



PI CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP MEMO

FEBRUARY 26, 2010

by Toni Smith, President-Elect

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Would Furloughs Affect My High Three in Extension?

There is talk of a possible furlough at the University of Minnesota. Nothing has been finalized but we have pursued the implications on high three years in Extension with Kathy Murphy, Extension Federal Benefits Administrator. She states that unpaid leaves that are 6 months or less in duration in a calendar year do not negatively impact either the service credit NOR THE HIGH 3-YEAR AVERAGE SALARY of federal employees. Obviously to the employee, their take-home pay is impacted, but if furloughs are enacted employees will continue to earn service credit toward retirement with no impact on the high-3 (again, as long as the leave is 6 months or less per calendar year).

As a reminder, this does NOT apply to a permanent reduction in percent of time worked. It only applies to leaves, or temporary reductions in percent of time worked due to furlough or unpaid leaves. For further information contact Kathy Murphy at kam@umn.edu or 218-637-2484.

Submitted by Cindy Bigger, ESP Legislative Committee Chair & Board Member

Scholarship Update and Opportunities

Good news!! There are currently six, \$300 MEWS scholarships available for life and active members from the current fiscal grant period ending June 30, 2010.

The application deadline for scholarships to be granted in the fourth quarter is April 1, 2010. Scholarships for activity occurring in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year, ending June 30, 2010, will take priority before scholarships are granted for activity occurring in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010. The scholarship committee encourages you to take advantage of this ESP membership benefit! Contact Phyllis Onstad at onsta003@umn.edu with questions.

Phyllis Onstad, MEWS Scholarship Committee Chair & Board Member

CSRS Retirees May be Eligible for Tax Credit

If you are a federal retiree NOT drawing Social Security, you may be eligible for a \$250 tax credit when filing your 2009 tax returns. This is part of the stimulus tax credit law passed last year. You cannot take this credit if you are an Offset or FERS retiree and you already received the \$250 economic payment through Social Security last year. The IRS says to use the new Schedule M to figure the government retiree credit. You can get more specifics on this via the NARFE (National Association of Retired Federal Employees) website. <http://www.narfe.org/departments/home/articles.cfm?ID=1989>.

Submitted by Jeanne Markell, ESP Board of Directors

Do you have an interesting Extension story?

We have heard many Minnesota Extension employees say, "I should write a book about my experiences in Extension. There are so many funny or heartwarming topics" Well here is your chance to submit a story for history. In an effort to keep our ESP website continually changing, encourage website traffic and honor the past we will be featuring a variety of Extension stories. This could be an old photo where people guess the participants and the gathering or it could be an interesting short story about an Extension experience. Look for criteria and further details in the next ESP Newsletter. For further information contact Kent Gustafson, History and Archives ESP Board Member kgustaf@umn.edu