

Employee Newsletter

MAY 2015



Retirement Statements

Retirement statements will be available around the middle of May at the Retirement System's website. You may access your account and statement by following the steps below:

1. Go to www.myncretirement.com
2. Click on ORBIT
3. Login to your account using your user name and password or if you have not set up an account, you may do so now. Please remember your user name and password as nobody at the retirement system can help you with that.
4. Click on View Annual Benefits statement on the left then click view annual statement

This statement shows lots of information that is useful.

When you are on this site you can also see who you have named as beneficiary. **If you have not yet named beneficiaries, please name a beneficiary for the death benefit and for return of contributions while you are here.** If you are a newer employee contributing to the retirement system, this is where you may go to designate beneficiaries. Remember to name a beneficiary for both death benefit AND return of contributions.

If you need help, I'll try to assist, but most of it you will need to do yourself.

Do you have a County purchase card?

If you purchase anything in the month of June using your County purchase card and you did not obtain a purchase order for that purchase before May 29th, you will be personally responsible for paying for that purchase. It does not matter how small the purchase, it must have been encumbered using a purchase order. The reason for this is that invoices with a June date that don't get charged until July or later and have not been secured by a purchase order result in budget violations. Therefore, if you make that purchase and didn't obtain a purchase order, the money will need to be repaid to the County through a payroll deduction. Also, for those of you who aren't department heads, before making ANY purchase ANY time, you should always check with either your department head or the person who processes invoices to make sure there is money budgeted and available for whatever you are purchasing.

Annual Open Enrollment!!!

Annual open enrollment for our insurance products will be on May 13th from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm in the upstairs Courtroom in the Courthouse. This year we will have a make-up day for anyone who can't come on the 13th. It will be on the 18th with a session at 1 and one at 2:30. **This is the only time during the year you can make changes to your health, dental, cancer, vision and accident policies without having a qualifying event** (such as marriage, divorce, loss of job, birth, death, etc.). You may cover spouses and children on dental and/or vision without having the medical coverage, so those changes may be made now as well. Keep in mind that in order to make changes when you have a qualifying event, the change must be made within 30 days of the qualifying event. So if you get married, divorced or have a child or have some other event that would be considered a qualifying event, you have 30 days to add or remove dependents to/from your health, dental, life, etc.

You may also make changes to any of our other benefits at that time, if you so choose. VALIC & 401K reps will be here as well as a representative from the Local Government Federal Credit Union. The meeting is mandatory.

MAY BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Roy Dickey | 1 |
| Larry Payne | 2 |
| Lisa Stroud | 2 |
| Maria Ward | 3 |
| Brad Hoxit | 6 |
| Donna Crawford | 7 |
| Brooke Leatherwood | 8 |
| David Pipes | 10 |
| Stacy Denny | 11 |
| Deborah Palmer | 11 |
| JB Reeves | 11 |
| Jason Derreberry | 13 |
| James Phillips | 13 |
| David Hughes | 14 |
| Will King, IV | 14 |
| Shannon Bruce | 15 |
| Candy Anderson | 16 |
| Stephanie Swanson | 17 |
| Mike Catuto | 18 |
| Cindy Coleman | 18 |
| Gary Davis | 19 |
| Nancy Hartsock | 19 |
| Clesia Wells | 19 |
| Jan Griggs | 22 |
| Susan Mashburn | 22 |
| Justin Radford | 23 |
| Jason Roberts | 23 |
| Randy Wiggins | 24 |
| David Crisp | 26 |
| Michael Ham | 26 |
| Donnie Roberson | 26 |
| Sara Barnett | 27 |
| Bill Brendle | 28 |
| Tracy Pollard | 28 |
| Robert Truett | 28 |
| Thomas Nelson | 29 |
| Nathan Sneed | 29 |
| Bob Davis | 30 |
| Sam Davis | 30 |
| Wayne Rogers | 31 |
| Ages 17 to 82 | |

Enjoy the little things for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.

Is there something you would like to see in the newsletter? Please email Melody at melody.johnson@cherokee-county.nc.gov with any suggestions

Commissioners Board Meetings

Mon. May 4, 2015 6:30 PM
Mon., May 18, 2015 6:30 PM

National Weeks in May

Ok, so I'm being a little nerdy this month, plus hunting some new stuff for the newsletter. There are several National Weeks of things in May, so I picked the ones that I felt applied to our group of employees:

1. **National Wildflower Week** is May 4 to May 10. This is a week to celebrate wildflowers. Lady Bird Johnson, our former first lady, and actress Helen Hayes founded an organization in 1982 to protect and preserve North America's native plants and natural landscapes. First as the National Wildflower Research Center and later as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, this special place exists to introduce people to the beauty and diversity of wildflowers and other native plants.



2. **National Nurses Week** is May 6 to May 12. During National Nurses Week and throughout the year, American Nurses Association is proud to celebrate the role nurses play in delivering the highest level of quality care to their patients. The National Nurses Week 2015 theme "Ethical Practice. Quality Care." recognizes the importance of ethics in nursing and acknowledges the strong commitment, compassion and care nurses display in their practice and profession. The theme is an important part of ANA's 2015 Year of Ethics outreach to promote and advocate for the rights, health and safety of nurses and patients.

3. **National Police Week** is May 20 to May 26. Each May, during National Police Week which was established in 1962 by joint resolution in Congress, the U.S. recognizes the service and sacrifice of U.S. law enforcement and pays tribute to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. A candlelight vigil is held at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, DC in honor of the law enforcement officers who have died that year. The names engraved on the Memorial include fallen officers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, and federal law enforcement and military police agencies. This event, as well as a memorial service on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol Building are open to the public.



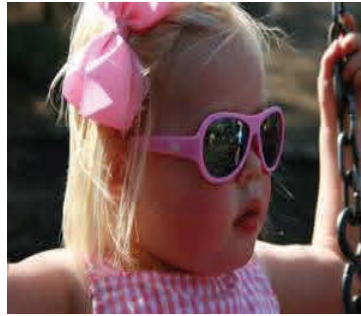
4. **National Emergency Medical Service Week** is May 17 to 23. Each May, National EMS Week is celebrated across the U.S. For 2015, EMS Week will be May 17-23. Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Day is May 20. EMS Week is planned and promoted each year by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP). EMS consists of EMT's, paramedics, and emergency dispatchers. EMS is vital to the healthcare chain. Without them, our healthcare system would have significant challenges and many lives would be lost without our EMT's and paramedics involved in the process. EMS is always on standby, even on holidays. They work long hours and often put themselves in harms way to help others. National EMS Week is a time to give back to these dedicated workers who are there for us during our times of need.

Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness defense is prevention. Here are some prevention tips:



- Drink more fluids, regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Don't drink liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar—these actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the shopping mall or public library—even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. Call your local health department to see if there are any heat-relief shelters in your area.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- Although any one at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others.
- Check regularly on:
 - Infants and young children
 - People aged 65 or older
 - People who have a mental illness
 - Those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure
- Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children, of course, need much more frequent watching. (Continued on next page)





If you must be out in the heat:

- Limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. Warning: If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage. Remember the warning in the first “tip” (above), too.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say “broad spectrum” or “UVA/UVB protection” on their labels).

This information provided by [NCEH's Health Studies Branch](#).

FLEX SPENDING ACCOUNTS

If you are currently enrolled in the flex spending accounts and wish to participate again beginning July 1, you ***must sign a new enrollment form***. This is the one benefit that you must enroll in anew on an annual basis.

If you are not participating in this program and have healthcare expenses for yourself, your children, or your spouse—even if you don’t have them covered on County insurance—you can enroll in this benefit and file for reimbursement of any approved healthcare costs associated with your children, spouse or yourself. Examples of covered expenses include prescription drug costs, office visit co-pays, eye glasses, out-of-pocket dental expenses, hospital expenses, screening tests such as x-rays and blood work., etc. This is not an exhaustive list but these are some of the more common items for which you may be reimbursed. Over the counter items are not covered unless you have a prescription.

Even if you put away \$500 a year and use it, you will save at least \$38.25 because the money is deducted on a pre-tax basis so you don’t have to pay any state or federal income tax or FICA on the amount of your contributions. In my opinion, this is one of the best benefits we offer to our employees because the coverage isn’t limited to only those who are enrolled in our health insurance, but covers all your eligible family members.

The only thing that I would caution you about is that this is a use it or lose it benefit, so you need to estimate conservatively what your expenses will be and don’t contribute more than you will use. One good thing about this now, though, is that the IRS is allowing each participant to carry forward up to \$500 in unspent deductions to the following year. If you know you, your spouse, or dependent children are going to be having any medical or dental procedures, I highly recommend this to you.

Another way to look at this is to think of it as sort of an insurance policy to pay for medical expenses that aren’t paid by your insurance. You put in what you know you’ll spend, you pay no taxes on your investment and you get it back out as you spend the annual amount you’re committed to.

We currently have pre-paid debit cards that are used to make qualified purchases where credit cards are accepted. They are loaded with your annual contribution amount and can be used beginning July 1st. You do have to submit copies of receipts to Wage Works to prove the expenditure was a qualified expense. This is a relatively easy procedure. If you have a smart phone, they have an app that lets you do that with your smart phone. If you don’t the receipts may be faxed or emailed.