The Year of the Monkey

Fire Monkey

2016 is the Year of the Fire Monkey, fire being the dominant element this year. Fire brings huge energy and determination to the Monkeys. They strive to gain the upper hand and like nothing better than to be at the top of the tree. Being recognized for their achievements gives them greater job satisfaction than money. In business they are good negotiators, persuasive and organized, but can get ‘burnt’ by taking risky shortcuts.

Fire monkey women, will be willing to give up their own wealth or dreams to raise their family and to ensure their spouse and children are successful. Fire Monkeys should remember that there is a saying in China: "The further up the tree a Monkey goes, the more you see his bottom."

Healthcare Fund (HCF)—The First 5 years

On May 7, 2010, the National Healthcare Financing Act (HCF) was enacted under 41 PNCA Title 9. The law established a universal insurance coverage for all the people of Palau and residents under what we call Palau National Health Insurance (NHI). It further establish an individual Medical Savings Account or MSA for all the participating members especially those who were employed at the time. MSA are individual savings accounts for the purpose of building up savings earmarked exclusively for medical expenses of the account holder, his/her family dependents, and other beneficiaries that the account holder can designate while NHI provides coverage against the risk of medical expenditure deemed as “catastrophic” resulting from prolonged medical conditions requiring lengthy stay at Belau National Hospital or medical referral to designated off-island facilities in Taiwan and/or Philippines.

UPCOMING EVENT:

Social Security Administration of the Republic of Palau is celebrating its 48th Anniversary on July 1st, 2016.
HCF—The First 5 years
Since inception, the number of contributors or members has grown steadily and consistently with growth of workforce in the market. The number of subsidized members, unemployed and over 60 years old including disabled have increased as well, from 1,361 in FY2011 to 1,863 in FY2015. Other factors contributing to the increase of subsidy members includes HCF outreach campaign on newsletter, newspaper, radio and state visits including word of mouth.

As of March 31, 2016, the total number of MSA contributing members have reached 15,761 or 90% of the population of Palau. The number of designated MSA beneficiaries is 14,966 with 8,000 beneficiaries’ count as non-contributing members, meaning unemployed spouses and relatives, dependent children below working age. The total number of insured members under the NHI has gradually increased over the last couple of years. The total members under NHI have reached 16,260 or 93% of the population of 17,501 (mini census on 2013).

While the program have nearly captured everyone in Palau to have medical insurance, the challenges ahead is how HCF deals with rising cost of care and services provided outside of Palau. Approximately 50% of the NHI pool contributions have been used to finance medical services outside of Palau aka "Referral Cases" while 18% finance the local inpatient services. The need to increase capacity of the Belau National Hospital is critical for the sustainability of the HCF in the long term.

### National Health Insurance (NHI) Coverage: FY2011 to FY2016 (March)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributors</td>
<td>9,167</td>
<td>9,217</td>
<td>9,502</td>
<td>9,623</td>
<td>10,383</td>
<td>10,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized Member</td>
<td>1,361</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,464</td>
<td>1,837</td>
<td>1,863</td>
<td>1,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Dependents</td>
<td>4,326</td>
<td>4,324</td>
<td>4,297</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>4,024</td>
<td>3,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Insured</td>
<td>14,854</td>
<td>14,918</td>
<td>15,263</td>
<td>15,530</td>
<td>16,270</td>
<td>16,260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above figures reflect only those whose NHI coverage was active at the end of each fiscal year.

### Subsidized National Health Insurance Coverage:
For unemployed and retired citizens over 60 years of age, the National Government pays for NHI Insurance Coverage through a subsidy program. This program includes all social security disabled clients and disabled individuals receiving a stipend from Ngak Mak Tang program under the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs. If you know someone who has disabilities and unemployed over 60 years old, please report them to SSA so we can help them enroll into the program.

### Voluntary NHI Coverage:
If you are currently unemployed or self-employed, you can purchase NHI insurance coverage on a voluntary basis. The voluntary insurance rate is $38.03 per quarter. You need to pay two consecutive quarters coverage for your insurance to take effect. If you are married and employed and your wife or husband is not employed, you must ensure that your spouse is listed as your dependent to be covered under your plan. The very least you could do when you enroll is to list your spouse in the space provided for spouse. Adang mekerang? Diak el uaisei? Ochoi!

### Social Security Refund
On March 31, 2016, social security refund checks were delivered to the post office for tax year 2015 refund. Total of 287 Social Security Refund checks, ranging from as low as $5.29 to as high as $5,743.20 were made available on April 1, 2016 in compliance with the law. The total amount of 2016 SS Contributions refunded amounted to $98,311.43.

Social Security Refunds accrued to taxpayers with two or more employers (or businesses) and whose combined taxable wages as assessed during calendar year 2015, ending on December 31, 2015, exceeded $21,000. Any tax assessed over $21,000 triggered a refund to taxpayers. However, refunds were withheld for taxpayers with outstanding social security tax obligations, in deference of the law.
**Presidential State Visit**

Social Security Administration and Healthcare Fund staff on Presidential State visits...to Aimeliik, Ngchesar, Ngarchelong, Ngiwal, Ngarraard. Most questions asked of Social Security Administration and Healthcare Fund staff were mainly for National Health Insurance (NHI) coverage. We encourage everyone with questions about social security benefits and insurance coverage to contact our office at 488-2457.

Ngchesar State Visit 11/17/15 – 7:00pm @Catholic Summer House, Karmaliang

Ngaraard 2/11/16 – 6:30pm @State Office, Ngebuked

Ngarchelong 2/18/16 – 6:30pm @State Office

Ngiwal State Visit 1/12/16 – 6:30pm @Old Age Center

Peleliu State Visit 4/30/16 – 6:30pm @Bai

Aimeliik 4/5/16 – 6:00pm @Community Center
Board of Trustees:
Every year Wilshire Associates (SSA Investment Consultant) holds a Due Diligence Meeting of all SSA Investment Managers and the Board of Trustee at Wilshire headquarter in Santa Monica. The meeting is followed after by Consulting Client Conference. The Annual Meeting was held on April 7-8, 2016 and Client Conference was held from April 10-12, 2016.

Training
Social Security Administration aims to be the best in customer services and therefore, all staff are trained under the Alii Host Customer Service Training organized by Tri-Org and arranged by Belau Tourism Association. During February to March 2016, Total of 7 employees attended the training: Rhondalyne Ngirarorou of Finance and Accounting, Natalie Nakamura of Member Services Section, and Nancy Rengiil, Renee Bausoch, Jovalyn Koshiba, Sierra Isalias and Maria Remeliik of Employer Services Section. This brings all SSA staff and management team to fully trained on Customer Service. Kindly expect the best customer services at Social Security Office and the Healthcare Fund Office. Call the Administrator at 488-2457 if you were not treated fairly and with respect.

$50.00 Supplemental Benefit on direct-deposit
Beginning this June 1, 2016, the $50.00 supplemental benefit will go on direct deposit for beneficiaries who now receive their benefits through direct deposit or “ACH”. For beneficiaries who have not signed up for direct-deposit, the $50.00 check will continue to your post office address. SSA would like to take this opportunity to encourage all beneficiaries to sign up for direct deposit...it is convenient, safe, and time saving. When you sign up for direct-deposit, your benefit will be in your bank account on the first day of each month. The Administration can provide your Monthly Benefit Statement for a minimal fee of $2.00, if you need a copy.

Recalculation of Benefit
In early January 2016, benefit recalculation was performed for all beneficiaries who continued to work and report contributions during Fiscal Year 2015 (October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015). The net effect of the recalculation is an increase in the monthly benefits of these beneficiaries. As a result of the recalculation, 616 beneficiaries received an increase in their benefits, ranging from a low of $.07 to a high of $105.21, beginning with the January 2016 benefit payment that was released on February 1, 2016.

Thank you, MS Section!!!
Annual Survey 2016
On January 15, 2016, there were total of 562 Annual Survey Form that were not received by deadline date. The Board of Trustees agreed to extend the deadline to allow all beneficiaries to comply and avoid having their benefits put on hold. Member Services Staff were asked to contact beneficiaries to submit the annual survey. By March 2015, nearly all surveys were received. Total of 26 individuals could not be located and their names were duly announced during the Palau Wave Radio Talk Show on 3/29/16. As of writing this newsletter, there were total of 17 who were placed on hold as these individuals have relocated outside of Palau without informing the SSA of their re-location. Once their benefit is placed on hold, SSA expect beneficiary to comply and submit their annual survey immediately.

Thank you, MS Section, for your hard work in overcoming the challenges last year and making this year a shining example of “Team Work”.

Retirement Age now 62, Number of Quarters needed to retire is 40 quarters
Beginning October 1, 2015, the new retirement age is 62 and the number of required quarters to be fully insured is now 40. Accordingly, a claimant now has to be age 62 with at least 40 quarters to qualify for full retirement benefits. However, a wage earner who is at least 60 years of age with at least 40 quarters may file a claim for early retirement. Take note that 40 quarters equal to at least 10 years of full employment and contributions to the Plan. An example is that you can be 50 years old, enter into the workforce until 62 years old and receive full retirement benefit. This goes without saying that at Social Security Administration, we do indeed take care of you when you reach old age.

Tiang diak el sal kmal ungil chais!

Changes to Surviving Spouse Benefit
The laws that were enacted in 2013 (RPPL 9-11 & 9-12) made it possible for retirees and other beneficiaries to receive dual benefits, meaning a beneficiary may receive more than 1 benefit. The laws further establish measures for surviving spouse (SP) benefit to be eligible for benefit as follows:

- If you are under retirement age of 62 and you remarry, you will be no longer eligible for SP benefit; 0%
- If you remained unmarried, below age 62, you are entitled for SP benefit at 60%
- If you reach retirement age and remained unmarried, you will receive 100% of SP benefit “same amount your deceased spouse was getting”
- If you are at retirement age and you remarry, you are entitled to 60% of SP benefit;
- However, You may not receive more than one surviving spouse benefit.
- SSA determines Marital Status based on:
  1. By honest reporting submitted thru Annual Survey;
  2. By marriage license;
  3. By church marriage certificate;
  4. By traditionally conducted and observed marriage;
  5. By common law as set forth in the law

Surviving Spouse (SP) audit ongoing...
To comply with RPPL 9-11 and RPPL 9-12, Social Security Administration continues to audit surviving spouse benefits to ensure that continued eligibility for SP benefit is met under the law and regulations. At this juncture, if you have received a letter from Social Security regarding SP benefit and walk in to report your correct marital status, you will not be penalized for benefits received in the past but rather we will adjust your benefit to comply with the law and regulations. This adjustment will continue this year and any penalty waiver is considered at the Board of Trustee.

Dependent Child (DC) audit ongoing...
Dependent Child audit is on going. DC audit is to ensure that surviving children are being benefited by the DC benefit as intended by law. Thus, in cases where a dependent child lives with other than a parent, a guardianship is in place before the guardian is given benefit payee status. Site visits to homes of dependent children are necessary to determine whether or not the child is being cared for. Like SP audits, DC audits are carried out throughout the year.
Health Tips:

Calvo’s Select Care: Ask the Wellness Doctor:

What are some healthy ways to reduce stress?

Being aware that you’re feeling stressed is a good place to start. Most people feel stressed from time to time. But not everyone admits it. And not everyone deals with it in healthy ways. Some people turn to food or alcohol to cope. But this is bad for your health, and can lead to more stress. Stress that is out of control can take a toll on you. That’s why it’s important to deal with stress in healthy ways. Recognize signs of stress Your body is pretty good at sending you signals that you’re stressed out. Your heart rate and blood pressure go up. You can have tense muscles, feel moody, and have memory problems or trouble sleeping. Stress has even been linked to anxiety, changes in appetite, and frequent illnesses.

Here’s how to manage stress in healthy ways:
- Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep;
- Exercise Daily;
- Breathe Deeply;
- Socialize;
- Eat Healthy Foods;
- and Ask for Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOR QUARTER ENDING</th>
<th>PAYMENT DUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH</td>
<td>APRIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APRIL, MAY, JUNE</td>
<td>JULY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER</td>
<td>OCTOBER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER</td>
<td>JANUARY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying for USA Social Security Benefits:
If you are applying or inquiring for USA Social Security benefits, please contact US Embassy at 587-2920 or visit the Embassy to further assist you.

Need Help? Need Answers?
Call us !!!