



# Epsilon Sigma Phi

## A SLICE OF PI

FALL 2006

### THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PI CHAPTER PRESIDENT

Greetings,

After a long, hot, dry summer, we are all looking forward to the cooler temperatures of fall. Even though January 1st is considered the official new year, it always seemed to me that fall, with the beginning of school, is the real “new year”.

ESP will soon be starting it’s new year as we wrap-up the past year at the September 27<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting and elect a new slate of officers to guide us through a new year.

I see this as an exciting time as we look at ways to grow our membership. As the professional organization for all Extension staff, we will be renewing our outreach to all county, regional, and state program and administrative professionals who have served Extension three or more years.

At this time we are also looking at a change in our by-laws that would allow those staff with less than three years of service to join the state association as associate members. Associate members would pay only the state portion of the membership dues, and would be eligible for the benefits that our state organization has, including the ability to apply for scholarships from the Minnesota Extension Workers Scholarship (MEWS) fund. As a board we felt this could be an important addition to our membership and a way to allow access to the MEWS funds which is limited to members only.

I remind everyone to apply for scholarship funds—they are available for both active and life members. At this time when

scholarship is being emphasized within the Extension

system, and, for most, the amount of staff development dollars are somewhat limited, the MEWS funds are available and often not used to their fullest potential. Anyone interested should contact Roselyn Biermaier for a copy of the scholarship application form.

Being better connected to our life members was another focus for this year’s board. Neil Broadwater sent out a survey to the life members we have email addresses for to get input. This has been put to use as we planned this fall’s annual meeting. We have also been working closely with Jeanne Markell and Gwen Gmeinder to get the most accurate records of retirees and their contact information, so we can develop a comprehensive Extension/ESP Retiree’s Directory. This work will continue with the new board and hopefully be completed within the upcoming year.

One exciting new opportunity that has come to the board’s attention is the upcoming celebration of Extension in Minnesota in the year 2009. ESP will be working closely with Extension Administration to plan for this event. We will be looking for volunteers, especially from our life members, to get involved.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the September 27th annual meeting.

Sincerely,

*Janet Beyer*

Pi Chapter President  
2005-2006

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## Save those Dollar Bills!

The ESP Annual Meeting is not far off. To help support ESP Pi Chapter general operating expenses, save those dollar bills for the Dollar Auction. The event will be on Wednesday, September 27, 6:30-7 p.m. at the MAEE/ESP Annual Conference, Extension Regional Center – Andover.

Only one dollar bids will be accepted on each item. Whoever has the bid as recognized by our auctioneers when the timer goes off will receive the item.

ESP is looking for fun items with a wide appeal for this fundraiser. To donate an item or to volunteer to assist before or during the Fundraiser, contact Colleen Gengler at [cgengler@umn.edu](mailto:cgengler@umn.edu) or 507-372-3907. Items can be brought with you as you attend functions during the Conference. For retirees, please contact Colleen and she can arrange to receive items if you are not planning to attend.

Again, note that the purpose of this year's Dollar Auction fundraiser is to support general operating expenses. We have the regular ESP Auction with funds going to the Minnesota Extension Worker's Scholarship (MEWS) Funds in alternate years. Thank you for your support.

## ESP Awards...not just for others anymore!!!

They are for you too!! Remember that we all have the opportunity to be recognized for the work we do, even if we have to step up and tell people about it ourselves!! That is okay. We know more about the work we do more than anyone else, so don't be shy...submit a form today! Please note that the deadline for submitting applications for ESP Awards and Recognition is September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Please help us recognize those that are deserving by submitting an application as a team or put your heads together in your regional office and submit some deserving person or nominate yourself as that deserving person. We can only recognize those we hear about. All ESP members have received the award descriptions and forms. Check your emails. Recognition is given in the following areas:

- Distinguished Service Award (DSA)
- Mid-Career Award
- Meritorious Support Award
- Administrative Leadership Award
- Team Recognition Award (with MAEE)
- Continued Excellence
- Team
- Early Career Award
- Friend of Extension
- International Award
- Visionary Leadership Award
- Diversity/Multicultural Award
- Individual

*Help us out by taking a bit of time to nominate your colleagues or yourself! The ESP Awards Banquet will be at the annual meeting in September. If you have any questions or want to forward an application, email to [cbigger@umn.edu](mailto:cbigger@umn.edu).*



## Federal Benefits Update Federal Employee Health Savings Accounts Proposal

By Liz Templin



To update ESP members on a proposal currently in Congress to expand Health Savings Accounts to Blue Cross / Blue Shield, I pulled the following information from the National Association of Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) website:

### **What are Health Savings Accounts?**

- “HSAs combine a high deductible catastrophic insurance policy with a tax-exempt savings account dedicated for health care expenses. If they are offered to the federal community, eligible enrollees could select an HSA instead of their current FEHBP plan during the next Open Season. At the beginning of the year, health care costs are paid out of the savings account portion of an HSA until the account balance is spent. Thereafter, enrollees are required to pay 100 percent out-of-pocket for their medical expenses until they have satisfied the high deductible of their health insurance plan. Once the deductible is paid, their plan covers their health costs, except for any co-payments, coinsurance or lifetime limits.”
- “Contributions made to the savings account portion of an HSA are tax deductible, and withdrawals are tax-free on the condition they are spent on medical costs. However, only active employees who participate in an employer-sponsored “premium conversion” program may use pre-tax wages to pay their share of premiums for the catastrophic health insurance that is used in tandem with the savings account. No retirees, regardless of whether they worked in the public or private sector, participate in premium conversion programs. (NARFE supports legislation [H.R. 1231 and S. 623] that would extend premium conversion benefits to federal annuitants and military retirees.)”
- “HSAs can be attractive to healthier enrollees since the plans reward them with tax-free cash balances in subsequent years if they don’t go to the doctor or to a hospital. The opposite is true for less healthy persons, whose potential out-of-pocket costs could be in the thousands of dollars if they joined an HSA.”
- “While individuals 65 and older may spend remaining HSA balances, the tax code does not allow them, or their former or current employer, to make new account deposits nor can they enroll in HSA/catastrophic plans as an alternative to other employer-sponsored health insurance options after their 65th birthday.”
- “The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has paved the way for HSAs in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) in 2005 by allowing nearly all providers to offer High Deductible Health Plans (HDHPs). (Under Internal Revenue Service rules, people under age 65 who are enrolled in HDHPs may purchase HSAs.)”

### **How could Health Savings Accounts affect me?**

Regardless of whether an employee or a retiree chooses to enroll in a HSA, there are anticipated impacts. “Research by the nonpartisan RAND Corporation, the Urban Institute and the American Academy of Actuaries indicates that premiums for coverage under a traditional health insurance policy could more than double.”

**ESP’s position:** Your Minnesota chapter of Epsilon Sigma Phi has not taken a position on this issue. The information in this article is distributed to members as a point of information. All employers are seeking options which will help control the cost of providing health care for their employees and retirees. HSAs are one alternative. Each ESP member will need to decide for himself / herself their position on this issue.

**The following slate of officers to be voted on at the Annual Meeting:**

**President-Elect: Kay Stanek**

**Director: Sue Fischer**

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**Secretary: Andrea Ruesch will continue for second year of term**

**Treasurer (appointed by board): Sheila Craig will continue**

**Director: Kent Gustafson will continue for second year of term**

**Please review the following proposed By-Law changes to be voted on at the Annual Meeting:**

**ARTICLE IV**

**MEMBERSHIP**

**CHANGE:**

Section 1 – Qualifications: *Full Annual Membership* in this organization is open to all *county, regional, and state Extension program and administrative* professionals, who have *served in (delete-held full or part-time) Extension (delete-appointments)* for three or more years and support the purpose of this organization. *Full membership includes membership in both the state and national association.*

**ADD:**

*Section 7 – Associate Annual Membership in this organization is open to all county, regional, and state Extension program and administrative professionals, who have served in Extension less than three years and includes membership in only the state association.*

Section 3– New Members: Potential members, who meet the qualifications set forth in ARTICLE IV, Sections 1 and 7, shall be invited to join the fraternity by the chair of the membership committee.

Section 4 – Life Members: Life membership shall be granted to all qualified members in good standing who have left Extension or at the time of retirement upon payment of dues specified by the executive committee.

Section 5 – Annual Members (*both Full and Associate*): An annual member is one who maintains commitment to the overall purpose of ESP and pays annual dues as established by the Pi Chapter executive committee.

Section 6 – Life and Annual Members have full membership privileges including voting and holding office.

*Section 7 – Retired members who choose not to pay the lifetime membership dues, may pay a yearly \$30 membership fee to enjoy the full membership privileges of the state association.*

**ARTICLE IX**

**COMMITTEES**

**ADD:**

*Section 5 – MAEE Liaison: The President-Elect will represent ESP on the MAEE Board to keep lines of communication open between the two organizations, plan the Annual conference, professional improvement opportunities, and other projects/ programs as determined by both Executive Boards. Likewise, MAEE will appoint a representative to serve as a liaison to the ESP Board.*

***ESP Members, Life Members and Prospective Members Invited to Annual Conference***

**Wednesday, September 27, 2006**

**Extension Regional Center – Andover**

**Bunker Hills Activities Center, 550 Bunker Lake Boulevard NW, Andover, MN**

The board is excited about the opportunity for our professional associations to gather together for networking, planning, learning, and dialoguing. These are YOUR professional associations. Attend the conference and help strengthen yourself as an Extension professional and the important work that we all do! If you have questions regarding the conference, please call Toby Spanier at (507) 337-2815 .

Registration for this event has four steps:

1. **Review the MAEE/ESP conference schedule and workshop details.**
2. **Complete Form I MAEE/ESP Conference Registration**, indicating which events you plan to participate (necessary for accurate meal count). The form & payment are due by Thursday, September 14 to Tim Arlt, MAEE Treasurer.
3. **Complete Form III - ESP Membership.** Dues must be paid in advance to vote at the conference meetings. The form & payment are due before *September 20th* to Diane Damerow, ESP Membership Co-Chairman.
4. **Make your own hotel arrangements if needed.**
  - **Crowne Plaza**, 2200 Freeway Blvd., Brooklyn Center (763-561-9531) will honor University rate (\$89) for Tues/Wed/Thurs; located near the Extension Fall Program Conference
  - **Comfort Suites**, 6440 Hwy. 10 NW, Ramsey (763-323-4800) - block of rooms reserved for Tues/ Wed/Thurs nights; located near Andover Regional Center. Ask for MAEE group rate (\$72).
  - Additional hotel/motel options:
    - Americinn Motel, 13440 Highway 65, Ham Lake, MN; 763-755-2100
    - Americinn Motel, 3430 Northdale Blvd., Coon Rapids, MN; 763-323-0010
    - Comfort Inn/Northtown, 9052 University Ave. NE, Coon Rapids, MN; 763-785-4746
    - Fairfield Inn, 8965 Springbrook Drive NW, Coon Rapids, MN; 763-785-8922
    - Super 8, 9410 Baltimore Street NE, Blaine, MN; 763-786-8888
    - Livinn Suites/Fridley, 5201 Central Avenue NE, Fridley, MN; 763-571-9440
    - Holiday Inn Express, 9333 Springbrook Dr NW, Coon Rapids, MN; 763-792-9292

**Wednesday, September 27**

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Registration for conference and section meetings attendees
8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Continental Breakfast for all conference attendees
8:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	MEAFCS Section Meeting
8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	MAEAP and MCNRA Section Meetings
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Registration for remaining non-section members
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	MAEE Area Meetings: North/South/Metro
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Registration for ESP Retirees
11:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.	ESP Luncheon
11:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.	MAEE Annual Meeting with lunch
1:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Break
1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	MAEE/ESP Professional Improvement—Concurrent Sessions I
2:45 p.m.—3:15 p.m.	Break
3:15 p.m.—4:30 p.m.	MAEE/ESP Professional Improvement—Concurrent Sessions II
4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Break
4:45 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.	ESP Annual Meeting
6:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	MAEE/ESP Social (ESP dollar auction) *
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.	Annual MAEE/ESP Awards Banquet



- MAEE/ESP Social is an opportunity for networking and socializing with food and refreshments. This will be an **alcohol free conference**; MAEE does not have a permit to have alcohol at the Andover Regional Center and the Anoka County Parks.

**MAEE/ESP Conference Registration - Form I**  
**Due Thursday, September 14, 2006**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**MAEE/ESP Conference Includes the following:**

- Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner during the conference
- Section Meetings
- Breaks
- Reception
- Professional Improvement Workshops (Check with your APL/CAL/DFO to determine if workshops qualify as Professional Development)
- Awards Program
- MAEE and ESP Annual Meetings
- ESP Dollar Auction

<b>Conference Registration</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>MAEE or ESP Members if post-marked by Sept. 14th</b> (includes all items listed above)	<b>\$35.00</b>	\$ _____
<b>MAEE or ESP Members who register after Sept. 14<sup>th</sup></b> (includes all items listed above)	<b>\$45.00</b>	\$ _____
<b>Non MAEE /ESP Members</b> (includes all items listed above)	<b>\$45.00</b>	\$ _____
<b>ESP Retirees -</b> (includes lunch, Professional Improvement Workshops, ESP Annual Meeting and MAEE/ESP Reception. Awards banquet not included)	<b>\$15.00</b>	\$ _____
<b>ESP Retirees -</b> (includes lunch, Professional Improvement Workshops, ESP Annual Meeting and MAEE/ESP Reception <u>AND</u> awards banquet)	<b>\$35.00</b>	\$ _____
<b>ESP Retirees -</b> (awards banquet only)	<b>\$20.00</b>	\$ _____

***Please indicate which events you will participate, to help us plan meal preparation:***

- \_\_\_\_\_ Continental breakfast  
 \_\_\_\_\_ MAEE Annual Meeting (lunch)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Reception  
 \_\_\_\_\_ MAEE/ESP Awards Banquet (dinner)

**Send form & check payable to MAEE by September 14 to:**  
 Tim Arlt, MAEE Treasurer  
 U of MN Extension Regional Center, Albert Lea  
 2360 Crossroads Blvd, Albert Lea, MN 56007-4001

For MAEE membership complete Form II—available from MAEE.

**Epsilon Sigma Phi –Form III**  
**National Honorary Extension Fraternity**  
**Pi Chapter – University of Minnesota Extension Service**

**2006-07 Membership – Due September 20, 2006**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Office Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

<b><u>Dues &amp; Contributions:</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
Yearly Membership	\$ 60.00	_____
Initiation Fee – New Member Only	\$ 7.00	_____
National Life Membership-Retirees only- one time payment	\$175.00	_____
Life Member Pi Chapter Annual Voluntary Contribution	\$	_____
Donation to MN Extension Workers Scholarship (MEWS) Fund	\$	_____
	<b>Total Due</b>	<b>\$_____</b>

**Note:**

ESP membership is open to all Extension Professionals  
who have held full or part time employment for three (3) or more years.

**Send form & check payable to Epsilon Sigma Pi Chapter by September 20 to:**

Diane Damerow, ESP Membership Co-Chairman

905 Spicer Road

Albert Lea, MN 56007

Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt.

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## Professional Improvement Workshops at MAEE/ESP Annual Conference September 27, 2006

On behalf of the Professional Improvement committee, I would like to thank everyone who offered suggestions and possibilities for PI sessions at our annual conference this year. As MAEE Board liaison to the committee, I would like to thank all of the PI committee members for their time and effort in helping to determine the mix of sessions provided as well as securing presenters for those sessions. Also, a special thanks to ESP for sponsoring the session "Making Travel Experiences Lifetime Memories."

Respectfully, Bob Mugaas

### Concurrent Sessions I (1:30 - 2:45)

- A. **Know Your Benefits - a Brief Overview** – *Dontelle Coles and Susan Smith*  
State Benefits - breakout section  
Federal Benefits - breakout section
- B. **Retirement Transitions - A Panel of Extension Retirees Share their Experiences**
- C. **Conversations with the Dean** – Dean and Director, *Bev Durgan*

### Concurrent Sessions II (3:15 - 4:30)

- A. **Conversations with the Dean** – Dean and Director, *Bev Durgan*
- B. **"Oh my aching back!" - Posture Principles for in Office and Behind the Wheel** – *Mia Bremer*
- C. **Preparing for Promotion: An emphasis on Scholarship** – *Jennifer Skuza*
- D. **Making Travel Experiences Lifetime Memories** - *Cheryl Jones* from UMAA (ESP Sponsored)

# Epsilon Sigma Phi

### **Know Your Benefits**

*Dontelle Coles and Susan Smith*

Whether you are a new hire, a mid-career Extension employee, contemplating retirement or are already retired, this will be a good chance for you to become more familiar with your federal or state benefits package. Updated information regarding benefit programs at State/University level will be presented by Susan Smith and at the Federal level by Dontelle Coles. After a few introductory remarks, participants will break into their respective areas of benefit interest.

### **Retirement Transitions**

*Panel Members: Sheila Craig, Karen Schafer, Dave Pace, Naomi Fruechte and Dick Krueger*  
*Facilitator: Neil Broadwater*

Career transitions often increase stress levels and can negatively impact one's work. Transitioning to retirement from a successful Extension career, while perhaps exciting to anticipate, can create its own unhealthy level of stress that can affect our work life. Like most successful efforts in life, good planning is a critical part of that success. This session will feature a panel of Extension retirees who will share their experiences in how they have managed a successful transition from Extension careers to retirement or other careers. It is neither too early nor too late to begin planning for this life transition. Developing and having a plan just might be one of the 'healthier' things you can do for yourself, family and career.

### **Conversations with the Dean**

*Dean and Director, Bev Durgan*

Dean Durgan will begin this session with some opening comments followed by an opportunity to ask questions and simply have a 'conversation' with the Dean about your Extension issues and concerns. Everyone is invited and welcome to attend!

### **Oh, My Aching Back! Posture Principles for in the Office and Behind the Wheel**

*Mia Bremer*

Posture is more than just a matter of "standing up straight." Poor posture leads to muscle imbalances and faulty movement patterns that can cause physical problems - now and in the future. This workshop will focus on common posture problems caused by hours of driving and sitting, as well as simple aging. Learn about your "anti-gravity" muscles and how to work them throughout the day during breaks and even in your car. We'll practice these exercises and I'll give you ideas you can use in the way you work and move that can make a difference in posture and overall health.

### **Preparing for Promotion: An Emphasis on Scholarship**

*Jennifer A. Skuza, PhD*

Scholarship is an important part of our work at the University of Minnesota Extension Service. It is embedded in our program leadership, teaching, and community engagement. As many of you are aware, the spotlight has been placed on *scholarship* as one of the defining characteristics of our Extension work and is an essential part of the promotion process. The quality of Extension is sustained through excellent and creative work of its academic professionals. Therefore, objective, systematic, and thorough appraisal of each Extension candidate for promotion in Extension academic rank is critically important. You are invited to participate in this workshop on scholarship and the promotion process. Here, we will define key terms, develop common scholarship language, share practical examples of scholarship, and discuss the promotion process.

### **Making Travel Experiences Lifetime Memories**

*Cheryl Jones, Travel & Special Programs Director*

*University of Minnesota Alumni Association McNamara Alumni Center, Minneapolis campus*

This workshop will discuss the following topics: travel tips including important documents; immunization/medical considerations; group insurance savings; discussion on the UMAA Personal Vacation Club; and travel opportunities available through the UMAA.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
Extension Regional Center, Rochester  
863—30th Ave SE  
Rochester, MN 55904-4915  
Phone: (507) 280-2863  
Fax: (507) 280-2872

**Epsilon Sigma Phi**



### **Attention ESP Members:**

Help save Epsilon Sigma Phi money! If you receive this newsletter via postal mail, but have an email account, please let us know! We can email you the newsletter and save printing and postage costs. Thank you to those who have done so.

Send a message to Melissa Instenes—[mminsten@umn.edu](mailto:mminsten@umn.edu)—with your email address. Also, if your address has changed or changes in the future please let us know. Thanks!

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### **Epsilon Sigma Phi A Slice of PI**

**Newsletter Editors:** Kathleen Olson & Sara Croymans with the assistance of Melissa Instenes & Donna O'Malley, Regional Support Staff.

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