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LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES



Be Leaf It, or Not

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Featured Department of the Month: Veterans Services



Left to Right: Bob Ogle, Cathy Bryant, Eric Truesdale

Veterans Services, formed shortly after World War II, is located within the County Administration Building at 102 East Front Street in Lillington. This department should be commended as it is one of the top five counties for dollar per dollar per capita per veteran. Under the direction of Eric Truesdale, department director, the mission of Veterans Services is to pursue a high quality of life for local veterans, their families and their survivors. The department's primary

function is to provide advice and assistance to veterans and their dependents on their rights and entitlements under various State and Federal Laws. Currently, veterans within Harnett County draw in excess of 47 million dollars per year from compensation and pension programs through the Veterans Administration.

In addition to the director, the department staff includes Robert Ogle, Veterans Services Specialist, and Cathy Bryant, Administrative Support Specialist. Veterans Services works to offer clients assistance with obtaining compensation for service related injuries or illnesses. Through the department, veterans are assisted with obtaining pensions, life insurance, death and burial benefits, medical benefits and educational benefits to include scholarships for certain eligible dependents.

Each year the department assists dependents of service connected disabled North Carolina War Time Veterans with applying for the North Carolina Division of Veterans Affairs Scholarship. This four year scholarship program is awarded in appreciation for the service and sacrifices of North Carolina's war veterans and was established for the qualifying children of a certain class or category of deceased, disabled, combat, or POW/MIA veterans. Dependents can apply for the full scholarship, with the exception of textbooks, computers, or supplies, to any North Carolina approved state funded college or university. Scholarships are accepted during the winter months until the deadline of March 1st which proves to be a busy time for the department.

As with many organizations, the recession has placed additional pressure on Veterans Services as the department is currently experiencing many veterans' needs for additional assistance. Further, Veterans Services is seeking additional funding to be able to participate in outreach programs to be more visible to the public and reach more veterans.

Veterans Services supports all local veterans organizations to include the Harnett County Veterans Council. The department also assists in the training and selection of new service officers in surrounding counties. In addition, the department staff speaks at various civic organization meetings within the county and surrounding counties.

For additional information or questions regarding the services the Veterans Services Department provides, please contact the department directly at 893-7574.

Emergency Preparedness

With the winter season ending and spring just around the corner, warm weather and sunshine are in the forecast along with the threat of severe weather. It is important to be prepared in the event of a power outage or the need to temporarily evacuate your home. Below are some suggested items to keep on hand in the event of an emergency:

Power Outage Kit

- Canned Food
- Non-Perishable Snacks
- Bottled Water
- Flashlight
- Batteries
- Radio
- First Aid Kit

"Ready to Go Bags"

- Money
- Medications
- First Aid Kit
- Keys (copies of house and car keys)
- Snacks
- Extra Clothing

"Kids Ready to Go Bags"

- Small Toys
- Games
- Snacks
- Extra Clothing

"Pets Ready to Go Bags"

- Spare Collar/Leash
- Copy of Vaccinations
- Pet Food
- Treats



Safety Tips for Outdoor Walking Exercises

Spring is quickly approaching, which means more pleasant weather and warmer temperatures for getting exercise outdoors. The following tips will ensure your safety while getting physical activity walking outdoors.

- **Face the Traffic.** If your walking route forces you to walk on or near the road, always walk facing oncoming traffic.
- **Use the Buddy System.** If at all possible, walk with someone. If you must walk alone, inform someone of your route and at what time you expect to return.
- **Walk Defensively.** Never assume all road-users know the "pedestrian has right-of-way" rule, especially at intersections.
- **Vary Your Routes.** Walk various routes and vary the times that you walk.
- **Self-Defense.** If you elect to use a hand-held spray device that contains mace or something similar, ensure you know how to use it properly.
- **Carry ID.** Always carry some form of identification in case of an accident or medical emergency.
- **Stay Alert.** Avoid listening to your iPod™ at times when you need to be alert.
- **Stay Hydrated.** Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercising.
- **Wear Reflective Clothing.** If walking while dark, wear reflective clothing.



Strategies for Consuming Lower Calories on a Busy Schedule

With busy schedules and obligations to adhere to, many find it more convenient to eat out than to prepare meals at home. However, when eating out, it can be very easy to consume more calories than what the body actually needs. When you are unable to eat a prepared meal at home, follow these steps to maintain healthy eating habits while enjoying the convenience of eating out:



Prepare before you go. Determine where you will eat and review the menu prior to arriving to plan what you will order. Choose a restaurant that you know offers healthy eating solutions.

Think before you order. Review the menu carefully and opt for meals that have lower calories.

Control portions. Skip the combo. Split an entrée, order an appetizer as an entrée or a kids meal, or take part of the meal home.

Always look for healthy options when eating out is necessary. For example, order water or a diet soft drink and choose fruit instead of fries. If you order fries, order a small. Avoid items that use words such as crispy, creamy, sautéed, pan-fried, buttery, breaded, sauces or stuffed. Alternatives are grilled or broiled seafood, chicken, pork or beef with no sauce.

Choose fast food only occasionally. Prepare and eat more meals at home.



www.myeatSMARTmovemore.com

Current Job Opportunities

Currently, Harnett County is recruiting for the following vacancies:

EMT-Paramedic
\$38,887- \$44,719
(w/Overtime)

Income Maintenance Caseworker I
\$27,477-\$32,972

Income Maintenance Caseworker II
\$29,892-\$35,870

Income Maintenance Caseworker III
\$32,518-\$39,022

Social Worker IAT
\$40,137-\$48,164

(LS) Parks Maintenance Assistant
\$8.00 per hour

AG Extension Agent
This position is advertised through the state:
www.ces.ncsu.edu/xvacancy/detail.php?vacancy_id=1321

For additional information or to apply for any of the above positions, please visit the Human Resources website at www.harnett.org.

Quote of the Month



"To give real service you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity."

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~ Douglas Adams,
Musician & Author
1952-2001

BCBS Expands Prior Review Certification Requirements



Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina has announced that effective April 1, 2010, it will expand its prior review/certification requirements for several drugs to provide high-quality, cost-effective health care to its members. Prior review and certification will be required for the following prescriptions:

Triptans (Migraine Therapy)

Users of nonpreferred **Triptans**, to include **Amerge**, **Axert**, **Frova**, **Sumavel DosePro**, **Treximet**, **Zomig** and **Zomig ZMT** will be required to try **Sumatriptan** (generic **Imitrex**), **Replax**, **Maxalt**, or **Mazalt MLT** which are all used to treat migraine headaches before the nonpreferred drug will be covered.

SSRI Antidepressants

New users of nonpreferred selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) to include **Lexapro**, **Luvox CR** and **Pexeva** will be required to try **Citalopram** (generic **Celexa**), **Fluoxetine** (generic **Prozac** or **Sarafem**) **Fluvoxamine** (generic **Luvox**), **Paroxetine** (generic **Paxil**), or **Sertaline** (generic **Zoloft**) which are used commonly used to treat depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder or anxiety disorders before the nonpreferred drug will be covered.

Hypnotics (Prescription Sleep Aids)

Users of nonpreferred hypnotics to include **Ambien CR**, **Edluar**, **Lunesta**, **Rozerem**, and **Zolpimist** will be required to try **Zaleplon** (generic **Sonata**) or **Zolpidem** (generic **Ambien**) all commonly used to treat insomnia, before the nonpreferred drug will be covered.

If BCBS does not receive a prior review/certification for the affected drugs on or after April 1, 2010, the following will occur: if a member attempts to fill a prescription for one of the above mentioned drugs, the claim will reject upon trying to fill the prescription if the review/certifications has not been obtained. As a result of the claim rejection, the member may be directed to contact their prescribing provider to discuss other treatment options that would be appropriate for his/her condition.

Impacted members who are currently prescribed one of the previous mentioned non preferred drugs should receive a detailed letter concerning the prior review/certification of these drugs by mid-March.

For questions regarding this new prior review/certification requirement, please contact BCBS Customer Service at 877-258-3334.

Earn Rewards with Blue Points



If you have not already enrolled in Blue Points , a rewards program provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, join today and begin earning rewards for living an active lifestyle. If you are already participating in Blue Points, keep up the good work and encourage your co-workers to join!

As a BCBS member, you can live a healthy lifestyle and be rewarded at the same time! Visit www.bcbsnc.com and register with Member Services to begin participating in Blue Points. This program allows you to track your wellness activity to include physical activity, healthy eating, and preventative care assessments. Simply enter your wellness activity and begin earning points towards brand-name merchandise, charitable donations, and gift cards to retailers such as Macy's, Barnes & Nobles, American Airlines, and Khol's just to name a few! In addition, earn points for preventative care assessments!

For questions concerning the Blue Points program, please contact your Human Resources representative at 893-7567.

Reminder: Co-Pay Waiver Program for Certain Generic Drugs

This is a reminder that the Board of Commissioners has approved offering the Medication Dedication program through Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BCBS) to employees and their dependents enrolled in Harnett County's self-funded plan. The program, which offers a co-pay waiver for specific prescription drugs, took effect January 1, 2010 and will run thru December 31, 2010.

The Medication Dedication support program is designed to encourage employees with specific chronic conditions to continue taking medications as prescribed by his/her health care provider. Since costs can be a significant barrier to taking medications as directed, generic prescription co-pays will be waived for medications that treat the following conditions: congestive heart failure, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

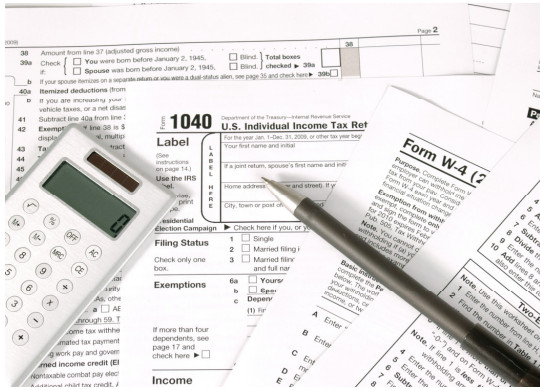
In addition, Blue Cross and Blue Shield will also be moving certain brand-name drugs used to treat the above conditions to a lower drug tier level to make those medications more affordable.

For the complete listing of generic medications covered under the Medication Dedication co-pay waiver program, please visit the Human Resources website at www.harnett.org or contact your Human Resources representative at 893-7567.



Don't Miss: New Credits for This Tax Season

Every penny counts—especially this tax season! Thankfully, the IRS agrees. So, visit www.irs.gov before doing your taxes to make sure you are getting every qualifying credit and deduction. Read on for some of the not-to-be-missed highlights...



Making Work Pay Credit

Most eligible taxpayers will qualify for the maximum Making Work Pay Credit of \$800 for a married couple filing jointly, or \$400 for single filers. The credit equals 6.2 percent of earned income up to the maximum amount. Thus, any eligible couple whose earned income is \$12,903 or more qualifies for the \$800 maximum credit. Single filers qualify for the \$400 maximum if their earned income is \$6,451 or more. Claim this credit on the new Schedule M.

Government Retiree Credit

This credit is designed to provide a benefit to those government retirees who did not qualify for the economic recovery payment. Retired federal, state or local government employees who received pensions in 2009, based on work not covered by Social Security, are eligible to claim this \$250 credit (\$500 if both spouses are retired government employees). An individual *cannot* claim the credit if he or she received an economic recovery payment during 2009. See Schedule M for more details.

Earned Income Tax Credit

The IRS estimates one in four people who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) don't take it. The EITC is a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families, meaning they have "earned income."

Here's how this credit breaks down according to the number of qualifying children and income limitations:

- If you have **three or more qualifying children** and your income limit is \$43,279 (48,279 if married filing jointly), you will receive a \$5,657 credit.
- If you have **two qualifying children** and your income limit is \$40,295 (\$45,295 if married filing jointly), you will receive a \$5,028 credit.
- If you have **one qualifying child** and your income limit is \$35,463 (\$40,463 if married filing jointly), you will receive a \$3,043 credit.
- If you have **no qualifying children** and your income limit is \$13,440 (\$18,440 if married filing jointly), you will receive a \$457 credit.

If you qualify to claim the EITC on your federal income tax return, you also may be eligible for a similar credit on your state or local return. Twenty-two states offer the EITC, and North Carolina is one of them! And don't forget: Even if you did not earn enough money to require filing a tax return in 2009, you must file anyway to receive this credit.

Home Energy Tax Credits

If you made an energy-efficient purchase in 2009, such as certain refrigerators, washers/dryers, air conditioners, insulation or windows, you can take a credit up to 30 percent of the cost up to \$1,500. Visit www.energystar.gov for a list of qualifying products. There is no income limit on this tax credit; however, there is a restriction: The purchase must be for improvements to an existing home that is your principal residence. New construction and rentals do not qualify. Note: This is a combined credit for 2009 and 2010.

Other Reminders:

- Charitable Contributions for Haiti Relief: Even though these were made in 2010, cash contributions to Haiti Relief made between January 11 and February 28, 2010 are includable in 2009 itemized deductions.
- Unemployment: The first \$2,400 of unemployment received is not taxable for 2009.
- If you are a member of Local Government Federal Credit Union, have your basic taxes prepared and filed for free at your local branch if you have a household income of \$49,000 or less. If your household income is more than \$49,000, have your basic taxes filed for just \$75! Simply contact your local branch to schedule an appointment now through April 15.
- If you enjoy the convenience of online filing at home, access TurboTax Online through the LGFCU's Web site at www.lgfcu.org, and receive a 15 percent discount.

Questions concerning this information should be directed to the LGFCU.

