

The HR Messenger

A Quarterly Journal of Updates, Announcements, Instructions, Articles and Tips

Issue 02 April 2011



Income Taxes

Many of you may wonder the following, “Are my retirement benefits subject to North Carolina income tax?”, and the answer is:

As a result of the “Bailey” tax case, retirement benefits that are payable to members of the Retirement System who have maintained five or more years of retirement service credit as of August 12, 1989, are not subject to North Carolina income tax. If you did not have five years of maintained retirement service as of August 12, 1989, your retirement benefits are subject to North Carolina income tax, less a \$4,000 annual exclusion when you file your North Carolina income tax return. The taxable portion is equal to the portion of your benefit that is taxable for federal tax purposes.

You may also wonder, “Do I have to pay Federal or North Carolina income tax on my retirement contribution on which I have already paid income tax?”, and the answer is:

No – retirement contributions which have been previously taxed will not be taxed again. If you have previously paid tax on all or some of your contributions, a very small portion of your retirement benefit will be excluded from Federal income taxes each month for your expected lifetime. When you receive your annual 1099-R from the Retirement System, the non-taxable and taxable portions are shown for tax purposes.

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Getting Comfortable With Public Speaking

Try these tips to feel influential as a public speaker:

1 – After being introduced, don't dive into your notes too fast. Instead, begin with an engaging and authentic story about your topic while making eye contact with your audience. You'll establish a “presence” and a connection that your audience wants with you.

2 – Don't be afraid to raise a provocative or controversial opinion. Doing so will cause your audience to feel the time spent was worth it.

3 – Visit YouTube.com and search “Speech tips.” Watch a few pros and spot a few things great speakers have in common. These are teachable tactics. Model them in front of a mirror, and you will multiply your effectiveness at your next presentation.

-Courtesy of REACH-

Let's Welcome the Following Employees to the Halifax County Team!



January - March 2011

Jason Barbee	EMS	February 1, 2011
John Bellamy	EMS	March 1, 2011
Stephanie Blalock	EMS	March 1, 2011
Christopher Boden	Sheriff	January 31, 2011
Sheila Buckner	EMS/911	March 9, 2011
Helen Cooper	Public Utilities	February 1, 2011
Grace Crowell	Tax	February 1, 2011
Daniel Dickens	Sheriff/Jail	March 21, 2011
Katherine Genova	EMS	March 1, 2011
Dr. Karen Ballou-Hunt	Health	February 1, 2011
Brandy Keller	EMS	February 1, 2011
Andrea Lewis	Sheriff	January 31, 2011
Emily Matthews	EMS	February 1, 2011
Dr. Delisha Moore	Health	January 25, 2011
Sandra Partin	Board of Elections	February 1, 2011
Patricia Peterson	Sheriff	March 14, 2011
Barbara Plum	Health	March 1, 2011
Camesha Robinson	EMS/911	March 9, 2011
John Silver	Sheriff	March 1, 2011
Jason Smith	EMS	February 22, 2011
Jessica Watson	DSS	February 15, 2011

Retiree News

The following employees are retiring from Halifax County effective April 1, 2011:

Clifton Cobb – Planning

William McBlief – Legal

Evelyn Whitaker –
HRM/Commodity Foods

Congratulations to each of you on achieving such a milestone, and we wish you lots of rest and relaxation as you begin a new chapter in your life!



Marriages

Congratulations to Jennifer J. Gaskins who became Jennifer G. Simmons on Saturday, January 1, 2011.

Congratulations to William "Bill" McBlief who was married on Saturday, March 12, 2011



Father

CONGRATULATIONS TO

Chris Rountree, Planning
Dept., who welcomed a baby
boy, Nolan on December 16,
2010

Caroll Newbern,
Environmental Health, who
welcomed a baby boy, Perry
Gene Newbern on March 29,
2011



Father

CONGRATULATIONS TO

Robert Byrum, EMS Dept.,
who welcomed a baby girl,
Natalie Cooper Byrum on
February 12, 2011

Tip of the Quarter-5 Ways You May Be Making a Bad Job Worse



The truth is, you may be stuck in that less-than-ideal job for a while. Being stuck in a job that is below your skill level and outside of your career path can be as stressful as not being employed at all. As bad as the job seems, however, you may be making it harder on yourself. Any of these behaviors sound familiar? If so, don't worry. Simple changes to your attitude will get you back on track.

***Complaining constantly:** Let's face it, it feels good to talk about how much you don't like something, so you do. A lot. But pointless complaining can also reinforce negative feelings instead of helping you find a solution.

Instead: Turn your lamenting into solution-oriented conversations. Talking positively about issues can help ease stress and lead you to find ways to make your workdays better.

***Doing your job badly:** To save yourself from the stress of doing what you don't like doing, you may simply slack off or not do it at all. That kind of passive-aggressive rebellion may feel good in the moment, but it will only create resentment toward you, extra work for co-workers

and a higher likelihood that you won't have that much-needed job much longer.

Instead: Keep up with your work. Working efficiently and professionally will make you more eligible for an advancement or job change when something becomes available.

***Avoiding company functions:** If you're already bummed to be there, why not skip out on group lunch, the weekend retreat or the non-mandatory meeting?

Instead: Because being absent sends a message that you are not interested in the company, and that won't win you any favors. You also miss out on valuable time with the boss where you can show your support and petition for a better situation.

***Not enjoying your time off:** You just want out of this job, so you devote every second off the clock to looking for a better position. Too bad all work and no play make Jane or Joe Jobseeker very dull indeed.

Instead: Enjoy yourself when you're not at work. A weekend away, a relaxing night with movies or indulging in a hobby can fill your soul while you work to fill your wallet. This will make you more relaxed and give you more energy to face your workweek.

***Getting fired:** As much as you don't want to be doing it, you need this job. If you didn't, you wouldn't still be there.

Instead: Do what you can to keep your job. Show up on time, do the work required of you, don't burn a statue of your boss in effigy.

With a dismissal on your record, it may be difficult for you to collect unemployment compensation or get another job. You will also lose out on contacts and a good reference.

It's true, not liking your job can be difficult. But you can work to make the most of it; and make yourself ready for when the right opportunity comes along.

(Courtesy of Nancy Tillery – article obtained from Aydreia Walden – clipart supplied by HRM)

Tip #2 – Thriving at a New Job



Starting a new position can be exciting, but it's also stressful. The first few months are typically a probationary period, when managers and colleagues will be assessing your talents and ability to fit in at the organization. First impressions are critical, so you want to get off on the right foot from the beginning. Following are some suggestions for thriving at a new job from the first day.



Make a clean exit – If you're leaving another job for this one, you don't want to burn any bridges with your former employer. Tie up loose ends with your work and thank everyone who assisted you during your time there. By parting on good terms, you'll keep your reputation and professional network intact.

Brush up on your skills – If you've been on the job hunt for a while, some of your skills may have grown rusty since you last sat down at the keyboard. If you will be using Excel frequently in your new role, for instance, spend some time with the program, or even consider enrolling in an online course before your first day. Even though you are likely still familiar with the software, you may need a refresher on how to use the application's more advanced functions and features.

Forget what you know – You may have done things a particular way at your previous company, but it's a safe bet that at least a few processes or procedures will be handled differently at your new employer. So be flexible. For instance, a face-to-face communication may have been preferred at your old firm, but now you may need to rely more on e-mail or instant messaging to contact people. Take note of common protocols and embrace them. Your ability to adapt quickly to the new environment will play a role in your success.

Start strong – Show your new employer that you can hit the ground running by giving it your all from day one. Try to soak up as much information as you can about the organization, the various roles within your group and where your position fits into the big picture. Also show your enthusiasm by jumping right into your assignments and volunteering for new projects. Just be careful you don't take on more than you can handle. If you do, you may not only burn out and become less productive, but you also could damage your reputation if you miss deadlines because your plate is too full.

Learn the firm's Internet policies – Every office has its own rules regarding Internet usage. You may think it's safe to do a little online shopping or check sports scores during lunch, but your new company may prohibit non-business Internet use. Disclosing information about your new employer on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter also is against the rules in most situations. If you haven't received a copy of the company's Web use guidelines, ask your manager so you're informed.

Get to know your co-workers – According to a survey by Robert Half International, 32 percent of workers said the greatest difficulty of starting a new job is getting acclimated to the new workplace culture and colleagues. To ease the transition, try to learn more about the people with whom you will work on a daily basis. Offer to take them to lunch, talk to them in the break room and participate in company social events. You may make new internal contacts who can support you during your initial weeks and beyond.

As you strive to adjust to your new surroundings, remind yourself that you were hired because you were the best person for the position. Your employer is just as invested in your success as you are. So don't be afraid to ask questions and inquire about training and mentoring programs that might be beneficial. You'll start on the right foot and build the knowledge needed to make an impact in the months and years to come.

(Courtesy of Tracey Eason – article obtained from Robert Half International – clipart supplied by HRM)

Military Website for Psychological Health Helps

The U. S. Department of Defense operates a website dedicated to psychological health. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury website

(www.dcoe.health.mil)

“assesses, validates, oversees and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Department of Defense meets the needs of the nation’s military

communities, warriors and families.”

If you are active duty, a concerned person, or a professional, look into this rich resource of help whose key purpose is helping service personnel with “invisible” wounds of war like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

(Contributor: REACH EAP & Workplace Solutions)

Expanded Options Available for Law Enforcement Officers to Transfer Funds to Retirement Systems Account at Retirement-NC 401(k) and NC Deferred Compensation (457) Transfer Benefit

North Carolina Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) now have expanded options for transferring funds from their supplemental retirement accounts to their North Carolina Retirement Systems account at retirement. This opportunity became available when the General Assembly passed a bill, during the 2010 legislative session, providing the opportunity for all retiring Teachers' and State and Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System members to transfer all or a portion of their NC 401(k) or NC Deferred Compensation funds to their North Carolina Retirement Systems account and receive an additional separate monthly lifetime benefit based on these transferred funds. Previously, you could only transfer all of your NC 401(k) funds.

To learn more about the NC 401(k)/NC 457 transfer benefits – several sources are available to help LEOs determine if the benefit is right for you. The North Carolina Retirement Systems and Prudential Retirement have partnered with the State Employees' Credit Union (SECU) to provide you with information on the Transfer Benefit. Contact any one of the partners for more information. State Employees' Credit Union has employees who are ready to advise you on whether this benefit is right for you. They offer this service free of charge and you do not need to be a Credit Union member. As a non-profit, member-owned organization, SECU will provide you with unbiased advice.

Visit the NC 401(k)/NC 457 Transfer Benefit website. View the information and use the "Is This for Me?" quick calculator at www.nclifetimeincome.org. Additional information regarding the law enforcement Transfer Benefit option is available at <https://nclifetimeincome.org/SpecialOptionsForLEOs.html>.

If you do not have access to the Internet or have further questions about the material on the website, SECU call center staff is available to assist you 24 hours a day at **888.732.8562**. Press "3" to reach an experienced call center staff person.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Check out who made it into Volume 1, Issue 9, February 2011 of The Veterans Monthly



Shelly Whitton, Veterans Service Officer

Ms. Whitton was interviewed and asked the following questions

Q: Why did you decide to become a VSO?

A: I love to feel like I am helping people to get what they deserve out of life. Veterans fought for us to have freedom and not it's time someone fought for them.

Q: How many Veterans do you serve in Halifax County?

A: There are somewhere around 5,000 Veterans in Halifax County. I serve about 2,000 of those and growing.

Q: How long have you been a VSO?

A: I started out as the Administrative Assistant to the VSO here in 1997. Upon her retirement in 2009, I took over as VSO.

Q: What is your favorite part of the job?

A: The satisfaction at the end of the day knowing that I did my best to help a Veteran find the answers they were looking for.

Q: What started you down the path to becoming a VSO?

A: Again, I have to say the fact that I love to help people, especially Veterans because I don't feel they get the recognition they deserve. There has to be someone to stand up and fight for them and believe in them and that's what being a VSO is all about.

Q: What is your biggest challenge in assist Veterans?

A: Trying to make them understand that it's not an overnight process. You have to have patience when dealing with the VA.

Q: What was your most memorable case and what were the circumstances?

A: Although we are still waiting on a decision for this particular case, I would have to say that my most memorable one would be for the Navy Corpsman who was in Vietnam for a full tour. He came back to me and cried in my office for two hours because the VA failed to acknowledge his time there even though it was documented right on his discharge. It wasn't just that the VA denied his conditions, but the fact that they denied his service there. We have refilled and are awaiting a decision. His stories from Vietnam were of horror, but to him nothing was as horrible as the VA not acknowledging his time in country. My heart went out to him and it still does.

Q: What advice would you give to Veterans just beginning the claims process?

A: Be patient! Nothing is going to happen overnight. And if you do not understand something, don't be afraid to ask. We are here to help you and never give up on what you know in your heart is rightfully due to you.

To read more about Veterans please visit The Veterans Monthly Newsletter archives online at www.vetlawyers.com.

Please join the HRM staff in congratulating Shelly on being chosen by The Veterans Monthly as the Veterans Service Officer to be interviewed for their newsletter, and spotlight the tireless work she does on a daily basis to assist the Veterans of Halifax County.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

North Carolina Economic Developer of the Year



Cathy Scott,
Economic
Development
Director

On Friday, February 25, 2011, at the Northeast State of the Region meeting in Williamston, NC, Cathy was chosen Economic Developer of the Year.

Cathy was named top recruiter by her peers. Cathy, who is not big on recognition, said she was pleased her peers selected her.

Cathy was presented an award recognizing her Outstanding and Dedicated Service. She said she may do the day-to-day work, but many groups come together to provide financing, business support and leadership for business/industry recruitment and expansion efforts.

Please join the County Administration staff and Management Team in congratulating Cathy on being recognized by her peers for such a prestigious award.

A Message from the County Manager



Tony N. Brown

Hello fellow employees and Happy Spring! As we continue to go through these tough economic times, I would like to take a moment to compliment each of you for your hard work, dedication and determination in addressing our budget challenges. We still have an on-going task in providing services with limited budgets but, as we have done historically, we will continue to step up to the challenge and provide our essential services.

My goal is to maintain our current budget for the upcoming fiscal year (FY2011-20-12) and address our capital needs as best as we can with the Board of Commissioners. My goal is to maintain jobs at the current level or at a minimum have temporary hour

reductions as to not have to implement a reduction-in-force plan.

Unlike other local governments and the State of North Carolina, we have proactively done much to position ourselves to not be in a dire situation of doing massive layoffs as are occurring and/or being proposed in other locations. Though it's a challenging process, our Revenue-based budgeting plan has allowed us to be in a better position to address our needs. All this has been done without requiring a tax increase.

I thank you for the job you do and persevering with Team Halifax to continue our services. We have thankless jobs, but rest assured, you **are** appreciated by those you serve. Once we are in a better economic position, we will be able to fiscally thank you by providing added benefits again (cost-of-living/market adjustments, performance pay, etc.).

Bless you all and I hope you enjoy the beginning of the Spring and Summer season.

April is Public Health Month

April is National Public Health Month. April 4-10, 2011 is observed as National Public Health Week. "Safety is No Accident: Live Injury-Free" is the theme for National Public Health Week this year. Creating a healthier nation starts with creating a safer nation, and that means taking steps to protect neighbors, families and communities from harm. Injuries, unexpected events and violence affect people at home, at work, in their communities, on the move and even at play. Unintentional injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes, poisonings and burns, rank among the top 10 causes of death for people ages 1-44.

During National Public Health Week 2011, the American Public Health Association needs your help to educate Americans that "Safety is No Accident." Together, we can help Americans live injury-free in all areas of life: at work, at home, at play, in your community and anywhere people are on the move. We all need to do our part to prevent injuries and violence in our communities. Join us as we work together to create a safer and healthier nation. For more information about events regarding Public Health Month, please contact the Halifax County Health Department.



(Courtesy of Denise Norman, Wellness Coordinator – clipart supplied by HRM)

APRIL AWARENESS MONTH

The month of April has been designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) in the United States. The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence and to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence. Each day, people witness a continuum of behaviors that range from being respectful and safe, to sexually abusive and violent. For more information, please visit www.nsvrc.org/saam.

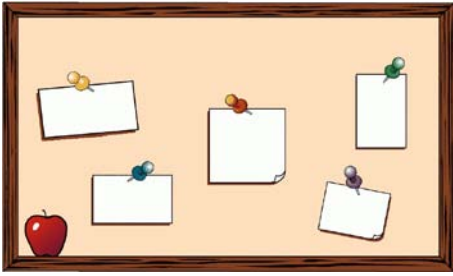
April is Stress Awareness Month, and a time to get to the bottom of what stresses you out, how to eliminate what is stressing you out, and maybe find a new hobby to do for the rest of the year. Although April 16th is Stress Awareness Day, to see thirteen tips to use 364 days of the year to calm you down, please go to the following website at www.associatedcontent.com.

Child abuse can occur anywhere and to anyone. We must all be made aware to look for signs and symptoms of abuse. We cannot look away.

It is for this reason that the month of April has been designated Child Abuse Awareness Month. For more information on the signs to look for in child abuse, there are hotlines you can call anytime with questions or concerns you may have. You can call **800.4ACHILD**.

Alcohol abuse does not just happen to certain people. It can affect people of all ages, sexes and race. No one is immune to alcohol abuse or the affects it has on oneself or to others. Alcohol abuse can happen to everyone from high schoolers to senior citizens. That is why April has been designated as Alcohol Awareness Month. More education and awareness of this disease could possibly, and hopefully, save a life. If you think you have a drinking problem you can contact Alcohol Abuse and Crisis Intervention at **800.234.0246**. You can also contact the Substance Abuse Hotline at **800.331.2900**. You do not have to suffer through this alone.

Bulletin Board



This is a “friendly” reminder to pay your county taxes. It’s as easy as visiting Human Resources and completing Form HR1013, Property Tax Deduction, to arrange for a set amount to be deducted from your monthly payroll check. For your vehicle taxes please contact the Tax Department to set up a payment plan.

The Shared Leave Bank is out of time – if you feel generous, and want to assist fellow co-workers, please do so by completing a Shared Leave Donation Form. Forms may be requested from Human Resources.

Charlotte Motor Speedway is offering 2011 Spring discounts for racing enthusiasts. You will be able to buy 2 get 2 free or a 25% discount on premium seating for their Visit Myrtle Beach.com 4 Wide Nationals (drag racing) the weekend of April 14th. Please call **800.455.3267** or visit www.charlottespeedway.com/cms1. If ordering tickets on the website, enter “County Name”, under company name. If calling the ticket office, please give the **offer code: CMS1** to receive your corporate discount as well as give the county name.

BCBS has developed an online community where North Carolinians can share their opinions and ideas about health care, wellness, and other topics. Go to BlueAskYouNC.com to share your opinions or provide comments. This is a new open forum where you can get involved, share your perspectives and participate in conversations with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina. Each week, those who actively participate on the site will be eligible to win great prizes like gift cards to top retailers or tickets to North Carolina sporting events.

Have a news tip to share – please email hrm@halifaxnc.com.

Upcoming Events

Spring Begins – March 30, 2011

National County Government Month – April 1-30, 2011

Halifax Day – April 12, 2011

Open Enrollment – April 11-15, 2011

Make-up Day – April 18, 2011

Good Friday – April 22, 2011

Administrative Professionals Day – April 27, 2011

Memorial Day – May 30, 2011

Summer Begins – June 21, 2011

HCHRM

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2011 Cafeteria Benefits Enrollment Schedule



Date	Time	Location
Monday, April 11, 2011	9:00	DSS Main Conference Room
	1:30	DSS Main Conference Room
	3:00	DSS Main Conference Room
Tuesday, April 12, 2011	9:00	Health Department Board Room
	1:30	Health Department Board Room
	3:00	Health Department Board Room
Wednesday, April 13, 2011	9:00	DSS Main Conference Room
	1:30	DSS Main Conference Room
	3:00	DSS Main Conference Room
Thursday, April 14, 2011	9:00	Ag. Extension Auditorium
	1:30	Ag. Extension Auditorium
	3:00	Ag. Extension Auditorium
Friday, April 15, 2011	9:00	Old Commissioner's Building
	1:30	Old Commissioner's Building
	3:00	Old Commissioner's Building
MAKE UP DAY:		
Monday, April 18, 2011	10:30 – NO PRESENTATIONS	Old Commissioner's Building

NOTE:

You will hear group presentations on the specified dates and times, and will be seen by a Mark III Benefits Enroller at another location in order to talk about your options. It is our hope that this process will allow you more privacy in discussing your benefits.