

ORS Look Out

Year 2000



98 Days

September 24, 1999

Volume 3, Issue 5

ORS Mission:

We deliver pensions, related benefits and services to promote the future financial security of our customers.

ORS Vision:

Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service.

All Staff Meeting to have a new look

This time around the All-Staff Meeting on Thursday, September 30, 1999, will have a slightly different look. All staff will gather for a presentation by the Leadership Team in the GOB Cafeteria from 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Then, employees with last names beginning with letters A through D will meet in Conference Room A from 9:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Those with last names beginning with

letters E through N will meet from 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. And those with last names beginning with letters O through Z will meet from 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

At these sessions, each Strategic Team will present a status report on the progress they are making on their initiative.

Attendance is mandatory.

See you there!

ORS Calendar



September

Pension Paydate ----- 25th

All Staff Meeting ----- 30th

October

State Employees Board

Meeting ----- 7th

U of M/MSU Day ----- 8th

Public School Employees

Board Meeting ----- 15th

State Police Board

Meeting ----- 21st

Pension Paydate ----- 23rd

Halloween Party ----- 29th

December

ORS Holiday Party ---- 15th

Did you know . . . about Flexible Spending Accounts?

Flexible Spending Accounts are a little understood benefit for State of Michigan employees. These accounts allow you to pay for dependent care and unreimbursed medical expenses with pre-tax dollars. This helps make these expenses more affordable. You pay for your eligible expenses with tax-free dollars. Taxes are calculated on the salary remaining after your spending account deduction. Your contributions to the Flexible Spending Account(s) lower your Social Security tax, as well as federal, state, and local income taxes, and increase your take-home pay. However, over the long run,

paying less Social Security taxes could slightly reduce your Social Security retirement or disability benefits.

You may benefit from participation in the Medical Care Spending Account if you, your spouse, and/or your dependent(s) expect to incur medical expenses that are not reimbursed by your health, dental, or vision insurance. Your deduction in any taxable year may not exceed the lesser of your earned income or \$5,000.00. The minimum biweekly deduction is \$2.00.

See Flexible Spending Accounts on Page 3

Unremitted MIP project successfully completed

In June of 1999, the Unremitted Member Investment Plan (UMIP) Project was implemented, with future Y2K date testing completed in August. The project began because of over- and under-contributions by school reporting units of employees' MIP contributions.

Reporting Units deduct MIP contributions from the pay of their MIP participants and remit to ORS on a monthly basis. This amount is also reported on the Quarterly Reports and posted to individual member accounts. The intent of the Unremitted MIP Project was to diminish future occurrences of MIP differences by making the Reporting Units responsible for the accurate withholding of MIP payments. The project's goals were:

1. Posting proper contributions to member's account based on gross wages and benefit plan.
2. Providing notice of withholding discrepancies to Reporting Units.
3. Collecting required contributions from Reporting Units.

The new processes calculate a

member's correct MIP contribution, post the proper amount to the member's account, and generate reports. On a quarterly basis, Reporting Units will be billed if they have underpaid MIP contributions, or receive a refund if they have overpaid MIP contributions. (See Page D-8 & D-9 of the Reporting Instruction Manual for additional information.)

The Report Processors have successfully incorporated the additional tasks into their existing procedures, and have done so during a shortened processing time frame.

Joyce Buchanan was the Information Technology/ Reengineering lead for initial implementation and **Audrey Smith** was the ITR lead for future testing, along with ITSD lead **Peter Perala**.

Those who helped successfully complete the UMIP project include, from ORS, **Stan Aves, Eve Baumgart, Janet Darling, Chantele Geisenhaver, Kay Johnston, Lois Musbach, Carla Price, Angela Sanborn, Alice Semevolos, Patty Wethy** and **Suzanne Wright. Mary Jane Cookingham** and **Pam Rasher** from ITSD contributed to the project.

Retirees' September mail will contain a little extra

September's warrant and Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) mailings to retirees will contain that all-important pension payment. But there'll be a little extra. Retirees of all four systems who still get warrants will receive an EFT application in an effort to encourage more EFT sign-ups. Public Schools retirees will receive an Earnings Limitation letter about recent changes to their earning limits. And State Employee and State Police retirees will be getting an Insurance Rate notice. If you need a copy of any of these items, contact the Communications Unit in Customer Service.

Correction

Last issue, in the article *Reporting Units will soon access data via the web* the name of Sejin Chung was misspelled. We apologize for the error.



Published by:
State of Michigan
Department of Management
& Budget
Office of Retirement Services
P.O. Box 30171
Lansing, MI 48909-7671

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Rosemary Baker, Matt Beha and
Robert Glennon, Editors

Printed by Authority of 1984 P.A. 431
Total number of copies printed: 350
Total cost: \$59.36 Cost per copy: \$0.17

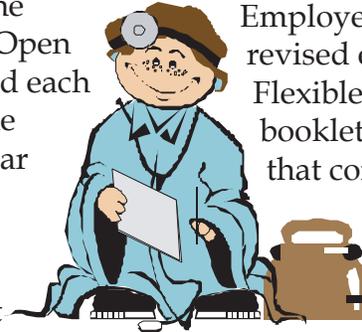
Flexible Spending Accounts

Continued from Page 1

Dependent Care Spending Accounts can be used to get a tax break to provide care for children, a disabled spouse, or dependent parents. Expenses must be for dependents who are claimed as an exemption on your federal income tax return.

How can you determine whether a Flexible Spending Account is right for you? First, calculate your anticipated medical expenses and/or dependent care expenses. Under IRS regulations, once you sign up, your deduction amount cannot change, even if your costs are higher or lower than what you anticipated. To

establish your account, get the appropriate enrollment form from your Human Resources office, complete and submit it to the Employee Benefits Division of the Office of the State Employer. Open enrollment is held each November for the following calendar year of participation. Deductions will begin on the first pay day following January 1. No changes to your deduction will be permitted after November 30 for the upcoming calendar year unless you experience an IRS-approved Family Status Change. A change in status can only be the result of



marriage or divorce, death of a spouse or dependent, birth, adoption or legal guardianship, change in dependant's eligibility or change in employment status.

The Office of the State Employer produced a revised edition of the Flexible Spending Accounts booklet in August of 1998 that contains many changes. All older versions of the booklets are obsolete.

Importantly, some expenses that were approved in prior years will not be approved in 1999. Contact your Human Resources office for a copy of the current booklet or for Spending Account forms.

If you have questions after reading the booklet, contact the Employee Benefits Division between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. For enrollment, family status changes and general information, call (517) 373-2605. For inquiries on medical reimbursement, call (517) 241-9035. If you have questions about dependent care reimbursement, phone (517) 335-5095. For specific tax questions regarding the Spending Accounts, call the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. at 1-800-829-1040.

Comings and Goings



Deb Mosher began as an IT/R manager on September 20. She comes from the Family Independence

Agency where she was instrumental in the completion of a multi-phase automation system.

Bob Nemeth began as an IT/R manager on September 20. He was with Consumer and



Bob Nemeth

Industry Services where he was responsible for development, implementation and maintenance of the automation projects.

Joy Bartel has accepted the Waterford Outreach Office analyst position. Due to recent staff changes Joy will begin her new job but remain in the Detroit office for the foreseeable future.

Linda Stevens left the Report Processing Unit on September 17 to accept a position with the Michigan Administrative Information Network (MAIN).

ORS-ITSD Golf Outing suits them to a tee!

Fred Covert of Information Technology/Reengineering reports that the ORS Duffers golf league finished its season with its traditional combined banquet and ORS-ITSD golf outing on August 31.



Amy Betts, left, and Bob Keenan ride to the next tee in style.

Taking first place in the Golf Outing was the team of **John Donovan, Jeff Dumroese, Dick Pennington and Jim Thelen** (all ORS). Second place went to **Tom Braun, Don**

Dimitroff, Tim Droste and Bill Motz, (all ORS). Taking



Enjoying the fun are Patsy Burhans, left, Cathleen Curran, and Sandy Elstro.

third was **Don, Wilma, Jim and Jody Therrian** (family).

The league winners were **Tom and Judy Therrian** (Fred Covert's in-laws). There was a tie for second place between the team of **Barry BeVier** (ITSD) and **Roger Gilmore** (friend of Barry's) and the team of **Jeff Ellsworth** (Community Health) and **Tom Dimmer** (Delta Dental).

Anyone interested in participating in next year's

league should start planning now. The cost will be about \$150 per person for 14 weeks. Fred states that they will need a deposit in March and final payment by the first of April.

Information will be



Chef George Orban, at a smoky grill, kept the golfers fed.

sent in late February or early March.

This Scramble is shore to puzzle you

When your Friendly Scramble Editor sees a picture of a lighthouse, it gets him thinking about the sea and, naturally, that leads him to thinking about what kind of coffee was served on the Titanic. It was, as everyone knows, Sanka.

Now it's time to sink your teeth into this issue's Scramble:

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het glith hatt
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If you get stuck, talk it over with your team members. Or check out the unscrambled posters next week.



elt tonighn mid
het glith hatt
sneshi mofr nitwih