

SRSRA NEWSLETTER

For SRS Retiree Association Members

Bob & Pat Stokes, Editors

Volume 20 February 2004

SRSRA 2004 ANNUAL MEETING

March 9, 2004

12:00 -3:00 P.M.

AIKEN COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE

in the **WASHINGTON CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**

(124 Newberry Street in Aiken)

TIME TO RENEW YOUR SRSRA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2004

(see last page of this newsletter)

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Chairman's Letter

Plan to attend your SRS Retiree Association annual meeting March 9, 2004, at the new Washington Center for the Performing Arts at 124 Newberry Street across from the Alley. The meeting starts at 1 PM; come at noon to sign up for next year and visit with friends over light snacks. This is a very important meeting; you will hear from top SRS DOE and WSRC Team Management. Your Board of Directors will report on retiree benefits issues including the new Medicare Prescription Drug Bill.

Representatives from your Board of Directors met with Mr. Bob Pedde, WSRC President, on February 6. The meeting was mutually beneficial for WSRC and SRSRA. We initiated several action items with commitments for follow-up in the coming months. Key items include: Retiree role in site support with pending use of Retirees as a "voice of experience" to the Communities surrounding SRS; Retiree concerns regarding medical benefits; future pension increase; support for site ADHOC work assignments; and site help in contacting new retirees. We also discussed SRSRA's interest in supporting the development of a potential SRS Museum/Visitors Center. Great news is that **Mr. Pedde advised SRSRA that he plans to keep the "status**

quo” on our prescription drug benefits. WSRC will take advantage of the new bill’s incentives, but not at the expense of the retirees. Your Board has serious concerns regarding adverse impact we would experience if WSRC adopted the new Prescription Drug Bill President Bush signed into law recently. We voiced our concerns to our Congressional Delegation many times over the past 2 years. We also made our concerns known in letters to the editor in three CSRA newspapers. This bill would represent significant cost increases with a major loss in benefits when compared to our current benefits. Needless to say, we are delighted with Mr. Pedde’s intent regarding this Bill. We will have more discussion on this item at the Annual Meeting.

One Medical Benefits Problem retirees have recently encountered is the delay in receipt of benefits for prescription drugs. Formerly, these benefits were received faster because pharmacies initiated the filing soon after the prescription was “called in” by the patient. Unfortunately, in many cases, the patient then received payment from BC/BS, but never picked up the prescription. We were appalled to hear that the extent of this overpayment of benefits (to both retirees and current employees) is in six figures! These funds had to be returned to BC/BS, and it was no small task to recoup them! Therefore, a recent change has been made that delays from 5 days to 14 days the automatic filing of prescription drug reimbursement checks. The message is: **pick up your prescriptions in a timely manner**—we do not want to lose the convenience of a good refund program and be forced to return to the days of manual filing for prescription drug reimbursements.

See you at the Annual Meeting,

Dave Cowfer, Chairman
Savannah River Site Retiree Association

Pension Adjustment Planning

The Committee presented an executive summary of our proposed pension increase planning program to Bob Pedde, WSRC President, on February 6, 2004. Mr. Pedde had anticipated our discussion of future pension increases. He could not give assurances that WSRC and DOE would look favorably on a pension increase in 2005. He did agree that we could advise our membership that **“a dialogue has been opened” with SRS management concerning the prospect for future planned pension increases.** We were also advised that a DOE-HQ committee has been convened to consider ways to resolve the benefit disparities at different DOE sites across the complex. Members of the SRSRA Board plan to meet soon with Jeff Allison, DOE SR Operations Office Manager, to review a pension increase program, benefit disparities, and other pertinent issues concerning the Savannah River Site that are of particular interest to the SRS Retiree Association. We expect this meeting to take place before the upcoming Annual Meeting of the SRSRA.

ORA Activities

New ORA Representative Needed: We are still searching for a replacement for Paul Katonak to act as SRSRA’s representative to the ORA Board of Directors. Paul’s membership on the ORA Board expired on Jan 1, 2004. The job involves attending between six and eight two hour board meetings a year on site. If you feel you would be willing to represent the SRSRA on this Board, please advise Nick Kuehn at nhkuehn3@msn.com. **Please support your SRSRA and volunteer your time and talent.**

2004 ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars. The 2004 Annual Meeting of the SRS Retiree Association will be held Tuesday, March 9 at the Washington Center for the Performing Arts located at 124 Newberry Street in Downtown Aiken. The doors will open at 12:00 P.M. to allow members to register and, if necessary, pay their dues for 2004 and socialize with fellow retirees. The meeting will begin at 1:00 P.M. SRSRA Chairman Dave Cowfer will open the meeting and introduce the invited guests – Senator Lindsey Graham and Representatives Gresham Barrett, Max Burns, Charles Norwood and Joe Wilson (or their representatives). Mr. Fred Cavanaugh, SRSRA Public Affairs Committee Chairman, will introduce our featured speakers. Mr. Jeff Allison, the U. S. Department of Energy's SR Operations Office Manager, will be the Keynote Speaker. Mr. Robert Pedde, President of Westinghouse Savannah River Company, will give an update on the site.

Stan Smith will give the Treasurer's report for the Association, and Nick Kuehn will oversee the elections for Board of Directors. Important topics to be discussed in the State of the Association Report will be: the effect of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Bill on SRS retirees; and other retiree benefits.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Carolina will have representatives at the meeting to answer retiree questions and provide information to assist in processing medical claims. **To take full advantage of this opportunity, please read the discussion below under Medical Benefits Issue / Medical Cost Reimbursement Issues.** Medicare will also provide information for retirees at the meeting and may also have a representative present.

Election of Board Members

The Nominations Committee has selected a list of candidates for election to a two-year term on the Board of Directors of the SRS Retiree Association at the March 9, 2004, Annual Meeting. The candidates are incumbents John Church, Dave Cowfer, Sid Curry, Mike French, Sam Goforth, Al Hunter, Francis Langford, Harry Ledbetter, Stan Smith and Bob Stokes and newcomers Randolph Clarke, Carl Hirst, Charlie Miller, John Pickett and Leo Zimmerman. All of the candidates have agreed to serve if elected. We believe that this list of candidates provides the continuity needed to continue ongoing programs and the new blood that is important to the future of the Association.

Additional nominations can be made during the annual meeting; but before a candidate can be added to the ballot, he or she must agree to serve if elected. A proposed candidate can either make his or her intention known at the meeting or in a signed written statement presented to the Nomination Committee at the meeting.

Newsletter Mailing

We are continuing to use the internet email to reach nearly half of our members. **If you have an email address that can accept long attachments and you did not receive this newsletter over the internet, please correspond with Pat and Bob Stokes at Robert40@bellsouth.net and give us your correct email address for future use. If your email address has changed, or does change in the future, be sure to advise us so that we can update our files and keep you abreast of the activities of the SRSRA.**

Yearly Physicals for Retirees in CSRA

Just a note to remind all local area (CSRA) retirees that yearly physicals can be arranged through Internal Medicine Partners at 3121 Peach Orchard Road, Augusta, GA. (Tel: 706-792-5075) The phone number is also included regularly in the benefits contacts list. **You should retain the contacts list for future reference.** The cost for the service is your co-pay amount, with BC/BS paying the rest. **You should not receive any additional charges for a routine physical.**

Medical Benefits Issue:

Prescription Drug Bill Concerns

Since our last newsletter, Congress has indeed passed a Medicare supplement bill to provide prescription drug coverage. This could have been a very bad bill if implemented for SRS retirees, and **still is a very bad bill** for many other seniors who already have prescription drug coverage through a private insurer (e.g. BC/BS for SRSRA retirees). Even though President Bush urged Congress to give him a bill that would provide prescription drug coverage to seniors, the one passed by Congress was poorly constructed and will cost more money than many seniors now spend on medicine. This was an important issue that was reviewed with Mr. Pedde at the Feb.6 meeting. **Mr. Pedde gave us strong assurances that he would not be recommending any change to prescription drug coverage that would transfer a larger medical cost burden onto the SRS retirees. His recommendation is to maintain the "status quo" and stay with the current BC/BS prescription drug program we enjoy. This is indeed encouraging news to your SRSRA BOD.**

Medical Cost Reimbursement Issues

We have all had problems with reimbursement of medical benefits. One person who has always made a real effort to help resolve those problems is Judy Martin of BC/BS. Both she and Linda Clemmer, Manager of Customer Service, will be at the Annual Meeting and will answer any questions you may have to help resolve your problems quickly. To facilitate this process, if you plan to speak to Judy or Linda, please have a copy of your claim or service information that they can take with them. Please don't make this a general "gripe" session. Instead, take advantage of the opportunity to get specific help on specific claims.

We are working with BC/BS and WSRC to try to improve the general claim reimbursement process. This opportunity to speak with Judy and Linda at the Annual Meeting is designed to speed resolution of specific problems you are encountering. (Ed. Note: Medicare may send a representative to the Annual Meeting. If they can't send someone, they will provide handouts to be placed on a Medicare table.)

A recommendation from our Medical Benefits Chairman, John Church

Problems with BC/BS reimbursement continue. My wife's description is, "It's just unreal!" If it worked the way it is supposed to, then we could plan, budget, etc. But there are pitfalls all along the way. Problems are particularly bad for retirees who are on Medicare and who also live outside of South Carolina.

We are working with BC/BS and SRS to outline a path to follow to try to minimize problems. We will publish this in forthcoming Newsletters. **However, at this point there are several things we can recommend:**

1. This may seem trivial, but it is vital: organize your medical paperwork in a way that you can readily find all the bills, statements, claims, reimbursements (Doctor, hospital, clinic, Medicare, BC/BS, other), letters, faxes, etc.
2. PERSEVERE! On bad days it seems as if the system is designed to lose all the papers in the first round. You have to be able to resurrect the entire paper trail again, and again.
3. The order of processing is: Doctor submits bill to Medicare and BC/BS and gives copy to patient. [Note that some doctors will not file insurance claims. That means that you have to do all the paperwork yourself. So be sure to do it.] Things can and do go wrong at this first step. You have to be sure that the medical provider files with the right insurer. If you are out-of-state, you must insist that the BC/BS claim be filed with BC/BS of SC.

BC/BS will not reimburse claims until they receive the Medicare paperwork. If you have not received your copy of the Medicare action from the Medicare office in the state where you were treated, you must call them. For those of you with Internet access, the internet web site for telephone numbers for all states is www.medicare.gov/contacts/home.asp. Usually you will want the contact number for "Billing Medicare". [Note that these are all 800 numbers so the call is toll-free.]

Too many times the paperwork seems to be delayed or lost in route to BC/BS. You have to check with BC/BS after a reasonable period (3 weeks seems more than reasonable) to be sure that your claim is being processed. Again, for those of you with Internet access, the URL is www.southcarolinablues.com/bcbs/bcbs_memb1.nsf [Note: their servers are extremely slow to respond. This may be a hardware or software problem. We have alerted them several times to this problem, but it continues. Until improvements are made you will just have to be patient -- remember, the byword is "Persevere"].

This web site is actually quite useful [aside from the slowness of the system response] and you can accomplish a great deal. Unfortunately, Internet interaction with BC/BS remains a web browser function. When you have submitted a question on the web, you have to return to the website at a later time to see if an answer has been provided and to read that answer. BC/BS has not integrated even an email announce system to tell you when a response has been generated.

4. We list telephone numbers in each Newsletter for you to contact in regard to your medical benefits problems. You should go through them in order: (A) **SRS People Support Service Center [local SC&GA 803-725-7772 or long distance 800-368-7333]; (B) BC/BS help line [1-800-325-6596]; and finally, (C) Judy Martin at BC/BS [1-800-288-2227, ext 42205]. Please note that Judy Martin should be contacted only after you have gone through all the other steps.** She is our "contact of last resort" and, while truly helpful in solving many problems, she has limited availability to us. We must save her for the problems that can't be resolved routinely by the other steps.

SRS Activities

Six Million Pounds of Radioactive Glass Poured at DWPF

By February 2, 2004, SRS Defense Waste Processing Facility had poured six-million pounds of radioactive glass, and produced the 200th canister with its new melter. DWPF leads the world in pouring environmentally acceptable borosilicate waste, and is the largest facility of its kind. The facility converts highly radioactive waste, which is currently stored in 49 large underground tanks at SRS, into a solid glass form suitable for long storage and disposal. The heart of DWPF is the 65-ton melter. The first melter operated continuously for more than 8 years, including 6 years of radioactive operations – more than three times its design life. It produced more than 1,300 waste glass canisters. The new melter was installed in January 2003, and began pouring radioactive glass three months later.

Jeff Barnes, DWPF Facility Manager, said employees have safely and efficiently operated the process, and have consistently met or exceeded expectations. Furthermore, moving waste from our waste tanks and immobilizing it in glass is an important mission for this site.

WSRC Maintains Top DOE Safety Award

In January of this year, SRS primary contractor, Westinghouse Savannah River Company, achieved STAR Status re-certification, Star status is the highest level of safety recognition in the U.S. Dept. of Energy's Voluntary Protection Program (DOE-VPP). The DOE-VPP mirrors the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) VPP. The purpose of the program is to recognize contractor organizations, like WSRC, that have excellent safety and health programs. In order to be recognized as a participant in the DOE-VPP, a contractor must demonstrate excellence in the following safety program areas: management leadership, employee involvement, worksite analysis, hazard prevention and control, and safety and health training.

In 2000, WSRC became the single largest employer in the DOE complex to achieve VPP recognition. In 2003, WSRC demonstrated its strong safety performance by having the lowest injury frequency rates for Operations employees since 1992. The Company also earned its 8th President's Award by completing 10 million safe work hours and 176 safe days without a lost-time injury. The Site's Construction Department employees achieved five consecutive years without a lost-time injury, and have completed 12.5 million safe work hours.

“Atoms for Peace” Display at S.C. State Museum

A display commemorating SRS's contribution to the Atoms for Peace program is now open on the S.C. State Museum's second floor in Columbia. The opening of the display coincided with the 50th anniversary of the program when then President Eisenhower announced the beginning of a concerted effort to promote peaceful uses of the atom.

One major SRS contribution to the program was the production of plutonium-238, which is the heat source for electricity generation on deep-space probes. SRS plutonium has powered deep-space missions from the Pioneer 10 spacecraft in 1972 to the Cassini mission launched in 1997 and due to arrive at Saturn this year. Space missions also included Apollo 11-17 and a variety of navigational, weather, and communications uses. Voyager 1, launched in 1977, is now the most distant man-made object in the universe, being very near the edge of the

solar system. It is well over 8.3 million miles from home, far beyond Pluto's orbit, and still gathering data –and is powered by SRS-made plutonium!

SRS has manufactured other industrial and medical isotopes, including cobalt-60, which can be used both as a heat source and as a gamma-ray source for cancer treatment and industrial uses.

WSRC Team Workforce Restructuring Action

It is with much concern that we have learned that there will be another WSRC workforce restructuring during this current fiscal year. On February 5, Bob Pedde sent a letter to all full-service employees stating that DOE had approved a workforce restructuring plan that calls for some 300 employees to be laid off in the coming months. Those impacted by the job cuts will receive individual 60-day notifications the week of March 22. The staff reduction is a “result of skill mix issues as the Site continues to see modified mission needs due to accelerated cleanup and evolving program requirements”.

As part of the severance package, all employees impacted by this lay off will receive one week's pay for each year of service up to 26 weeks, together with accrued vacation and personal time for the current calendar year. Separated workers will also have the opportunity to continue their insurance benefits for a year at current costs. After that, the medical and dental benefits can be continued but at a higher rate.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Association's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. The data below summarizes financial activity for the current FY to date:

Opening Balance (7/1/03)	\$12,654.22
Expenses FYTD	1,209.87
Income FYTD	1,310.00
Closing Balance (1/31/04)	\$12,754.35

Expenses are for board meeting room through November, 2004; annual meeting room deposit; Newsletter printing; and general operating overhead. All income is from membership dues.

NOTICE OF BOARD MEETING LOCATION CHANGE

Effective with the December meeting, the SRSRA Board of Directors is now meeting in the Conference Room of the Hampton Inn on Whiskey Road/Route 19 South, near the Aiken Mall. The Board usually meets on the first Tuesday of each month (except when there is a conflict with holidays). Association members may attend and participate. Contact a BOD member to confirm the correct date if you plan to attend.

BC/BS Service Concerns

We have many letters from retirees trying to get proper Blue Cross/Blue Shield reimbursement for their medical bills. Many of the problems occur when the retiree/patient lives out-of-state (i.e., no longer in SC). If you have records of BC/BS service problems to share with SRSRA members, please send a letter outlining your case to:

John Church, Benefits Committee
SRS Retiree Association
P. O. Box 5686
Aiken, SC 29804

You should also include copies to Judy A. Martin, Manager & Service Representative, Major Group Marketing AX-330, BC/BS of South Carolina I-20 at Alpine Road, Columbia, SC 29219 or you can email your information to her at: **Judy.A.Martin@bcbsc.com** or fax: 1-803-736-2851. Phone her as a last resort: 1-800-288-2227 x42205

Benefits Contacts

People Support Service Center (a one-stop service for most HR and payroll activities and questions).

- ◆ **803-725-7772 (local area SC and GA)**
- ◆ **800-368-7333 (long distance)**
- ◆ service-center@srs.gov (email contact for this new service)

◇ **Life, Health, Dental**

Becky Proveaux	PS Svc. Ctr. #
Rosalee Bennett	PS Svc. Ctr. #
Greg Murray	803-725-0531
Cindy McClintock	803-725-7004

◇ **Pension**

John Felkel	803-725-7722
Viola Best	803-725-1900

◇ **Internal Medicine Partners** 706-792-5075
(Annual Physical Examinations)

◇ **Metropolitan Life** 800-360-2747
(WSRC/BSRI SIP Funds Program)

◇ **Blue Cross/Blue Shield of SC**

1-800-325-6596
www.southcarolinablues.com
Option 1 for Medical
Option 2 for Dental
Option 3 for Pre-Cert/Med Authorization

◇ **Value Options** (mental health & substance abuse assistance) 800-333-6557

◇ **BAC (Westinghouse Corporate Pension)**
800-581-4222

◇ **Safety Eyeglass Office**
Tom Cuny 803-725-3379

MEMBERSHIP

IT IS TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2004! PLEASE COMPLETE THE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM BELOW AND RETURN WITH YOUR CHECK FOR YOUR 2004 MEMBERSHIP DUES. PLEASE REMIND OTHER RETIREES TO CONTACT RAY PERKS (TEL. 803-642-8654) TO GET ON THE MEMBERSHIP LIST.

_____ Yes, I want to **RENEW** my membership in the SRSRA. (I am willing to serve on the Board of Directors. _____ Yes _____ No)

_____ Yes, I want to **JOIN** the SRS Retiree Association. (I would serve on the Board of Directors. _____ Yes _____ No)

_____ Yes, **my SRS retired spouse** wants to **JOIN** the SRSRA. (...and would serve on the SRSRA BOD. _____ Yes _____ No)

Annual Dues: Year 2004

_____ \$15 for Retiree

_____ \$0 for Retiree's Spouse (if also retired from SRS)

_____ \$5 for Retiree's Survivor Spouse

Year 2005

_____ \$15 for Retiree

_____ \$0 for Retiree's Spouse (if also retired from SRS)

_____ \$5 for Retiree's Survivor Spouse

SRS RETIREE NAME _____ SRS RETIRED SPOUSE'S NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ TELEPHONE _____

RETIREE RETIRED FROM: WSRC _____ BSRI _____ BWXT-SRC _____ BNFL-SRC _____ OTHER SRS _____

SPOUSE RETIRED FROM SRS: WSRC _____ BSRI _____ BWXT-SRC _____ BNFL-SRC _____ OTHER SRS _____

RETIREE DATE OF RETIREMENT _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

RETIREE'S SPOUSE DATE OF RETIREMENT _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Return to: **SRS Retiree Association P. O. Box 5686 Aiken, S.C. 29804 Attn: Ray Perks**

Please help your membership committee locate recent retirees and any other non-member retirees who can help grow our membership and support the objectives of the SRS Retiree Association. The following is a list of recent retirees who should be invited to join the Association and contribute their support. If you are a friend of these persons please take a moment and ask them to join us. The membership form is shown above. Please give them a copy of the newsletter or notify a member of the BOD and we will be glad to send them a copy by email or regular mail.

--Ray Perks, Chairman, Membership Committee --

tel: 803-642-8654

Gerald Bach

Dorothy Barnes

Brenda Bell

Betty Bolen

Royce Boone Jr.

Gisle Bryant

Vonda Clerc

Brent Daugherty

Patricia Edey

James Fallaw

Samuel Ford

Joye Glaze

Rhonda Green

Lana Griffin

Marcia Hall

Gloria Hansen

Monte Hawkins

Daniel Hayward

Cubby Heath

Ron Hinds

Rita Hitchler

Emily Johnson

Bhagwan Joshi

Wallace McCluggage

D.C. Miller

Kathy Moore

Charles Morgan

William Morgan

Gary Mullis

David Norred

Frank O'Brien

Arthur Odom

George Owens

Charles Pair

Carmen Provenzano

Teresa Quarles

Paul Shearer

Jim F. Smith

Art Stephen

Donald Swindler

Raam Vichare

Joanne Waldrop

Steven Walling

Carolyn Williams

Oleen Witter