



COPRA CHRONICLE

Issued by and for the City of Phoenix Retirees Association
Your advocate in pension and insurance matters

December 2008

MEMBERSHIP IS OUR STRENGTH

Issue 5

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MEMBERSHIP

Changed your address or phone number??? For address and/or telephone number changes, or for any questions about your COPRA membership, please contact Marvin Roelse, Membership Chairman. Marvin can be reached by telephone at (480) 288-1046, or by mail at: COPRA Chronicle, 10701 E. Peralta Canyon Dr., Gold Canyon, AZ 85218, or by e-mail at marvinr567@msn.com

Financial Challenges

Like every investor, our retirement system board (COPERS) is facing a significant financial challenge. As a member of COPERS, I receive an enormous amount of information about that challenge. Reading through the historical information helps keep the situation in a balanced perspective. Here's some financial history you may find helpful.

1. Our markets have always recovered from downturns. That's not a guarantee, but it's an impressive fact. The COPERS financial consultant, R. V. Kuhns & Associates, gave us a fascinating report about market recovery. The report identified the 27 worst 12-month declines in returns for the S&P 500 companies since 1969. The average for all 27 declines was a negative -23%. If you then look at the cumulative returns the following 6 months, the average return was a positive 9%. If you look 12 months later, the cumulative average return is 20%. If you look out 5 years, the cumulative average return is 69%.

2. Wages and salaries tend to decrease as an economy slows down. Pension adjustments are less likely. That's not what any of us want to hear, but there is another side to that history. The cost of living tends to go down. The cost of food, clothing and other staples decrease. We have already seen a reduction in the cost of gasoline. Other commodity costs and wholesale costs are currently decreasing.

3. Federal intervention in the financial system, while unusual, isn't new. And it isn't cause for alarm. As a country we have a good track record when it comes to financial challenges:

- The Home Owners Loan Corporation was created in 1933 to help homeowners refinance troubled mortgages. It was closed in 1950 and actually made a small profit.

(continued on page four)

President's Message

Thanksgiving is over and I hope all of you could spend time with your families this season. Of course there is another full month of Holiday celebrations and New Years to look forward to and I hope you will be able to enjoy every moment of it going forward. Hopefully this New Year we can turn the page on the past 12-month's financial challenges and move upward in 2009.

On a very positive note we sold almost 200 tickets for the Holiday Luncheon and Annual Meeting for COPRA on December 4th. This is a new record and we even had to expand the hall to accommodate the larger turnout. Every year there is great food, entertainment, and fellowship at this gathering and if you missed it, we look forward to you making time in 2009 to come and enjoy this event.

Of course, this luncheon and December also marks the end of dedicated board service to COPRA and all of our members for four of our great volunteers. These include Cindy Hasker, Bruce Selden, Nancy Iverson, and Jim Flanagan. Cindy worked very hard for many years in making sure that each meeting was well planned, greeting members as they arrive, coordinating to make sure that we had great goodies to enjoy, prizes to win, and social gatherings to share stories with fellow retirees. Thank you Cindy for those many years of dedicated service.

Bruce also worked very hard serving in many positions including as our Vice-President and President coordinating many of the events that took place and providing leadership to COPRA. We will miss Bruce on the board and wish him well in his new adventures.

Nancy has also been a great supporter to the board and kept our records straight as Board Secretary. We wish Nancy well in the coming years and hope that she checks in with us once and awhile. Jim, as a board member and our representative to COPERS these past three years has also been a tireless worker serving the needs of both organizations. As a board member Jim provided great council to COPRA and COPERS as well which required many countless hours of effort. We and the Pension Board as well will miss Jim's dedicated service tremendously. Thank you again to all four of these fine individuals who gave that extra effort to be on the board and represent the extended interests of all City of Phoenix retirees.

In saying goodbye to these wonderful individuals, the 2009 year will mark the start of COPRA board service for new faces that we are excited to see join us in our work with confirmation at the Annual Meeting on December 4th. Karen Clifford-Anderson retired from the City Clerk Department. We look forward to Karen being on our board.

Sue Stites retired from the Law Department in 2005 as a Management Services Administrator after 33 years with the City. We are also excited that Sue was willing to step forward to help COPRA.

Kerry Wangberg retired in 2007 after almost 30 years with the City completing his career as the City Prosecutor. We look forward to Kerry's assistance on our board and we have also nominated him to fill the position that Jim Flanagan held at COPERS. As of this writing we are still awaiting the COPERS Board confirmation of Kerry which should occur later in December.

In closing, I thank all of you for your continued support of COPRA and the work of the board. We have had some exciting meetings this year and are busy planning the calendar for 2009 which will again target meetings on the Pension System, Health and Benefits, Deferred Compensation, and state of the City. Of course the 2009 Holiday and Annual Meeting will close that year as well in December.

Happy Holidays to all of you:

Jack Thomas
President

Medical Identity Theft

Medical Identity Theft

With identity theft on the rise these days, most of us are already taking steps to protect ourselves. But did you know that there's now a growing form of identity theft known as "medical identity theft" that can not only devastate victims' finances, but also compromise their health, too. According to Joy Pritts, JD, author of *Your Medical Record Rights*, here's what you need to know.

What is Medical Identity Theft?

Medical identity theft occurs when criminals access victims' medical records. Since medical records contain a person's social security number and credit card information (if bills have been paid via credit card), criminals can open accounts and make fraudulent charges. However, criminals also gain access to victims' health insurance policy information and medical histories, and they can create forged health insurance cards to sell to people who are uninsured and need expensive medical treatment. A person who buys a fake health insurance ID card would then seek treatment using the victim's name and policy number, and then disappear, leaving the victim with the bills to pay.

Why Should You Be Concerned?

Victims of medical identity theft not only have to repair their credit and convince credit agencies and service providers that bills are fraudulent, they also have to correct inaccurate medical information that becomes part of their health records. Victims could be denied life insurance or individual health insurance if their record shows treatments that they did not have. In addition, victims could receive treatments or medicines that could be harmful to them on the basis of inaccurate content in their medical records.

Steps to Take if You Suspect a Medical Identity Theft

1. Read all bills and "Explanation of Benefits" statements from your insurance company to verify they are for treatment you received.
2. If a bill or statement refers to treatment you did not receive, contact the employee in charge of investigating fraud at your insurance company and at the medical facility involved and explain the situation. Follow up with a letter sent via registered mail with return receipt once again explaining the situation, asking for any bills to be voided, and asking that your medical record be amended to state that you did not have this health problem or receive this treatment.
3. Report the identity theft to the police department and state's attorney general's office.
4. Contact the health care providers you use, explain the situation, ask if the erroneous information has been added to the providers' records, and if so, ask them to correct the records.
5. Report the fraud to the major credit bureaus and set up fraud alerts. Also, request free copies of your credit reports to make sure no new fraudulent accounts have been opened.
6. Review your medical records every few years to make sure there are no errors.

To learn more about your medical record rights, visit:
<http://ihcrp.georgetown.edu/privacy/records.html>.

Financial Challenges (continued from page one)

- In 1979 the Federal government made a loan to the Chrysler Corporation. The loan was repaid in full in 1983 and the federal government made a \$311 million profit.
- In 1984 the Federal government took an 80 percent stake in Continental Illinois Bank and Trust, the 7th largest bank in the country. Oil-patch loans in Oklahoma and Texas went bad and the bank failed. The government lost an estimated \$1 billion on the bad loans. However, the bank was reconstructed and sold to the Bank of America.
- In the 80s and 90s the Federal government managed the failure of over 1000 financial institutions in the savings and loan industry. The cost to the taxpayer is estimated to be \$124 billion. That is far less than the original estimates of \$500 billion, and the savings and loan industry recovered.

We have a challenge, but we can be optimistic that we will learn, change and improve.

Little Bits & Pieces

Get Lower Prices Using Coupons

Learn where to use coupons and where to find them. As a good shopper, be sure to recognize when favorite brand name items hit their lowest prices and use the coupons at that point to save the most money on your grocery bill.

Fry's Food Store is honoring all competitor's coupons through December 31st.

For more information, log on to www.Shortcuts.com for a free e-book.

Renew Your Dues Now

Please check the mailing label on this Chronicle for the "Dues paid Thru:" year. If the "Dues Paid Thru:" year is "2008", you should renew your COPRA membership now!

As a retiree, it is important that you stay abreast of events happening in the City that may have an impact on your benefits and the retirement fund. Please renew your membership today. As our motto on the front page of the Chronicle says, "Membership is Our Strength."

The 2009 dues are still \$7.00 for Singles and \$10.00 for Couples. The dues special is still available so if you pay dues for 4 years (\$28.00 Singles; \$40.00 Couples), you get credit for 5 years. To renew your COPRA membership, send a check payable to "COPRA" to the following address:

COPRA
% Marvin Roelse
10701 East Peralta Canyon Drive
Gold Canyon, AZ 85218

Butter vs. Margarine

Both have the same amount of calories.

Butter is slightly higher in saturated fats at 8 grams compared to 5 grams.

Eating butter increases the absorption of many other nutrients in other foods.

Butter tastes much better than margarine and it can enhance the flavors of other foods.

According to a recent Harvard Medical Study, eating margarine can increase

heart disease in women by 53% over eating the same amount of butter.

Margarine

Very high in trans fatty acids.

Margarine triples risk of coronary heart disease.

Margarine increases total cholesterol and LDL (this is the bad cholesterol) and lowers HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol)

Margarine increases the risk of cancers up to five fold.

Margarine decreases immune response.

Margarine decreases insulin response.

And here's the most disturbing fact... Margarine is but ONE MOLECULE away from being PLASTIC. This fact alone is enough to avoid margarine for life and anything else that is hydrogenated (this means hydrogen is added, changing the molecular structure of the substance).

Margarine is nearly plastic. Would you melt your Tupperware and spread that on your toast?

Prepare for Digital TV

Prepare for digital TV. On February 17, 2009, all TV channels will be broadcast solely in digital. If your set only has an analog tuner, you'll need to subscribe to a cable or satellite provider, purchase a new TV with a digital tuner, or buy a converter box for your analog TV. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration are offering on a first-come, first-serve basis up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, toward the purchase of two boxes. Call 888-388-2009, or visit www.ntia.doc.gov and www.dtv.gov.

Kiplinger's Retirement Report

City Council Cuts Bus Services

Phoenix city buses will begin running later in the morning and will stop late-night trips starting Dec. 29. Saturday hours will also be trimmed.

As the city makes unprecedented budget cuts, the City Council voted to eliminate all trips before 5 a.m. and after 10 p.m. In addition, Saturday service will be reduced to match Sunday frequency, a reduction of 24 percent.

This move, which will save \$7.4 million between now and July 2010, comes as collections from Phoenix's Transit 2000 tax have fallen 6.9 percent over the past year.

Arizona Heart Institute

How Much Is Your Peace of Mind Worth?

Heart disease is still the number one killer of men and women in the United States today. The Arizona Heart Institute's calcium score test can put your mind at ease.

The development of coronary atherosclerosis, the process by which cholesterol is laid down in the arteries supplying blood to the heart, starts in childhood and proceeds silently for decades. While none of us is immune to the slow accumulation of plaque in our arteries, a combination of genetic and environmental factors can influence the rate at which blockages in our blood vessels develop. The best course to follow if we want to avoid the potentially devastating results of coronary disease is to modify those factors that may influence plaque development – and to know where we stand right now, before actual symptoms of disease occur.

At Arizona Heart Institute, a tool is now helping doctors identify individuals at risk for heart disease. Our state of the art GE 64 slice CT scanner can obtain a complete picture of the heart in 5 heart beats. This scan can detect the microscopic amounts of calcium which is part of the development of atherosclerosis. A negative calcium score predicts a low risk for cardiovascular events in the next 5 years. Conversely, a positive test confirms the presence of plaque; the greater the amount of calcium, the greater the likelihood of occlusive disease. A high calcium score predicts a moderate to high risk for cardiovascular events within 5 years.

Calcium score testing is particularly useful in the screening of asymptomatic people and others at intermediate risk for heart disease. It is also used in the diagnosis of obstructive coronary artery disease in individuals with symptoms that may indicate a cardiac problem. If you have a family history of heart disease or diabetes, or have high blood pressure or cholesterol, perhaps you should consider Arizona Heart Institute's ultra-fast 64 slice CT calcium scan as the test to let you know your risk for coronary artery disease.

For more information on how this test can help put your mind at ease, please call the Arizona Heart Institute today. No physician referral is required, and the results are provided the same day.

The Heart Institute has agreed to give COPRA members the calcium score test (**two for the price of one**). You must schedule both appointments when you call.

Call 1-877-64-SLICE (1-877-647-5423) to schedule an appointment.

The \$99 calcium score test is a non-contrast study. Follow-up testing and consultation may

The COPRA Board Wishes a
Happy Holiday to All and a Healthy and Happy 2009

In Remembrance

George M. Venslove	11/02/2008
Rita J. Fyan	11/04/2008
Wesley Young	11/05/2008
Ella B. Fortenberry	11/06/2008
Henry L. Freeman	11/11/2008
Betty G. Shafer	11/12/2008
Peter M. Esparza	11/12/2008
Loyde C. Edmonson	11/15/2008
Arne I. Oie	11/16/2008

HEALTH AND COMPASSION

We care about our members and their families. If someone in your family is ill, whether at home or in a care facility, or if a loved one has passed away, please call Kathy Erickson at (623)879-9632.

Can Alzheimer's Be Prevented?

A new study finds that a type of blood pressure medication - angiotensin receptor blocker (ARBs) - reduces risk for dementia in seniors and slows its progress in cases where it's already diagnosed.

A study of the medical records of five million people found that patients taking ARBs had a 35% to 40% lower chance of getting Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

Patients taking ARBs who were already suffering from Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, had up to a 45% lower chance of developing delirium, being admitted to nursing homes or dying. How ARBs produce this benefit is not certain.

Consult your doctor. *By Benjamin Wolozin, MD, PhD, professor of pharmacology and neurology, Boston, Massachusetts*

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Chronicle Article Deadline

Please be advised that the deadline for submitting articles for the Chronicle is the **first day of the month** in which you want the article to appear. Any member may submit material for publication, but the Editor will determine what will appear in the final copy based upon suitability and available space. For more information call the Editor at (623) 879-9632.

This is your Chronicle! Help us by submitting articles and/or pictures of general interest. Tell us about yourself, your family, an interesting trip or hobby. Suggestions are always welcomed.

E-mail to: **rekathleen@qwest.net**

Or mail to: Kathleen Erickson
20248 N. 17th Place
Phoenix, AZ 85024

Disclaimer

Acceptance of advertisements or articles in the COPRA Chronicle does not constitute an endorsement by COPRA of goods or services.



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PERIODICALS

Membership Meeting Announcements

December 4, 2008 - 11:00 am
Holiday Luncheon and Annual Meeting
Mountain Preserve Reception Center
1431 E. Dunlap Avenue

Entertainment will be provided by Cantare, a singing group composed of music teachers from high school, community colleges and Arizona State University.

March 2009 - 1:00 pm
Pension and Retirement Board Issues

May 2009 - 1:00 pm
Benefits and Health Insurance

September 2009 - 1:00 pm
To Be Announced