

At Your Service

Orange County Employees Retirement System

Volume 8 Number 2 Magazine for all Members April 2009



At Your Service



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At Your Service is published for members and retirees of the Orange County Employees Retirement System

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Board of Retirement Meetings:
All regular business meetings are held in OCERS Board Room at 8:30 a.m.

January 20, 2009	February 17, 2009
March 23, 2009	April 20, 2009
May 26, 2009	June 22, 2009
July 20, 2009	August 24, 2009
October 19, 2009	November 23, 2009
	December 21, 2009

Member Information Center

In early 2009, OCERS made a number of security-related improvements to the online Member Information Center (MIC).

Beginning Feb. 17, 2009, all OCERS members have been required to create a new User Name and Password before logging in to use the newly-enhanced Member Information Center.



If you do not have a PIN (Personal Identification Number), please call OCERS at 714-558-6200. You will then be able to go to the Member Information Center and follow the simple steps outlined under the "Create User Login" column to begin using the site.

For more information, visit OCERS' Web site at www.ocers.org.

Tax changes effective April 1

If you are a Retired Member or Payee you may see an increase in your monthly "Net Earnings" beginning with your April 1 payment.

New federal tax tables have been developed due to changes to the tax law made in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 that became law in February.

No action is required, however, some Payees may want to adjust their withholding in light of the new tax tables (which can be viewed at the Internal Revenue Service Web site: www.irs.gov). For more information, consult with your tax professional. A Tax Withholding Election Form can be downloaded at OCERS' Web site at www.ocers.org.

OCERS is stable and paying retirement benefits

By Steve Delaney, Chief Executive Officer

If you've followed the financial markets lately, you know that public pensions and other institutional investors did not fare well in 2008 or in the first quarter of this year.

But during these tough economic times, it's important for current and future retirees to know that OCERS is able to pay member benefits, which are secure and protected by law. Aside from the \$6.3 billion our retirement system has in reserve, OCERS presently brings in \$520 million a year in member and employer contributions which is more than enough funds to pay approximately \$400 million a year in pension benefits.

Your Board of Retirement has adopted a highly-diversified asset allocation mix to help OCERS weather difficult market periods. And one of many conservative practices used by the OCERS board to help navigate challenging economic storms is "smoothing." This process allows OCERS to average plan asset values over five years so that any single year's performance doesn't have as big an impact on the plan.

Fortunately for OCERS members, the peaks and valleys of the stock market do not directly affect member benefits. Because OCERS is a defined benefit (DB) plan, benefits are based on your final average salary, total years of service credit and benefit formula, not conditions on Wall Street.

In addition to the information available in *At Your Service* magazine and your Annual Benefit Statement, OCERS also hosts several types of free seminars where you can learn more about your retirement system. Here at OCERS, we strive to provide you with a wide range of resources where you can learn more about retirement and survivor benefits.

For more information on OCERS' investment strategy and performance, you can access the OCERS Web site at www.ocers.org. A newly-created OCERS By the Numbers document provides a wealth of information about our pension fund, including demographics, the investment asset allocation, funded status and customer service efforts.

If you have any questions or concerns about your OCERS retirement benefits, you can contact our Member Services department at (888) 570-6277.



Board election update

Eligible Safety Members are invited to participate in the upcoming election to fill two open seats on the Board of Retirement. An election will be conducted among Safety Members for the positions of "Safety Member" and "Alternate Member" on the Board; both terms will begin July 1, 2009. For more information, visit OCERS' Web site at www.ocers.org.

Financial Strategy Seminars help prepare for future

If you are planning to retire within the next 3 to 30 years, you should plan to attend a free Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar. Financial Strategies Seminars are held at:

**OCERS (Training Room)
2223 E. Wellington Avenue, Suite 100
Santa Ana, CA 92701**

The Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminar consists of a three-session workshop. Each session will cover important topics for successful planning. The third session concentrates on information from an OCERS representative. Individuals and couples are welcome to attend. There is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending.

Various topics of interest and importance will be covered over the course of the three-session workshop. Some of them are:

- Deferred Compensation investment choices
- Tax-free and low-cost investing for profit
- How to determine retirement goals
- Investment choices to consider in the current stock market

The third session of each workshop focuses on information relating to OCERS, including such topics as:

- Eligibility for retirement
- Reciprocal benefits
- Benefit calculations, and how to apply for your retirement benefits from OCERS online
- How to determine your future OCERS benefit

Don't miss out on this valuable information. It will help you prepare for your future. The seminars are free, but reservations are required. To make your reservation to attend this seminar, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars."

An important note: anyone registering for the Financial Strategy Seminar should plan on attending all three sessions. For more information on upcoming Financial Strategies for Retirement Planning Seminars, please call Robert Kinsler at (714) 558-6230.

SCHEDULED DATES:

The Financial Strategy Seminar is a three-session workshop, and persons signing up should plan on attending all three sessions of the workshop.

Dates are as follows:

Workshop

Wednesdays

May 6, 13 and 20, 2009

6 – 9:30 p.m.

Workshop

Wednesdays

June 3, 10 and 17, 2009

6 – 9:30 p.m.

Workshop

Wednesdays

July 1, 8 and 15, 2009

6 – 9:30 p.m.

Workshop

Wednesdays

September 2, 9 and 16, 2009

6 – 9:30 p.m.

Calculate your future retirement using online tools

Hardly a day goes by without a member calling OCERS to ask when is the best date for them to retire. OCERS' Web site has easy-to-use retirement benefit calculators that can help you prepare for the future by giving you a retirement estimate with the push of a button.

The Member Information Center has a Benefits Estimator that uses your individual account information to create a personalized retirement estimate.

Once you log in at the Member Information Center site, select the "Benefit Estimate" tab to obtain retirement estimates based on information displayed on the page. Your Final Average Salary is already displayed on the Benefit Estimator, and you have the ability to project your planned retirement date, age at retirement or service years to help complete an estimate.

In addition to the Member Information Center, anyone can use the Benefits Calculator via the home page of OCERS' Web site without logging into their account. Simply enter your projected data into the required fields and the Benefits Calculator will create a hypothetical estimate.

"These tools are designed to give our members retirement information from the convenience of their home or office, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Members now have the convenience of instant information as well as the flexibility of using actual data relevant to their specific accounts or to project future benefits using hypothetical information," explained Suzanne Jenike, OCERS' Director of Member Services.

The screenshot shows the OCERS website interface. At the top left, it displays the date "March 11, 2009" and the "Member Information Center" header. Below this is a "Member Login" button and a note: "If you do not have a PIN or have forgotten your PIN, please call OCERS at (714) 558-6200." A vertical navigation menu on the left includes links for Home, Newsroom, Finance & Investments, Public Meetings, Forms & Publications, Plan Sponsor Information, and About OCERS. Below the menu is a "Quick links" section with buttons for Benefits Calculator, Frequently Asked Questions, Member Services Directory, Online Retirement Application, Related Links, and Retirement Seminars. The main content area is titled "Orange County Employees Retirement System" and features a search bar. Under the heading "For All Members Benefits Calculator:", there is a "Select Your Plan Type (choose one):" section with radio buttons for Plan A (General Tier 1), Plan B (General Tier 2), Plan C and D (Safety 2% @ 50), Plan E and F (Safety 3% @ 50), Plan G and H (2.5% @ 55), Plan I and J (2.7% @ 55), Plan K and L (3% @ 60), and Plan M and N (2% @ 55). A "Minimum Requirements" button is also present. Below the plan selection, there are input fields for "Member's Age at Retirement:" (set to 57), "Member's Years of Service:" (set to 30), and "Final Average Monthly Compensation:" (set to \$5000). A "Definition of Compensation" button is next to the compensation field. At the bottom of the calculator, there are "Calculate" and "Reset" buttons, with the calculated result shown as \$4,050.00. A small note states: "Age at retirement is calculated in quarter year increments: i.e. 50, 50.25, 50.50, 50.75".

Visit www.ocers.org for more information.

Retirees to see 3 percent Cost of Living Adjustment in May

OCERS Retirees will see a 3 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) beginning with their May 1, 2009 monthly retirement allowance. The Board of Retirement approved the increase at its regular meeting on Feb. 17, 2009.

Any OCERS member who retired on or before April 1, 2009 will receive the 3 percent COLA this year.

The COLA is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the United States Department of Labor as it relates to the Orange County area. The CPI for the region in 2008 was 3.53 percent; the 1937 Act calls for cost-of-living increases to be rounded to the nearest one-half percent. Because the COLA is limited to a maximum increase of 3 percent, the additional .50 percent will go into each member's "COLA bank" and could be used in any year where the COLA is less than 3 percent.

Peg Jones inspires others with excellence

Although Peg Jones recently celebrated her 88th birthday, she has no plans to retire.

“I like to work. I like to learn new things and I think age is a state of mind,” said Jones, who is a Senior Office Supervisor with the Health Care Agency. Always eager to take on new challenges, she recently accepted a transfer from the Public Health Disease Control & Epidemiology program to the Family Health program.

At an age when many workers begin to plan for retirement, Peg began to think about beginning a career.

“I was a stay-at-home mom. When my husband Hank retired, he started doing the dishes and took over my jobs at home,” Peg recalled. “He began to golf and sail, and I didn’t like to golf and sail. I was 58 and decided to get a job.”

Peg went to the local unemployment office and was directed to look at several opportunities, including a federal position, a state job with the Department of Motor Vehicles and an eight-week typing extra-help assignment with the County of Orange.

“I didn’t know what I was doing, but I could type,” Peg said. Before her two-month assignment was over in December 1979, Peg accepted an offer to work for the County of Orange full-time.

Three and a half years later, Peg was asked to apply for a supervisory post in the Environmental Management Agency where she worked in the word processing center from 4 p.m. to midnight. On her own time during the day, she returned to school and enrolled in classes at Santa Ana College to gain new skills.



Peg will celebrate 30 years as a full-time County of Orange employee and OCERS member in December 2009.

“Peg began her County career nearly 30 years ago, never really intending to work for a long period,” said Michael L. Carson, Program Manager at the Health Care Agency’s Public Health Disease Control & Epidemiology program. “Yet, she continues today as a Senior Office Supervisor within the Pulmonary Disease Services Program, working through two front line supervisors to provide excellent, efficient customer service to clients and office support to professional staff.”

Peg is the oldest of OCERS’ 23,400 active members. She has a son and four daughters, 12 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Two of her daughters are full-time employees with the

County of Orange, and she has a grandson who is a captain with the U.S. Army stationed in Iraq.

Although her husband died 10 years ago, Peg feels very fortunate to have a large and loving family, as well as a job she loves so much that “I would pay you to let me come to work.”

“I’ve met so many wonderful people in Public Health. People are here to help; they are so kind and caring, plus we want to give customer service,” Peg said.

“Peg can be relied upon to not only get the job done but get the job done right and in a timely manner,” Michael L. Carson explained. “This was evident during the great flood of 2004 at the 17th Street, Santa Ana clinic site. Peg worked tirelessly to ensure that every staff member affected by the flood had the appropriate tools to do his or her job. This ranged from arranging the clinic’s move of telephones and computers from one site to another and back again, to keeping her manager aware of facility issues. If it wasn’t for Peg’s persistence and dedication, the move back into the clinic would have been less than successful.”



Michael L. Carson with Peg Jones at the Health Care Agency

When the time comes to retire, Peg already has a plan in mind.

“I hope to volunteer in a library because I love to read,” said Peg, who grew up living in a Pennsylvania farmhouse built in 1776.

“I want to join a health club. I love to swim, walk and stay active.”

On the move? Please keep your employer and OCERS updated

Is your address within your agency’s payroll system correct? Please look at your most recent pay stub to verify that your home address is accurate. To correct your address, contact the Human Resources Specialist or Payroll Representative within your Agency/Department as soon as possible.

If you are a retiree and plan on moving, please make sure to contact OCERS as soon as possible to keep us updated with a current address and phone number so you continue to receive important information from us, including your annual 1099-R Form and future issues of *At Your Service* magazine.



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Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars are coming

While it's easy to live for today, moving into retirement requires plenty of advance planning. OCERS is offering Pre-Retirement Seminars throughout 2009 to help you gather information you'll need to meet your retirement goals. The few hours you spend at the seminar can have a beneficial and long-lasting impact on your quality of life after you retire. Anyone who is within three years of their retirement date should plan on taking this seminar.

These daytime seminars will be held at OCERS, 2223 E. Wellington Ave., Ste. 100, Santa Ana, from **8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 8 and 22; May 6 and 20; June 3 and 17; and July 8 and 22, 2009.** The one-session, five-hour seminar is free, and there is plenty of free on-site parking for those attending.

Various topics will be covered. A Social Security representative will discuss Social Security and Medicare benefits; a representative from "Deferred Compensation" will discuss the County's 457 plan; a representative from Retiree Medical will discuss the County's retiree medical benefit options; and an OCERS Retirement Specialist will focus on your OCERS retirement benefits.



No advance registration is necessary and this information will help prepare you for the move into retirement. For more information, please log on at www.ocers.org and click on "Retirement Seminars."