Compensation System at the following levels:
   a) Fund the career growth at a minimum of two percent, to be included in the continuation budget
   b) Tie the cost of living adjustment to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) of the previous calendar year
   c) Fund the performance bonus at a minimum of two percent of total payroll.

The cost of living adjustment and the performance bonuses will be funded from the expansion budget.

6. Seek a change in legislation for a full, unreduced service retirement with 28 years of creditable service, regardless of age.
7. Seek to increase the maximum sick leave that can be added at retirement to an unlimited amount instead of the maximum of 12 days for each year of membership service.
8. Seek legislation to remove the cap on the lifetime maximum benefit of the State Health Plan.
9. Seek legislation and appropriation to provide scholarships for tuition and fees up to a bachelor’s degree for State employees and dependents at State-supported institutions in North Carolina.
10. Seek full restoration of the employer’s contribution to the Retirement System at 9.35 percent and reduce the employee’s contribution to 5.0 percent.
In addition to serving as delegates this year, Anthony Weaver and Claude Hooker provided delicious meals during the lunch breaks, served in our hospitality suite.

The following members of District 19 attended the Convention as delegates:

Peggy Cotton
Kay Daniels
Robert Edwards
Martha Fowler
Bertha Fuller
Patricia Harris
Cathy Harrison
Brenda Hooker
Claude Hooker
Helen Iverson
Janie Jones
Iola Lattie
Dawn Laws
Ruth Lewter
Mariah McPherson
Muzetta Pettiford
Pamela Siler
Marie Tate
Joe Totten
Jim Vaughn
Wendy Watkins
Anthony Weaver

NEWS ABOUT OUR STATE HEALTH PLAN

Dr. Jack Walker, Executive Administrator of the North Carolina State Employees Comprehensive Major Medical Plan, addressed a group of about 200 State employees on the campus of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on July 14, 2000. The following is a summary of some of his remarks from the UNC-CH Office of Human Resources Home Page, Benefits, Notes from Meeting with Jack Walker.

First let's look at the good news.

Effective August 1, 2000 the State Health Plan now includes a wellness benefit for payment authorized for annual Pap tests for women, regardless of age.

The State Health Plan now has a $4.00 (rather than the previous $6.00) dispensing fee for each covered prescription, resulting in substantial savings.

However, there is unpleasant news about projected health costs for State employees.

If expenses continue at the projected rate, the Plan will need 600 million to one billion dollars for the biennium 2001-2003. The State Plan must do a better job of contracting with health care providers to obtain more competitive pricing. The goal is to minimize shifting the cost to employees.

A sample of the Question and Answer session, in which Dr. Walker participated, follows.

Q. Why are HMOs leaving the State Plan?
A. Market share (number of enrollees) is no longer the goal of these companies; profit is the goal. The State Plan business is not profitable. The benefits required by the State are estimated to be 10-15 percent richer than the State’s program, and the administrative load for these companies is 12-20 percent. These conditions make the State Health Plan business unprofitable. Additionally, the State Plan covers the entire State of North Carolina. Members concentrated in large metropolitan areas provide more profit for an HMO than members in outlying areas.

Q. Why isn't dental coverage part of the State Health Plan?
A. Our current plan of benefits is becoming difficult to fund. There is no possibility of adding dental coverage.
Peggy Cotton wants us to know that:

It is good to be back and involved in SEANC. When I left The University two and one-half years ago, little did I know I would return. However, I left a better paying contracting job in the Research Triangle Park a few months ago to return to a permanent position with good benefits at UNC-CH. I am currently employed in the Department of Housing and Residential Education as a Conference Services Manager. I am very optimistic about the future of SEANC. I’m also willing to give 100% effort to District 19, but I can’t do it all by myself. I would like to extend a challenge to all State employees who are inactive members and those who are not members of SEANC at all. SEANC is the largest non-union public association in the United States. All State employees should stand up and be counted. Remember, the Association is powerful in numbers. By stepping up to the plate, you will be taking the initiative to make it even more powerful.

You can and you will make a difference. The SEANC motto is “keeping watch.. taking action.” If I can participate with a very busy schedule, then so can you. We are a partnership for a better North Carolina. Join us and participate today!

Raymond E. DuBose, the Director of Energy Services at UNC-CH, was elected to a two-year term as Chair of the International District Energy Association. The Association includes heating and cooling executives, managers, engineers, consultants and equipment suppliers from 18 countries. Congratulations, Ray.

All Magic Kingdom Club cards, regardless of expiration date, will be void after December 31, 2000. That is because the Magic Kingdom Club is being phased out, in favor of the new “The Disney Club.” All members with current membership cards will be receiving a Disney Sampler and information about the new program.

New SEANC Life Insurance Program with Boston Mutual
Guaranteed issue up to $100,000
Open enrollment for SEANC members only
Look for details in your mailbox in January 2001
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Q. Are pharmaceuticals the biggest issue?
A. They account for 20 percent of total medical cost. Pharmacy cost increases are the greatest risk to the system. Outpatient hospital cost increases are the next greatest concern.

Q. Will current benefits be cut?
A. Except for the addition of a non-formulary drug copay, benefits will not be cut this year. However, benefit reductions will be discussed for fiscal years 2001-2003.

Q. How can employees get a list of the Blue Cross Blue Shield UCR (usual and customary rates)?
A. This cannot be done. They are considered proprietary by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina.

Q. What other changes could be made?
A. It may be possible to consider eliminating the deductibles by raising the copays. This would provide employees with more predictable costs, making the fee structure more like the HMOs.

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.

November 21, 2000      Monthly Meeting
December 19, 2000      Monthly Meeting
January 16, 2001      Monthly Meeting
January 24, 2001      General Assembly convenes
February 20, 2001      Monthly Meeting
March 20, 2001        Monthly Meeting
April 17, 2001        Monthly Meeting
May 15, 2001          Monthly Meeting
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 morning of each month at 8:30 at Bob Evans Restaurant, Highway 15-501 and I-40. All retirees are welcome. For information, call Mariah McPherson at 919-732-2583.

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