



# BCBSM Retirees Newsletter

*Produced for and by members of the  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Retiree Association*

**Volume 20, Issue 2 • May 2011**

## Fun and prizes highlight first-time bowling event

The Strikers, the Sparklers and the High Scorers were three of the teams vying for prizes at the Country Lanes of Farmington on Sunday, Feb. 27. The occasion was the Retiree Association's first-ever "Bowl-a-Rama" fundraiser event for retirees, their family members and friends.

"We had a nice-sized group for our first time," said Beleta Williams, chair of the Association's Fundraising Committee. "And we were very pleased that we raised over \$300 for charity."

Included in the \$20 entrance fee was a donation for charity; three games; shoes; pizza, pop and cookies for lunch, and loads of prizes.



Country Lanes on Nine Mile Road in Farmington Hills



From left to right, Jim Kujawa, Bea Dougherty, Lela Thomas, Tim Andrzejewski, Jack Dougherty, Nickolas Morakeas, and Joyce Obenhoff took part in Bowl-a-Rama

"We want to give special thanks to the Country Lanes of Farmington for their help," said Beleta. "They even supplied the pizza for lunch, which allowed us to donate more of our proceeds to charity."

The day's winners included:

- High-scorers Bea Dougherty in the first game (220 points) and Lela Thomas in the second game (221 points)
- Mystery game winner Rosa Jones in game one and Karen Stecher in game two
- 50/50 raffle winners Joyce Obenhoff (\$31) and Tim Andrzejewski (\$22)
- Lucky strike winners Viola Champion and Kay Jones

*Bowling...* (continued on page 2)

**Bowling...** (continued from page 1)

Other prizes included gift cards from COSTCO and Target, VIP passes to the West River Theater, coupons for Red Lobster, gift baskets from Festive Affairs and an assortment of door prizes. BCBSM donated tote bags as well.

“Since this was our first bowling event, we’re looking at what we can do to make the event even better next year. We definitely want to offer Bowl-a-Rama again and hope more members will join in the fun,” said Beleta.

Beleta noted that the Retiree Association volunteers who helped make the event a success were Kay Jones, Annette Foster, Ray Newak, Kath Arndt, Karen Stecher and Sandy Freeman, the newest member of the Association board.



Annette Foster, Tim Andrzejewski and Lela Thomas grab a bite for lunch



From left to right, Yvette Bow, Gloria Johnson, Karen Stecher, Viola Champion, Pat Cooley and Nia and Serena Bow



Annette Foster's great grandson Alex was the littles bowler.

May							June						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30		
July							August						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31			
31													
September							October						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2							1
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29	30		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					
November							December						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2							1
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## More 2011 events coming up

### June 24 – DETROIT TIGERS, DETROIT

Join our annual outing to cheer on the Tigers. This year the Tigers take on the Arizona Diamondbacks starting at 7:05 p.m.

### July 21 – FORD ROUGE PLANT TOUR, DEARBORN

Details to be announced.

### August 19 – BILL BURKE MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING, HOLLY

The 21st annual golf outing is set for the Heather Highlands Golf Course.

### September Outing

A day trip is being planned. Details will be available soon so check our Web site at [bcbsmretireeassoc.com](http://bcbsmretireeassoc.com).

### October 20 – ANNUAL MEETING & LUNCHEON, CANTON

Join us for the annual business meeting and lunch at Summit on the Park in Canton.

### December 7 – HOLIDAY PARTY, MADISON HEIGHTS

The holiday party will be an evening event this year. Join your friends at the Club Venetian in Madison Heights.

## Snowbirds celebrate silver anniversary

Nineteen people gathered on March 9 for the Association's annual snowbird luncheon, the 25th year it's been held. This year's lunch took place at Remington's Steakhouse in Wesley Chapel, Fla., a new location that worked out well, according to event coordinator Dee Stilson.

To add to the festivities and in honor of the special anniversary, there was a cupcake cake commemorating 25 years, silver balloons, silver bead necklaces and Hershey kisses. "We wanted to make this year's lunch special," said Dee.

After lunch, attendees gathered outside on the deck and launched their balloons for world peace.



Dee Stilson, coordinator of the annual snowbird get-together



Front row, left to right, Cass and Barb Modrzejewski, Linda Christensen, Dee Stilson, Sue Loren Davidson, Cindy Warf and Carolyn Evans. Back row, left to right, Marvin Dooley, Lowell and Liz Wolfe, Pat and Ron Kurkowski, and Dave and Heather Garner.

## Bay Area holiday party

A small but enthusiastic group of Bay Area Retiree Association members held their annual holiday luncheon at DaVinci's Restaurant in Frankenmuth on Dec. 9. In keeping with tradition, they held a "white elephant" raffle to raise money for Toys for Tots. This year they donated \$100 to the charity. "It was a nice party," said Don Clune, who coordinates the event each year.



Don and Lois Carter



Barbara Morris and Evelyn Smerdon

## A message from the Blues

Thanks, retirees, for helping the United Way

Many thanks to the Blues retirees who gave generously to the 2010-2011 United Way campaign. Our Blues retirees—along with current Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Blue Care Network and LifeSecure employees—contributed more than \$420,000 to help fund United Way agencies throughout the state for 2011. It's an admirable show of community support during these most difficult times.



The dollars will reach economically challenged members of society and support agencies that assist youth, families, the handicapped and homeless. Contributions also fund United Way 2-1-1 call centers, substance abuse education, medical research, home nursing visits and many other services statewide.

Again, thank you for making the 2010-2011 United Way campaign a success!

# Meadow Brook trip both educational and entertaining

BCBSM Retiree Association members who visited Meadow Brook on April 6 enjoyed a day filled with fine art, local history, good food and a lively theater presentation.

The day began with a tour of Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester, the historic home of Matilda Dodge Wilson. The Tudor-revival style home was inspired by the historic country manor homes Matilda visited in England. It is considered one of the finest examples of this type of architecture in the country.

On arriving at Meadow Brook Hall, the BCBSM retirees were divided into small groups for a fact-filled, hour-long tour of the mansion. The tour guides, all volunteers, were exceptionally knowledgeable about the history and architecture of the mansion as well as the collection of fine art that fills the house. Each room had a story to tell. Everyone admired Alfred Wilson's study, with its intricate carved woodwork depicting his life, the French bedroom, and the younger children's suite of rooms.



Sue Fabian (left) and Sally Hosmer



From front clockwise, Alvina Lickman, Janet Lickman, Barbara Lipinski, Carolyn Bradford and Gloria Marks



Left to right, Mary Ann Gehringer, Bernie Spafford, and Linda Guthrie



Retiree Association members saw "Ding Dong" at the Meadow Brook Theater

Following the tour, a delicious lunch was served in the Christopher Wren dining room, which provided a beautiful setting for food and conversation.

Then it was on to the Meadow Brook Theater for a performance of "Ding Dong," an adult-themed farce about marital infidelity. The Meadow Brook players pulled off the comedy with great flare and timing, and everyone left the theater smiling.



Darlene Ziolkowski in front of one of the many fireplaces at Meadow Brook Hall



Left to right, Madeline Scarletta, Patricia Bevil, and Brenda Alley



Tour guide Bill Cichowsky points out some interesting facts about the decor of the dining room while Leonard Hicks (left) and Jatinder Vohra look on.



Left to right, Phyllis Hampton, Jean Medlen, Phyllis Kubler, Karl Kubler, John Schoder, and Elaine Shoder



Jennifer Wynn (left) and Betty Cooper



The ornate Christopher Wren dining room provided a beautiful setting for lunch.

## Did you know?

- Matilda Dodge Wilson's first husband, John F. Dodge, co-founder of the Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company, died in 1920 leaving Matilda one of the wealthiest women in the world. She later married lumber baron Alfred Wilson.
- Meadow Brook Hall was built between 1926 and 1929, cost nearly \$4 million, has 110 rooms and covers 88,000 square feet.
- In 1957 the Wilsons donated their residence, art collections, the estate's 1,500 acres and \$2 million to found what is now Oakland University.
- Meadowbrook Hall has been listed as the fourth largest house in the U.S.



"Pegasus on Mount Helicon" sculpture on the east side of the mansion was created by Avard Fairbanks, who also designed the original Dodge Ram hood ornament.

## Retiree or career switcher? You decide! *By Debra Ann Pawlak*

I grew up at the Blues. Still in high school, I started working as a co-op for what I thought would be a brief spell. Thirty-eight years later, I was still there worrying about claims, resolving systems issues and trying to figure out just how to attend three or more meetings at the same time. That lifestyle suddenly came to a screeching halt in 2009 with those infamous three letters: V S O!

The idea of leaving the hassles of the job was certainly tempting, but it wasn't an easy decision. Admittedly, there was a comfort zone to consider. I had friends, a steady paycheck, good benefits. While BCBSM was a great place to work, there was something else I had always wanted to do. I dreamed of being a full-time writer.

Since 2000, I had been freelancing part-time. I wrote a couple of books for small publishers and a myriad of magazine articles both on-line and in print. I spent evenings and weekends writing, writing, writing.

Now, I decided it was time—not to retire, but change careers. Knowing that my last day of work would be Oct. 1, 2009 and my official retiree date Dec. 1, I set a goal. If I were really serious about writing full time, I'd better find an agent before I left the Blues.

I had a nonfiction book proposal about the early days of Hollywood already written so I sent it out to five agents each week. I got a few bites and a lot of rejections. No one offered representation.

Then at the end of August, I tried an agent who lived and worked out of New Mexico. According to his Web site, he had been in the business for more than 30 years. He wasn't open to new fiction writers but would consider nonfiction authors who had previously published. I took a chance and contacted him.

He liked my idea, but what really caught his eye was the last sentence in my pitch letter. I indicated that I wanted to write a second book about the 36 founders of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He thought I should be starting there—and yes, he was interested.

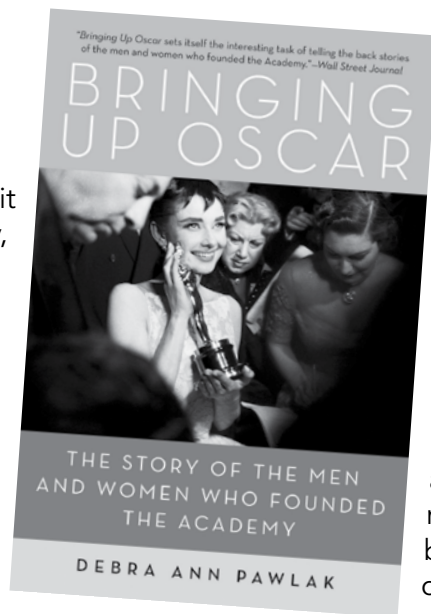
I put together another proposal and sent it to him via e-mail. Instead of hitting the reply button, he called me and asked for an exclusive—which meant I couldn't send it to another agent until he said yes or no. A few weeks later, he got back to me with a big YES!

I signed on with Mr. Peter Riva at International Transactions on Nov. 13, 2009—just 19 days before my “retiree” deadline.

2010 was spent writing my book on a full-time basis and in January 2011, *Bringing Up Oscar, The Men and Women Who Founded the Academy* was published by Pegasus Books.

Even though I've been away from the Blues for more than a year now, I still have assignments and work to do. Instead of bosses, however, I have editors to please. Instead of due dates, I have deadlines to meet. Instead of a project manager, I have an agent to guide me along.

And so the writing life continues—surprises and all. I've come to learn you just never know who might be reading your work. Imagine my astonishment when my agent told me that his mother had requested a signed copy of my book. Not so unusual, you might think. But considering that Maria Riva is the only daughter of Hollywood icon Marlene Dietrich (which makes Peter, Dietrich's grandson), it was great!



### Meet retiree Debra Ann Pawlak

In this issue of the Retirees Newsletter, we meet 2009 retiree Debra Ann Pawlak, who began working at BCBSM in 1971. She spent 20 of her years at the Blues with NASCO and prior to her retirement (under the company's voluntary separation program) had been with Blue Card for five years.



Publicity photo of Debra Ann Pawlak that appeared with her bio in her new book

Debra had always wanted to be a writer but deferred her dream to devote herself to working and raising a family. She began free-lancing in 2000 and since then has written numerous magazine articles, contributed to the Chicken Soup and Uncle John's books, and is the author of *Bruce Lee (Overcoming Adversity: Sharing the American Dream)*.

“I've always loved writing,” said Debra, “and I've always been a Hollywood fan. I have another Hollywood book in mind so I guess it's time for me to get started on my next project.”

# Who's Who in the BCBSM Retiree Association

<b>Officers</b>	
President	Spencer Brown
Vice President	Ray Newak
Treasurer	Joyce Obenhoff
Secretary	Marie Bjerke
Immediate Past President	Karen Stecher
<b>Committees</b>	
Operations	John McCrary, chairperson; Marie Bjerke, BCBSM liaison and records retention; Sandra Freeman, committee member
Social	Annette Foster, chairperson; Kathy Dolan, committee member; Nick Grabowski, golf outing; Dee Stilson, Florida luncheon; Don Clune, Bay Area activities
Planning	John Flint and Ray Newak, co-chairpersons; Phyllis Hampton, committee member
Finance	Richard Dow, chairperson
Membership Communications	Kath Arndt, Web master and photographer; Janice Crossland, newsletter editor
Membership Liaison	Beleta Williams, chairperson; Kay Jones, coordinator
Fundraising	Beleta Williams, chairperson
<b>Contact Information</b>	
Association Web site	<b><a href="http://bcbsmretireeassoc.com">bcbsmretireeassoc.com</a></b>
Association e-mail	<a href="mailto:information@bcbsmretireeassoc.com">information@bcbsmretireeassoc.com</a>
BCBSM Retirement Administration	Toll-free: 1-800-922-0699 Local: 313-225-9609 Fax: 1-866-238-3295 E-mail: <a href="mailto:retirementadministration@bcbsm.com">retirementadministration@bcbsm.com</a>
Change of address, phone number	All changes must be made in writing to Retirement Administration via Fax, e-mail or U.S. Mail at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Retirement Administration, Mail Code 0126, 600 East Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226.
BCBSM medical claims inquiries	E-mail: <a href="mailto:employeeinquiry@BCBSM.com">employeeinquiry@BCBSM.com</a> Phone: Medicare Plus Blue customer service, 1-866-684-8216; CAREN IVR, 1-800-858-7915
BCN claims	BCN Ombudsman, 1-888-265-4703; BCN Advantage customer service, 1-866-966-2583
Retiree checks/State Street Bank	1-888-419-8769

## Congratulations and Welcome to Our New Retirees

Kathy Adamus	Norman Buright	Claretha Kennedy	Patricia Roach	Irene Warren-Waller
Vernon Allen	Allene Conner	Patricia Langs	Ronald Shier	Edward Weathers
Naomi Barber	Marcia Dinius	Pamela Leek	Gary Sinning	Ernest Wronkowicz
Elizabeth Beninato	Dennis Drake	Angela Lewis	Rosemary Sniezyk	
Phyllis Bingham	Rita Fancher	Crystal Moore	Sandra Thomas	
Helen Boettcher	Kimberley Feng	Patsy Murphy	Diane Tworek	
Inez Bryant	Diane Gloss	Joyce Pankner	Colleen Vuketich	

## 2010 a banner year for giving

Several organizations benefited from the generosity of BCBSM Retiree Association members in 2010. Members donated to charity through 50/50 raffles, a charity auction at the fall business meeting, and the live and Chinese auctions at the annual holiday event.

In all, we raised just over \$2,000 last year. The Association donated \$290 to each of the following organizations:



Beleta Williams

St. Vincent DePaul, Capuchin Soup Kitchen, Gleaners, Forgotten Harvest, Detroit Rescue Mission, Salvation Army and Alzheimer's Association.

"In 2010 we not only donated to more charities, we were able to give more money to each organization. The Association board thanks everyone who contributed," said Beleta Williams, chair of the Fundraising Committee.

## Check out volunteer opportunity

As you may have heard by now, last year BCBSM announced its plan to close the Metro Service Center in Southfield and move employees to the Renaissance Center, Tower 500, in downtown Detroit. The first 400 employees moved May 2, with all employees set to make the transition in stages over the next year.

To ease the transition, a number of BCBSM departments have banded together in partnership with UAW Joint Programs to form the BLUnite team. The team is setting up tours to familiarize employees with their new workplace at the Renaissance Center. If you would like to assist with the tours being conducted in June and July, please call Melanie McCall-Brown at 313-225-7414 for information on dates, times and duties involved.

## ...May they rest in peace

James Cook  
December 21, 2010

Robert Tremain  
January 27, 2011

Claudia Landis  
April 18, 2011

Richard Goetz  
March 11, 2011

It was with great sorrow that the Retiree Association board learned of the death of their long-time fellow board member, Dick Goetz. Dick was 75 at the time of his death and had been an active member of the board for 20 years. He served on the planning committee for the annual golf outing and was chair of the Communications Committee. In that role, he helped bring the Association into the electronic age by establishing the Association's Web site and coordinating an e-mail directory for members. Many members will also remember Dick as the "auctioneer" at various Association luncheons.

"Dick was always ready to pitch in whenever help was needed—from taking photos to ordering the wonderful centerpieces we enjoy at Association luncheons. He will be sorely missed by all," said Spencer Brown, president of the Retiree Association Board.



The *BCBSM Retirees Newsletter* is published three times a year for members of the BCBSM Retiree Association. We'd like to hear from you. If you have a comment on the newsletter or an idea for an article, please contact us at [information@bcbsmretireeassoc.com](mailto:information@bcbsmretireeassoc.com).

Also be sure to check out our Web site at [bcbsmretireeassoc.com](http://bcbsmretireeassoc.com) for information about upcoming events and photos of past events. We're on Facebook, too. You will find the link on our Web site.

**E-mail Directory updates:** The directory is updated periodically and sent via e-mail to everyone on the list. If you would like to add your e-mail address, make a correction or remove your name from the list, send your request to [information@bcbsmretireeassoc.com](mailto:information@bcbsmretireeassoc.com).



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