

New Benefits for MEA

By Robert Anderson

At informational meetings in offices across the City, members of the Managerial Employees Association worry about gaps in their benefits package.

"We hear our members' concerns," said Managerial Employees Association President Stu Eber. Now members can fill some of those gaps through MEA's new Voluntary Insurance Program (VIP).

"VIP provides more flexibility and more choices," said Craig Butler, senior vice president for Winston Financial, based in New York City, which manages the plan.

The benefits include supplemental packages for dental, vision, disability and life insurance at a range of price points. "Hopefully MEA members will find the new benefits useful and take advantage of the program," said President Eber.

"Our Organization Committee is always striving to reduce members' out of pocket expenses," said Joel Fishelson, Director-At-Large for MEA.

Dental and Vision

Some retired MEA members have difficulty accessing dental and vision care providers after they move out of the metropolitan area.

"I moved to Alabama and I don't have a Davis Vision provider in my town," said one MEA retiree. "I have to drive to Atlanta to get my eyeglasses."

VIP provides supplemental dental and vision insurance accepted by a wide network of service providers, with more than 65,000 dental providers and 40,000 vision providers including LensCrafters, Sears, JC Penny, Target and most Pearle Vision.

The dental benefit provides a discount of 20 to 60 percent on cleanings, root canals, dentures, cosmetic dentistry and more. Vision savings include discounts of 15 to 40 percent on eye exams, glasses,



Ismael Arjune and Craig Butler for Winston Financial

contacts and laser vision correction. MEA members will also still be able to collect their usual benefit from the City's dental and vision plan for out-of-network procedures and services.

VIP's supplemental dental and vision coverage will cost \$7.75 a month or a discounted \$71.55 a year for a single MEA member, and \$10.95 a month and \$98.55 a year for a family.

Life Insurance

New managers only have 31 days to enroll in the Management Benefits Fund's Group Universal Life (GUL) plan or increase their existing life benefits without fear that they may be refused because of medical underwriting. However, VIP offers "guaranteed issue" life insurance for the MEA members and their immediate families. "This new MEA members-only benefits gives managers flexibility as their life needs change," said Stu Eber.

"Our plan offers members who are actively at-work a perpetual open enrollment window. And, more importantly, they have guaranteed issue and do not have to answer any medical

questions to get into the plan," said Ismael Arjune, senior account manager for Winston Financial. "This is something they can't get on the open market." Coverage is also available to spouses and dependent children.

VIP's life insurance is fully portable if the member retires or leaves employment and rates do not change. The life insurance also has many living benefits including cash value accumulation, an accelerated benefit for long term care (including nursing home, home health or adult day care) and an unemployment lapse protection rider in the event a member is involuntarily laid off.

MEA members can tailor the coverage amounts according to their needs and budget planning. The life insurance benefit is capped out at \$300,000.

Disability Insurance

The disability insurance offered by the City benefit plans does not start until an employee has been unable to work for 180 days, or about six months.

That leaves a half-year in which an MEA member may be deprived of income.

The VIP disability plan fills some of the gap in the City plan, starting after just 30 days and continuing for up to two years. The plan replaces up to half of the manager's previous income, helping to ease the disabled person's transition. That's in addition to the City's plan.

VIP's plan is guaranteed issue and all members can enroll without answering medical questions. On or off-the-job disabilities and pre-existing conditions that result in a disability will be covered starting 12 months after an MEA member enrolls in the plan. The cost of the benefit starts around \$7 a week, or \$364 a year.

"The Organization Committee is already researching other potential benefits to offer our members. Stay tuned!" said Organization Committee Chair Joel Fishelson. ■

Bits & Pieces



Linda Barnes, Executive Director

Getting Great Evaluations — Part 2

By Linda Barnes, Executive Director, and Bill Dworkin, Senior Advisor and Former President

We all know how important evaluations can be for New York City managers.

In the last issue, we provided basic information about the evaluation process. Now here are some strategies and tactics that can help you improve your performance as an individual manager and help you earn an outstanding evaluation.

"I've used these principles for years with good success," said Shelly Shulman, Executive Vice President of the MEA, and an active manager in the Health and Hospitals Corp.

Prepare for success

Before the evaluation period begins, it's time to lay the foundation for a good evaluation — by setting the right goals.

Your goals for yourself and your subordinates should fit into the goals of your agency overall. Develop a clear



understanding of your agency's mission and how your area of responsibility fits in. If you don't already know it, your agency's mission statement should be readily available from internal resources.

Because your goals will be measured statistically, know your numbers. Prior to the evaluation period, you should have a clear understanding regarding key areas that will be measured statistically.

Develop a plan to achieve established goals. Pay careful attention to goals that may be a stretch for your unit. Be prepared to discuss any barriers that will need to be eliminated in order to meet your goals.

Take your plan to your supervising manager ask for their opinion and any insights they may have. This will help to ensure that you and your supervisors have established an understanding regarding the achievement of goals and objectives.

If you are a supervising manager, prepare your subordinates' contracts and discuss it with your supervisor during your initial review period. Sometimes, your supervising manager may show no intention of preparing your evaluation. By preparing your subordinates contract/s and sending it to your boss, action will be required and should spur the evaluation process.

Good intentions are not enough.

Plans are a little like New Year's Resolutions — it's easy to forget about them.

Focus on the numbers. Identify required reports and audits that will affect your evaluation and track them throughout the evaluation period.

Make your subordinates understand your focus on the numbers — the success of the unit depends upon them. Even if your subordinates are not all managers they need to be accountable for the numbers.

Don't wait to find out about a problem area. Meet frequently with your subordinates to review their performance and keep communication open in both directions. Also, determine external supports you may need to meet your goals and cultivate them.

Near the end of the evaluation year, critically review each goal. Prepare and complete internal reviews. You will be able to identify and correct some problems before they are reflected in your evaluation.

In the end most managers know that it is better to be evaluated than not. Don't wait until raises come around to focus on your subordinates' and your own evaluation.

Maintaining a meaningful evaluation process is the key to successful management. ■



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2011

180 Water Street • 12th Floor Exhibition Learning Center

6:00pm - Promptly

The By Laws will be a primary topic of discussion for this meeting.
Please be prepared to accept the recommended revisions or discuss your concerns.

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MEA Profile: Toastmaster Carol Brooks

By Robert Anderson

One told the story of the sister she never knew she had, others came to the podium to share their plans for Hurricane Irene when the MEA's new chapter of Toastmaster International club met August 25.

"Ordinary people doing extraordinary things – that's what you hear when you come to the Toastmasters," said Carol Brooks, the Department

of Environmental Protection's NYC MEA Chapter Director and co-sponsor of the new chapter.

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that operates clubs worldwide to help its members improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills. There are more than 300 clubs in the New York metro area. This summer, MEA members started their own Toastmasters chapter.

Each Toastmasters meeting is carefully structured to give members opportunities to practice their skills.



Toastmasters left to right: Carol Brooks, Co-Sponsor; Travis Tucker, Sergeant-at-Arms; Evelyn Marrero, Treasurer and Darrell Sims, President

At each meeting, a different club member takes the lead as Toastmaster and assigns all the other roles. Another member chooses the Word of the Day as Word master. Other members prepare speech projects from the Toastmasters' curriculum or give brief speeches in answer to questions prepared by the Table Topics Master. Each presentation gets a careful, respectful critique.

The meetings combine the fun of a social gathering with the seriousness of a professional training workshop. "The exercises help you practice some of the

skills needed to run your business day as a manager," said Brooks. "The possibilities to enhance your skills can become endless."

Carol Brooks works as a Special Projects Manager for the New York City Dept. of Environmental Protection. She began working for the City in 1987 and joined the MEA as a manager in the early 1990s. Carol joined a chapter of the Toastmasters five years ago. "It was a coming of

age for me," she said.

Ms. Brooks believes that Toastmasters can help managers become stronger and more effective in workplace and in their lives. "There have been a lot of initiatives to save money and raise productivity, but they have not focused on the people," said Brooks. "The Toastmasters is a planned, tested, tried and true methodology for developing people."

Any member who is interested in joining the MEA Toastmasters chapter should contact Travis Tucker via email: ttucker@nycmea.org

Pension Counseling

By Robert Anderson

Planning for retirement requires making big decisions. MEA members should have all the guidance they need to make the best choices for themselves and their families.

That's why MEA now offers its members expanded counseling on the pension benefits offered by the City. MEA has teamed with the Civil Service Retired Employees Association for expanded retirement counseling services.

Members should call the MEA office (212) 964-0035 to schedule appointments.

"We are trying to provide more value to our members," said MEA Director at Large Joel Fishelson, Chairman of the Organization Committee, which is responsible for MEA members-only benefits.

MEA's pension counseling benefit now

offers members an unlimited number of counseling sessions to make sure members get all of their questions answered. That's a big change from MEA's old counseling benefit, which offered members just two sessions over the course of each member's entire life.

Jack Mollahan, the new pension counselor, will also talk members through exactly what materials to bring to their counseling sessions. He can meet with members both at the CSREA office on Steinway Street in Queens, N.Y., and at the MEA headquarters in Manhattan.

"It's critical that earlier in the process of planning for retirement, our members have an understanding of their needs and their financial resources — including their pensions, social security and their own resources," said MEA's Fishelson.

Joel Fishelson, Director at Large, MEA





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**Presenter
Domenick
Corrado
(FISA)**

By Vanessa DeSantis

MEA just kicked off a new series of financial planning seminars.

"Members have grown increasingly concerned with investing for the future," said MEA President Stu Eber.

Last year's financial seminar series was such a success, that MEA, through its Organization Committee and Volunteer Corps decided to offer an expanded program this year, with six weekly, two-hour sessions starting September 14. A seventh session has now been scheduled for Tuesday, October 25, 2011 to address Estate Planning and will be presented by Louis Balestriere, from the Law Offices of MEA Counsel Stuart Salles. The evening sessions cover each phase of financial

Strategies for Every Stage

MEA's Financial Seminar Series

preparation, from youth to middle age on through the retirement years.

One of the seminars focused on the retirement process, where an essential message was clear: It's never too early to start investing for retirement. These investments are especially important for people in their middle years, when managers often earn their highest incomes and have more power to invest.

October sessions will cover Agency Notification, Lump Sum and Terminal Leave Payments as well as federal programs such as Social Security and Medicare. There is also a session dedicated to pensions, which will be presented by the New York City Employees Retirement System.

This series offers MEA members an opportunity to interface with financial specialists – many of whom are MEA members, volunteering their time and knowledge to benefit their colleagues. Each session allows time for participant questions and equips each participant with a packet including a schedule of events and a survey - helpful for identifying topics for future seminars.

Dominick Corrado an expert in financial services led the first session, titled "The

Financial Times of Your Life."

"Pay yourself first," Corrado told MEA members.

In early adulthood, Corrado advises taking steps to protect against job loss. "You can't make your industry boom, you can't make your boss like you, but you can have six months of income saved up," he said.

And what about those noble retirement years, when we can sit back and enjoy the well-earned fruits of our labor...?

Not so fast, according to Corrado, who explained how factors such as overall increases to the average life expectancy, along with decreases to retirement packages (in both public and private industry) have shifted the outlook for retirement from previous generations.

"Just because you're retired, don't stop saving for the future," said Corrado, "You want to always have a plan in place to prevent you from outliving your money."

Under the leadership of organizational chair, Joel Fishelson, the MEA will continue to develop and implement educational seminars to benefit its members. Suggestions from members regarding topics of interest are welcome. ■