

AFFILIATE OF



SOCIETY FOR
HUMAN
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT



SWHRMA
Southwest Washington Human Resource Management Association

*Helping to Further Develop Human Resource Professionals
as Strategic Partners*

Established 2000

MARCH 2004

March Luncheon

ARE YOU "UP" ON THE LATEST COBRA NOTICE REGULATIONS?



TUESDAY, March 9, 2004

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Hostess House, 10017 NE 6th, Vancouver

11:30 A.M. – REGISTER/NETWORK 12:00 P.M. – PROGRAM

\$18.00 PRE-PAID \$23.00 PAID AT THE DOOR CASH OR CHECK ONLY

RESERVATION DEADLINE: 3/2/04

If you are not sure or just need a refresher, David L. Uyemura, JD, MBA will be able to answer your questions and offer you insight into recent updates by the Department of Labor.

The items to be discussed include:

- Content and distribution requirements for the General Notice, Notice of Qualifying Event, Qualified Beneficiary's Notice and COBRA Administrator's Notice
- Setting up a procedure for Qualified Beneficiaries to notify the medical plan of qualifying events
- Affect and new requirements of the 2002 Trade Act on COBRA

As well as recent court decisions on:

- COBRA notices
- Merger and acquisition issues
- Incomplete Notices
- Termination for gross misconduct

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MARCH 2004

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We were finally able to have our first Board meeting of the year on February 5th. The January Board meeting was cancelled due to the blast of cold weather from the north that made driving somewhat of a challenge and getting in and out of cars into buildings even more challenging.

Our Board of Directors has some unexpected vacancies with two of our members accepting employment across the river recently. We need to identify a new Legislative Action Representative, a Student Chapter Liaison, and a Co-Director of our HRCl Study Group. If you would be interested in joining the Board, or if you just need to get a little more information before you could say, please contact me to discuss the positions. I have to say that working around the caliber of people who are on the Board of Directors is one of the greatest of my professional experiences.

Don't miss the March Chapter meeting where you will have the opportunity to get an update on changes to the COBRA act. All of us in the H.R. profession need to make sure we receive continuing education in our field so that we can be the subject matter experts of H.R. related topics. See you at the meeting!

Please feel free to call me with any thoughts or ideas you have for the chapter this year. Remember to Prize the Past while we Build the Future!

Ronald K. Kramer, SPHR
President of SWHRMA
360-835-9507
rkramer@bbafiberweb.com



MARCH LUNCHEON SPEAKER
David L. Uyemura, JD, MBA
Marsh USA, Inc

Dave is a Senior Vice President, Senior Consultant and Western Region Legal Counsel for Marsh USA Inc.

Dave came to Marsh from Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon where he was Associate General Counsel and Manager of the Portland Metropolitan Marketing Department. Prior to Blue Cross, Dave was an Assistant Attorney General with the Oregon Department of Justice and for 13 years before that was in private legal practice.

Dave received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Oregon and his Doctor of Jurisprudence and Master of Business Administration in Taxation from Golden Gate University in San Francisco. He is a member of the Oregon State Bar and the Health Law Section of the American Bar Association, Past-Chair of the Executive Committee of the OSB Corporate Counsel Section and a past Director of Albertina Kerr Centers, Oregon's largest provider of psychiatric inpatient education and care for developmentally-disabled and abused children.

Dave has spoken frequently on employee benefits to audiences such as the Oregon State Bar, Western Pension and Benefits Conference, Certified Employee Benefits Specialists, Health Underwriters Association, the Society for Human Resources Management, Compensation Associations, Thompson's Publishing, Austin Software Council, Employee Benefits Planning Association, South Carolina Colleges and Universities and various Risk Management Conferences.

MARCH LUNCHEON SPONSOR
OPENonline –
National Service and Local Support,
an Unmatched Combination

OPENonline is one of the top five B2B employment screening services in the United States. With over 12,000 subscribers representing 3,000 companies, OPENonline has been delivering background information on applicants since 1992

Our newest service, developed exclusively for Washington subscribers, is the *Washington Combined Criminal Report*, which unites felony (SCOMIS) and misdemeanor (DISCIS) criminal court records contained in the Washington Justice Information System (JIS) with felony conviction information from the Department of Corrections (DOC).

The *Report* simultaneously searches both sources and returns results online immediately, provides subscribers with greater convenience as well as a lower price than performing the searches separately.

Jerod Dick will share how this exclusive service will benefit your company's recruiting efforts. Contact Jerod at 800-454-6575, or visit the company website at www.openonline.com.

Southwest Washington
Human Resource
Management Association

PO Box 871285
Vancouver, WA 98687



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SWHRMA

LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS FORM

ARE YOU "UP" ON THE LATEST COBRA NOTICE REGULATIONS?

TUESDAY, March 9, 2004
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Hostess House, 10017 NE 6th, Vancouver
\$18.00 Pre-paid \$23.00 Paid at the door Cash or Check Only
Federal ID#91-2052754

Complete and return this page before 3/2/04 to: Becky Whitten

C-TECH INDUSTRIES, INC.
 4275 NW PACIFIC RIM BLVD.
 Camas, WA 98607

PHONE: (360) 833-1600 EXT. 207
 FAX: (360) 817-9077
becky.whitten@c-techindustries.com

- Reservations are required whether you pre-pay or pay at the door.
- We must receive your check before the luncheon in order for you to receive the pre-paid price. We accept cash or a check at the door, but not credit cards.
- Call Becky Whitten (see above) if you must cancel.
- No-shows will be billed.

YOUR NAME: _____ SPHR PHR OTHER _____

EMPLOYER: _____

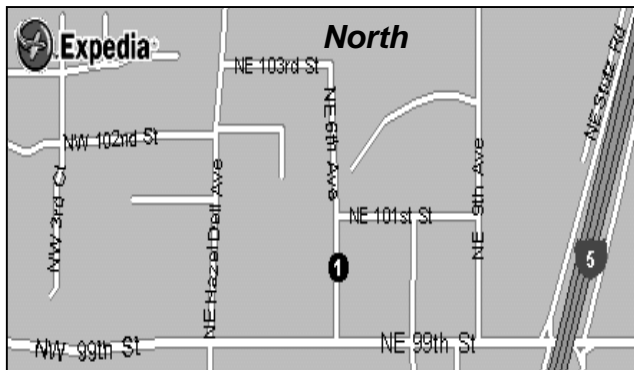
ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

E-MAIL: _____ GUEST: _____

Check all that apply:

- My check for \$_____ made out to SWHRMA is enclosed (\$18 per attendee.)
- I will pay \$23 for each attendee at the door, cash or check.
- Vegetarian lunch requested.
- Send membership information to my address.
- My contact information above (employer, address, e-mail, phone) has changed.**
- This is the first SWHRMA meeting I've attended.***



DIRECTIONS TO LUNCHEON

From I-5 take Exit 5 to access 99th Street. After exiting from I-5, turn west onto 99th Street. Continue to 6th Avenue (there is a bank on the corner of 6th and 99th) and turn North (right). The Hostess House is on the right side of 6th Avenue. For more information, call the Hostess House, (360) 574-3284.



Washington State Council Legislative Update

Jenifer Lambert, SPHR
Legislative Director

Washington State

Governor Gary Locke's decision not to run for re-election opens the door for a tough political battle as the parties not only vie for the state's top seat, but also over a narrowly divided Senate (one-seat division) and House of Representatives (eight-seat division).

The Washington State legislature commenced its 2004 session on January 12th. There will once again be some very hot topics on the state agenda concerning human resource professionals including State Wage and Hour Law clarification, Workers' Compensation reform, Health Care reform, Liability reform, and Initiative Process reform. It will be very important to stay informed and involved. To receive up to date legislative information and to contact your state legislators, call the Olympia hotline at 1-800-562-6000. You can also visit the AWB website (www.awb.org) or Washington Votes (www.washingtonvotes.org).

So far, there have been a handful of bills introduced that would have an adverse impact on the employer community including a bill that would establish a fund to provide compensation to employees who are taking time off for family leave. Given the current representation in Olympia, these bills have very little chance of passing this year, but it is important to note that is likely to be an issue we will see in future legislative sessions. It's important to keep this in mind when electing legislators.

Worker's Compensation is a hot issue this year. In response to two consecutive years of double digit premium increases, a number of bills are being originated from the Senate calling for serious reforms to the Worker's Comp system. It's important that your legislators hear from you that you support Worker's Comp reforms that will bring greater certainty, fairness and competition to Washington's workers compensation system. When writing letters, it is especially helpful if you can give examples of how the current system has adversely affected your company. Business competitiveness and job creation are the buzzwords in Olympia this session.

The Other Washington (D.C.)

On December 22, 2003, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) published its [regulatory](#)

[agenda for 2004](#). The only significant regulatory action the EEOC plans to take is to issue a final regulation that would allow employers to reduce or end retiree health benefits for retirees who become eligible for Medicare. On July 14, 2003, the EEOC published a regulatory proposal to allow employers to reduce these benefits without violating the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and SHRM filed [comments](#) supporting the proposed change. SHRM looks forward to the final rule, as it will clarify that the Age Discrimination Act permits employers to coordinate the provision of retiree health benefits with Medicare eligibility.

On December 22, 2003, the Department of Labor (DOL) also issued its [regulatory agenda for 2004](#). Some of the agenda items are new; however, many of the priority items are carry-overs from the department's 2003 agenda.

For example, revisions to the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) were projected to be issued in January 2003. They are now scheduled for publication in June 2004. The DOL indicates that the FMLA revisions will address the U.S. Supreme Court's 2002 opinion in *Ragsdale v. Wolverine Worldwide Inc.*, 535 U.S. 81. *Ragsdale* held that the DOL's regulation requiring that an employee's 12 weeks of FMLA leave does not begin to run until the employer notifies the employee that time off will count as FMLA leave.

Additionally, the regulatory agenda states that the DOL will issue its final regulation on the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Very contentious changes were proposed in March 2003 and it is hopeful that final guidance will arrive in 2004. Whether the rules will go into effect remains an issue. For more information on the FLSA and the proposed changes, check the [SHRM Governmental Affairs Web site](#).

Other changes discussed in the regulatory agenda include regulations implementing a new program expanding cash assistance and job training for workers who lose their jobs as a result of international trade. Additionally, the DOL hopes to tackle regulations governing the employment of foreign workers and regulations governing hours and conditions of employment for minors age 14 or older. Overall, it looks like 2004 will be a busy year for the DOL and SHRM will be monitoring all regulatory actions.

SHRM "Write Your Member of Congress"

2003 was a fantastic year for Washington State for letter writing. We ended the year with a top ten ranking nationally!! Let's make 2004 even better. Keep up the letter writing in 2004 by visiting www.shrm.org/government, select "Write Your Member of Congress," and click on the letter of your choice.

If you have any questions regarding this update, please let me know.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important Upcoming Mail from SWHRMA

In conjunction with the SHRM Oregon State Council, a mailing will be sent to you in the near future to let you know of an upcoming Legislative Conference in May. We are only sharing the address information with the Oregon State Council (not your email address). One of SWHRMA's goals is to provide information to our members about educational opportunities. This is one way we are meeting that goal. In the future we will continue to inform you of other educational opportunities we learn about.

Considering an Internship?

If you are interested in participating in an internship either as an employer or as an intern, please contact Tamara Russell at trussell@nautilusgroup.com.

For members interested in applying for a scholarship through SWHRMA, please also contact Tamara Russell at trussell@nautilusgroup.com.

2004 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award

For the third year, the Washington State Psychological Association is sponsoring **The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award (PHWA)**, honoring those employers committed to programs and policies that enhance the quality of the work environment for their employees.

The 2004 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards will be presented to winners in four categories: small business (under 100 employees), large business, non-profit and government employer. Applications open February 1st and close on May 1st, 2004.

Finalists selected in each category will be visited by a team from the Washington State Psychological Association. Presentation of the awards will be made on October 1, 2004 at an award luncheon held in conjunction with the annual convention of the Washington State Psychological Association. A second awards presentation will be made at the winners' request in a local venue of their choosing.

In 2003, Washington State University Vancouver became 1 of 17 employers nationwide to be recognized as a Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award Best Practices Honoree by the American Psychological Association's new national recognition program. WSU Vancouver was the 2002 state winner in the government employer category.

This award is presented in cooperation with the American Psychological Association. The Puget Sound Association of Industrial/Organizational Psychologists will act as a participating group in the award process.

For more information about the **Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award** please contact the local representatives named in the accompanying cover letter, or the Washington State Psychological Association (206) 547-4220, wspa@wa.psych.org.

See pages 8-10 of this newsletter for an application for the 2004 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award

SWHRMA 2004 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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G. Loomis
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JOB BANK

If you are searching for employment opportunities, or your company needs to fill a Human Resource position, go to the SWHRMA web site (www.swhrma.org), and click on "Job Bank". This links directly into the Portland Human Resource Management Association Job Bank. While there is no charge to an individual posting their resume, there is a small charge to businesses posting openings.

HR JOB OPENINGS

Does your company have a job opening for an individual in Human Resources? If so, forward the information to Mollie Hubler at m.hubler@comcast.net. She will post the information at the monthly Chapter luncheon meetings.

LUNCHEON SPONSORS

If you know of a business that might be interested in sponsoring an upcoming SWHRMA luncheon, please contact Leah Cox at:

417 NE 136th Street
Vancouver, WA 98685
(360) 576-4223

Leah.Cox@adaliscorp.com

HR LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

As we become aware of local Human Resource training and education opportunities for our members, we will add them to the Calendar location on our website, along with registration links when possible.

If you are aware of such opportunities, please forward that information to Carol Zaharko via the SWHRMA website (Contact Us) at www.swhrma.org.

ADVERTISING

You can advertise your HR-related product or service on Southwest Washington's leading website for Human Resource professionals. Visit www.swhrma.org for more information.

Washington State Psychological Association

2004 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award Application

The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award is given annually to companies (large, small, government, nonprofit) with a commitment to promoting employee well being in the following areas: Health, Safety and Security; Employee Involvement; Family Support; and/or Employee Career Development.

Please fill out the following application by May 1, 2004 and, along with supportive documentation and application fee (see last page), mail to:

Washington State Psychological Association
711 N 35TH ST, Suite 206
Seattle, WA 98103

Company Information

Company Name: _____

Address: _____

Name and title of individual completing this form: _____

Phone: _____

FAX: _____ Email: _____

Website: _____ Number of employees _____

For each of the four areas, specify the degree to which each area exists in your company. If these programs, policies, procedures or practices are present in your company, please give examples of them.

Please attach supporting material describing any programs which you wish to have considered. Supporting material might include information such as policy descriptions, memos, brochures, newsletters, or newspaper/magazine articles. These items should describe or illustrate your program and data your company has collected on its benefits.

PART I: HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

a. Does your company provide orientation and training sessions to ensure a safe and secure workplace? Yes / No

If so, are employees trained in:

- Accident prevention
- Workplace hazards
- Back injury prevention
- Behaviorally based safety programs
- Secured area safety
- Intruder or stranger on premises protocol

b. Are there other areas of safety and security for which training is provided? Yes / No

If yes, please describe: _____

c. The company has programs, policies, procedures or practices to prevent:

- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination
- Workplace violence

Part II: Employee Involvement

a. Does the organization have programs, policies, procedures or practices that explicitly include employee participation in business operations? Yes / No

If yes, what kind of employee involvement activities do you have?

- Problem solving teams
- Joint employee-management committees
- Continuous improvement teams such as Quality Circles or Six Sigma Teams
- Employee committees and task forces
- Conflict management

b. Does company policy and procedure state that employees are encouraged to give feedback regarding the work environment, job responsibilities, decision-making and problem-solving, conflict management and to share new ideas?

Yes /No

If yes, what kind of feedback mechanisms do you have?

- Employee surveys
- All employee meetings
- Small group meetings with managers such as breakfast meetings with management
- Structured suggestion systems
- Participation in job performance evaluation

PART III: FAMILY SUPPORT

a. Does the company have programs, policies, procedures or practices that support the employee's childcare needs such as providing on-site facilities, payment for childcare, dependent care, assistance plans and access to information?

Yes / No

b. Does the company have programs, policies, procedures or practices that support the employee's elder care needs such as providing information and referral services or financial assistance? Yes / No

c. Do employees have opportunities for flexible work arrangements such as variable hours, telecommuting, or working at home? Yes / No

d. Does the company provide on-site or nearby support services such as athletic facilities, convenient banking, food service etc.? Yes / No

e. Does the company provide domestic partner benefits? Yes / No

f. Does the company have leave options outside the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act such as caring for mildly ill children? Yes / No

PART IV: EMPLOYEE CAREER DEVELOPMENT

a. Does the organization have ongoing programs that provide employee career development and advancement opportunities, such as in-house training, tuition reimbursement or sabbaticals? Yes / No

b. Does the company provide career-counseling opportunities? Yes / No

c. Does the company provide specialized training for supervisors and managers in areas such as managing diversity, performance management, and coaching skills to encourage them to be responsive to employee needs and learn how to utilize employees as positive resources of the organization? Yes / No

PART V: SPECIAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING DIVERSITY PROGRAM

An additional award will be given in 2004 for the applicant with the most outstanding diversity program.

*Application Fee:

Large Business Award (over 100 employees)	\$100
Small Business Award (under 100 employees)	\$50
Government Employer Award	\$75
Not for profit Award	\$50

Application Schedule:

5/01/04	Application Deadline
6/01/04	Finalists notified and site visits arranged
8/06/04	Completion of 1/2 day site visits of all finalists
8/21/04	Notification of winners
10/01/04	Presentation of awards at the Annual Convention of the Washington State Psychological Association

in Seattle

Questions should be directed to WSPA:

Telephone: (206) 547-4220 or e-mail: wspa@wapsych.org