The conference this year, “Fighting to Keep Good Jobs for American Workers”, was attended by over 1,700 delegates. It was held February 1-4, 2004 in Washington, DC.

The plenary session on Sunday night usually is highlighted by a keynote speaker. Speakers in the past have included U.S. Rep. Richard Gephardt; former First Lady Hillary Clinton, Rep. Al Gore, etc. This year, however, the session was moved up an hour and there was no keynote speaker. I am not sure if it was because UAW had not endorsed any presidential candidate or it was Super Bowl Sunday (9955). I think it may have been a combination of both. President Gettelfinger, however, opened the conference and gave an overview of the agenda for the days to follow.

Monday started bright and early with President Ron Gettelfinger reporting that the focus of this conference would be on trade, labor law, and health care reform. Throughout the day, several speakers and panels (UAW Legislative Department, a media panel, Prof. Harley Shaiken - UC Berkley) expounded on these topics. At noon, all the Michigan delegates met for a luncheon where we heard our U.S.

How the Electoral College Works

• Each state is allocated a number of electors equal to the number of its U.S. senators (always 2) plus the number of its U. S. representatives, which may change each decade, according to the size of each state’s population as determined in the Census.

• The political parties, or independent candidates, in each state submit to the state’s chief election official a list of individuals pledged to their candidate for president and equal in number of the state’s electoral vote. Usually, the major political parties select these individuals either in their state party conventions or through appointment by their state party leaders while third parties and independent candidates merely designate theirs.

• Members of Congress and employees of the federal government are prohibited from serving as an elector in order to maintain the balance between the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.

• After their caucuses and primaries, the major parties nominate their candidates for president and vice president in their national conventions traditionally held in the summer preceding the election. Third party and independent candidates follow different procedures according to the individual state laws. The names of the
**Current Representation Districts**

Chief Steward - Grace Albert

District 1 - Jan Crawford - Cohodas

District 2 - Beth Sanderson - Services Building, Quad II (except Magers), Jacobetti Center, PEIF, Superior Dome, Berry Events Center

District 3 - Gary Jerry - West Science, Learning Resources, Magers Hall, New Science Facility, Whitman

District 4 - Vacant - University Center, Lee Hall, Art & Design North and South, Gries Hall, McClintock, Thomas Fine Arts, and Hedgcock.

**MAY, JUNE, JULY, and AUGUST BIRTHDAYS**

May 4 Kimber Olli
May 5 Christi Etelamaki
May 9 Tina Simula
May 9 Karen Smith
May 9 Rynee Richards

May 15 Leslie Herman
May 16 Cheryl LaJoye
May 18 Terry Johnson (50)
May 21 Susan Laforais
May 28 Raymond Liubakka
May 29 Darlene Rantala

May 15 Leslie Herman
May 16 Cheryl LaJoye
May 18 Terry Johnson (50)
May 21 Susan Laforais
May 28 Raymond Liubakka
May 29 Darlene Rantala

June 7 Janet Koski
June 8 Jean Paquette
June 10 Gina O’Donnell
June 11 Lorraine Deshambo
June 14 Vicki Hedstrom
June 17 Roxanne Rastello
June 18 Carolyn Basal

June 21 Keith Greising
June 23 Marsha Bartle
June 23 Barbara Munson
June 23 Kathy Maki
June 24 Pauline Gould
June 26 Tina Sehl
June 27 Carol Schiitzinger
June 30 Linda Meldrum

June 21 Keith Greising
June 23 Marsha Bartle
June 23 Barbara Munson
June 23 Kathy Maki
June 24 Pauline Gould
June 26 Tina Sehl
June 27 Carol Schiitzinger
June 30 Linda Meldrum

July 7 Tina Vandezande
July 7 Luann Dagenais
July 10 Erin Baldwin
July 11 Juliana Clement

July 13 Linda Cleary
July 14 Phyllis Zaenglein
July 20 Sue Ann Salo
July 22 Jodrie Larsh

July 13 Linda Cleary
July 14 Phyllis Zaenglein
July 20 Sue Ann Salo
July 22 Jodrie Larsh

August 2 Craig Buchanan
August 3 Beverly Pasco
August 4 Denis Johnson
August 4 Lori Rintala
August 13 Lisa Alto
August 16 Stephen Brisson
August 17 Kathy Solka
August 17 Patti Cooke

August 20 Annette Brown
August 22 Sarah Woods
August 24 Linda Hares
August 25 Rhonda Peterson
August 25 Kay Schwartz
August 26 Jan Biolo
August 26 Sandra Klabe
August 29 Judy Hopper

August 20 Annette Brown
August 22 Sarah Woods
August 24 Linda Hares
August 25 Rhonda Peterson
August 25 Kay Schwartz
August 26 Jan Biolo
August 26 Sandra Klabe
August 29 Judy Hopper

Have a wonderful day!

2002-2005 Officers

President - Sue Tollefson
Vice President - Dan Leppanen
Secretary - Pat Frenn
Treasurer - Rita Leppanen
Sergeant at Arms - Phyllis Zaenglein
Guide - Karen Smith
Trustees - Maddie Anderson, Mary Bourdeau, Joann Jordon

Bargaining Team - Grace Albert, Penny Hubble, Kimber Olli, Pat Woods

President Search Committee
Rep - Sue Henderson
Stewards - Grace Albert, Chief
District 1 - Jan Crawford
District 2 - Beth Sanderson
District 3 - Gary Jerry
District 4 - Vacant

Page 2
Diane Mankamyer
I will have 22 years at NMU in May. I started at the Jacobetti Center in December 1981 working in a temporary position in the administrative offices. I then worked for the Police Academy for about a month before being hired as clerk in the Construction Cluster at Jacobetti. I went from there to the Conference Department as a senior secretary, where I worked about 4 1/2 years. I also spent about a couple months in the Purchasing Department. In August 1987 I started as Principal Secretary in the Placement & Career Planning Office—now the JOBSearch Center—and have been here ever since—almost 17 years.

I have so many things I want to do when I retire, I just don't know where I'll start. This summer I am hoping that my oldest granddaughter from Colorado Springs might be able to come and visit me. Along with my hobbies that I haven't had time for in recent years (rosemaling, sewing, reading), I may travel to see my sons and grandchildren. They are spread out from Tennessee to Colorado Springs, to Portland, Oregon, and back to Ontonagon where my great granddaughter lives. I have to admit to being a real homebody, so this traveling thing would be a big adventure for me. I didn't even make my annual visit to Hancock last summer to visit my friend who lives there. Although I will certainly miss all the wonderful people at NMU that I've known and worked with, I know I will keep busy and wonder how I had time to go to work all those years. The possibilities are unlimited and I'm looking forward to them.

Jean Paquette – I began working at NMU during the summer of 1987 at which time I was in the clerical pool. My first assignment was filling in for Grace in Psychology for a month. That was a neat experience as I learned a great deal about working with computers, performing word processing, and spreadsheets for the department. I then filled in a semester assignment working in the College of Business for Karen Stulz who left temporarily to do her student teaching. What a great experience that was! Then in March 1988 a job opening came up in Engineering & Planning. I was interviewed for the position and was awarded the job. This position has been a very rewarding learning experience as it has many areas that I could excel in regarding meeting the public, working on contracted projects with office staff who were overseeing the multi-million dollar projects on campus. This venture has been ongoing since that time. I had a wonderful boss, John Bekkala, who was exceptional to work with. I now work for Kathy Richards, who is another excellent boss.

I have many plans upon retiring which include camping and fishing with the new boat and trailer my husband and I just purchased within the past year; gardening; finishing up on my house renovations; intermittent traveling to see family members; working on projects at church; and just enjoying spending time with my children, and grandchildren who are growing up so fast. Most of all, I will be able to spend time with my best friend, my husband, Bruce; who has been patiently waiting for me to retire. Over the years we have been separated in distance with him sailing on the Great Lakes ore boats for 28 years. He has retired twice and also took a part-time job waiting for me to finish my career.

Beverly Pascoe - I have worked in several departments over the years, English, Poli Sci, Education and then WNMO-TV/FM for a total of 30 years. I plan to do a lot of reading, playing with my grandson (Aidan), and have more lunches with my mother (Orva). I also have children (Rick, Coba and Ariel) I don't see enough of, so I will do more with them too. NMU has been a good place to work, great benefits, good people. I will miss the people, but not getting up and putting makeup on every morning of my life. Will be nice to relax, go to the beach, organize things and sit on my patio. Bye!

(Cont.on page 11, col. 3)
Mountain Dew Salad

2 small pkgs of lemon jello
2 cups of boiling water
1 cup of COLD Mt. Dew
1 can lemon pie filling
12 oz. Cool Whip


Thanks to Kathy Solka

3 Ways with Ramen Noodles

Vegetable Tofu Soup - Add cooked frozen oriental mixed vegetables and cubed firm tofu to prepared ramen noodle soup mix. Top with sliced scallions.

Tuna Noodle Salad - Break in half noodles from two 3-oz. bags. Boil until soft. Cool under running cold water; drain well. Whisk 1/3 cup mayo, 1 Tbs each lemon juice and water, and seasoning packets in a large bowl. Stir in 1 cup of sliced cucumber, 1/4 cup diced onion, 1 drained 6-oz. tuna and the noodles. Serve on lettuce. Serves 4.

Beef Lo Mein - Brown 8 oz. ground beef and 1 chopped onion in a large skillet. Add 2 1/2 cups of water; bring to a boil. Crumble in noodles from two 3-oz. bags and add seasoning packets and 2 cups thawed frozen broccoli florets. Simmer covered 3 minutes, uncover and simmer 3 minutes or until liquid evaporates and noodles are tender. Serves 4.

Source: November 1, 2003 Woman’s Day

(Recipes continued on page 7, col. 3)

Truly a tax loophole for the rich...

If you are a small business owner and happen to own any of these or 56 other eligible SUVs, don’t forget to deduct up to $100,000 of their price on your taxes this year. For the full story, see http://www.suvtaxloophole.org/what_happened.htm

Thanks to Kimber Olli
Tribute to Mothers

For those who are fortunate enough to still be blessed by having your Mom with you, this is beautiful. For those who aren’t, it is even more beautiful.

The young mother set her foot on the path of life. “Is this the long way?” she asked.

And the guide said, “Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning.”

But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, she fed them and bathed them, and taught them how to tie their shoes and ride a bike and reminded them to feed the dog, and do their homework and brush their teeth. The sun shone on them, and the young Mother cried, “Nothing will ever be lovelier than this.”

Then the nights came, and the storms, and the path was sometimes dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her arms, and the children said, “Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come.”

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary. (8692) But at all times she said to the children, “A little patience and we are there.” So the children climbed, and as they climbed they learned to weather the storms. With this, she gave them strength to face the world. Year after year, she showed them compassion, understanding, hope, but most of all.....unconditional love. When they reached the top they said, “Mother, we would not have done it without you.

“The days went on, and the weeks and the months and the years, and the mother grew old and she became little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage. The mother, when she lay down at night, looked up at the stars and said, “This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned so much and are now passing these traits on to their children.”

When the way became rough for her, they lifted her, and gave her their strength, just as she had given them hers. One day they came to a hill, and beyond the hill, they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. The mother said: “I have reached the end of my journey. Now I know the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk with dignity and pride, with their heads held high, and so can their children after them.” The children said, “You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates.” They stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. They said: “We cannot see her, but she is with us still. A Mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence.”

Your Mother is always with you. She’s the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street, she’s the smell of certain foods you remember, flowers you pick and perfume that she wore, she’s the cool hand on your brow when you’re not feeling well, she’s your breath in the air on a cold winter’s day. She is the sound of the rain that lulls you to sleep, the colors of a rainbow, she is Christmas morning. Your Mother lives inside your laughter. She’s crystallized in every tear drop. A mother shows every emotion......... happiness, sadness, fear, jealousy, love, hate, anger, helplessness, excitement, joy sorrow......and all the while, hoping and praying you will only know the good feelings in life. She’s the place you came from, your first home, and she’s the map you follow with every step you take. She’s your first love, your first friend, even your first enemy, but nothing on earth can separate you. Not time, not space... not even death!

Happy Mother’s Day!

“The Flame” is a member of the Local Union Press Association and the Michigan Labor Press AFL/CIO. “The Flame” is published monthly Sept-April by the Education Committee, UAW Local 1950, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI 49855.

Submissions maybe made to the Education Committee Chair, Dan Leppanen or the Asst. Editor, Phyllis Zaenglein.
Senator, Debbie Stabenow, speak.

Tuesday morning we all boarded buses to join the Industrial Union Council Legislative Conference, which was held at the Washington Hilton, the hotel where President Reagan was shot. Again speakers, including Richard Trumka, Industrial Union Council Chair and Secretary-Treasurer of AFL-CIO; Senator Tom Daschle, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate; Bill Lucy, President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, among others, spoke to the three issues of trade, labor law, and health care reform.

The afternoon was set aside for visits to the Hill. That morning we learned the Senate and Capitol were closed because Risen (a chemical agent) was found. The Michigan delegates from the first congressional district were still able to meet with U.S. Rep. Bart Stupak in his office on the Hill. We had worksheets to record his position on the focus topics of the convention. We are very fortunate to have a congressman who supports our positions and works hard for the rights of working people. Rep. Stupak also wanted us to convey to our membership that he needs to hear from us on issues.

Tuesday evening a legislative reception was held in the hotel. All delegates were asked to invite their congressmen and women. It is another opportunity to meet and discuss issues with our senators and representatives.

Wednesday morning we began bright and early again with speakers from the AFL-CIO and a few more legislators.

All delegates were given a wealth of information, not only on the three topics highlighted during the conference, but on all issues related to working men and women. The binder of material we received contains just about everything you would want to know about our government, both State and national. I will have some of the things I believe would be of most interest to our membership printed in our newsletter and/or on our Web site.

You can’t come away from this conference and not feel a renewed energy to fight for the things you believe in. It’s easy to feel like a small fish in a big ocean and that what you believe doesn’t matter; but it does. Both Senator Stabenow and Rep. Stupak emphasized how important it is for us to let them know how we feel on issues. Phone calls, emails, snail-mail - whatever the form - they need your voice.

I would like to thank the membership for allowing me to go to the conference this year. I truly enjoyed the experience and brought back a ton of information.

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**What is a BILLION?**

The next time you hear a politician causally use the word “billion”, think about whether you want that politician spending your tax money. A billion is a difficult number to comprehend, but one advertising agency did a good job of putting that figure into perspective in one of its releases:

A billion seconds ago, it was 1959.

A billion minutes ago, Julius Caesar was alive.

A billion hours ago, we were in the Stone Age.

A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes, at the rate Washington spends it.
Electoral College
(from page 1, col. 3)

The candidate for president with the most electoral votes, provided that it is an absolute majority (one over half of the total), is declared president. Similarly, the vice presidential candidate with the absolute majority of electoral votes is declared vice president.

In the event no one obtains an absolute majority of electoral votes for president, the U.S. House of Representatives (as the chamber closest to the people) selects the president from among the top three contenders with each state casting only one vote and an absolute majority of the states being required to elect. Similarly, if no one obtains an absolute majority for vice president, then the U.S. Senate makes the selection from among the top two contenders from that office.

At noon on January 20, the duly elected president and vice president are sworn into office.

More recipes ...

Good Morning ~ I love fresh Asparagus and thought I would send a couple of recipes that looked delicious!
Have a Blessed Week!
~Chris Ducsay (former CT) ~

Springtime Asparagus
1 cup (about 4 oz.) sliced mushrooms
1/4 cup KRAFT LIGHT DONE RIGHT! Italian Reduced Fat Dressing
1 tsp. lemon juice
1 lb. asparagus spears, ends removed
2 Tbsp. PLANTERS Sliced Almonds

MIX mushrooms, dressing and lemon juice in large nonstick skillet; cook on medium heat 3 to 5 minutes or just until mushrooms are tender, stirring frequently. TOP with asparagus; cover. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer 5 minutes or until asparagus is crisp-tender. SPRINKLE with almonds.

Easy Spring Frittata
Prep Time: 5 min | Total Time: 30 min
2 Tbsp. Kraft Light Done Right! Italian Reduced Fat Dressing
1 bunch asparagus spears, cut in 1/2-inch pieces
8 eggs
1/4 cup milk
1 cup Kraft 2% Milk Shredded Reduced Fat Cheddar Cheese, divided

HEAT dressing in a large nonstick ovenproof skillet. Add asparagus; cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. BEAT together eggs, milk and 1/2 cup cheese in a medium bowl until well blended. Pour over asparagus and stir gently. BAKE at 350°F for 25 minutes or until set, sprinkling with remaining 1/2 cup cheese after 20 minutes. Cut into wedges to serve. Makes: 4 servings

SINGLE FEMALE seeks male companionship, ethnicity unimportant. I’m a very good looking girl who LOVES to play. I love long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping and fishing trips, cozy winter nights lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. Rub me the right way and watch me respond. I’ll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Kiss me and I’m yours. Call ... and ask for Daisy.

Over 15,000 men found themselves talking to the owner of an 8-week old black Labrador retriever.
Two Ways the United States of American Could Deal With Other Nations

THE ROBIN WILLIAMS PEACE PLAN

This may very well be the best thought out item we have read since 9/11/01. Leave it to Robin Williams to come up with the perfect plan ... what we need now is for our UN Ambassador to stand up and repeat this message.

I see a lot of people yelling for peace, but I have not heard of a plan for peace. So, here's one plan.

1. The US will apologize to the world for our "interference" in their affairs, past & present. You know, Hitler, Mussolini, Tojo, Noriega, Milosovich and the rest of those good ol' boys: We will never "interfere" again.

2. We will withdraw our troops from all over the world, starting with Germany, South Korea and the Philippines. They don't want us there. We would station troops at our borders. No one sneaking through holes in the fence.

3. All illegal aliens have 90 days to get their affairs together and leave. We'll give them a free trip home. After 90 days the remainder will be gathered up and deported immediately, regardless of who or where they are. France would welcome them.

4. All future visitors will be thoroughly checked and limited to 90 days unless given a special permit. No one from a terrorist nation would be allowed in. If you don't like it there, change it yourself and don't hide here. Asylum would never be available to anyone. We don't need any more cab drivers or 7-11 cashiers.

5. No "students" over age 21. The older ones are the bombers. If they don't attend classes, they get a "D" (for "deport") and it's back home baby.

6. The US will make a strong effort to become self-sufficient energy wise. This will include developing non-polluting sources of energy but will require a temporary drilling of oil in the Alaskan wilderness. The caribou will have to cope for a while.

7. Offer Saudi Arabia and other oil producing countries $10 a barrel for their oil. If they don't like it, we go some place else. They can go somewhere else to sell their production. (About a week of the wells filling up the storage sites would be enough.)

8. If there is a famine or other natural catastrophe in the world, we will not "interfere." They can pray to Allah or whomever for seeds, rain, cement or whatever they need. besides, most of what we give them is stolen or given to the Army. The people who need it most get very little, if anything.

9. Ship the UN Headquarters to an isolated island some place. We don't need the spies and fair weather friends here. Besides, the building would make a good homeless shelter or lockup for illegal aliens.

10. All Americans must go to charm and beauty school. That way no one can call us "Ugly Americans" any longer. The language we speak is ENGLISH.....learn it...or LEAVE...

Now, ain't that a winner of a plan. The Statue of Liberty is no longer saying "Give me your poor, your tired, your huddled masses." She's got a baseball bat and she's yelling, "You want a piece of me?"

Thanks to Sue Tollefson
WOULD IT NOT BE GREAT TO TURN ON THE OLE’ TV TONIGHT AND SEE G.W. BUSH GIVE THE FOLLOWING SPEECH....

My fellow Americans:

As you all know, the defeat of Iraq’s regime has been completed. Since congress does not want to spend any more money on this war, our mission in Iraq is complete.

This morning I gave the order for a complete removal of all American forces from Iraq. This action will be complete within 30 days. It is now time to begin the reckoning.

Before me, I have two lists. One list contains the names of countries which have stood by our side during the Iraq conflict. This list is short. The United Kingdom, Spain, Bulgaria, Australia, and Poland are some of the countries listed there. The other list contains everyone not on the first list. Most of the world’s nations are on that list. My press secretary will be distributing copies of both lists later this evening.

Let me start by saying that effective immediately, foreign aid to those nations on List 2 ceases immediately and indefinitely. The money saved during the first year alone will pretty much pay for the costs of the Iraqi war. The American people are no longer going to pour money into third world hellholes and watch those government leaders grow fat on corruption. Need help with a famine? (8739) Wrestling with an epidemic? Call France. In the future, together with Congress, I will work to redirect this money toward solving the vexing social problems we still have at home.

On that note, a word to terrorist organizations: Screw with us and we will hunt you down and eliminate you and all your friends from the face of the earth. Thirsting for a gutsy country to terrorize? Try France, or maybe China. To Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Yo, boys. Work out a peace deal now. Just note that Camp David is closed. Maybe all of you can go to Russia for negotiations. They have some great palaces there. Big tables, too.

I’m ordering the immediate severing of diplomatic relations with France, Germany, and Russia. Thanks for all your help, comrades. We are retiring from NATO as well. Bon chance, mes amis.

I have instructed the Mayor of New York City to begin towing the many UN diplomatic vehicles located in Manhattan with more than two unpaid tickets to sites where those vehicles will be stripped, shredded and crushed. I don’t care about whatever treaty pertains to this. Pay your tickets tomorrow or watch your precious Benzes, Beamers, and limos be turned over to some of the finest chop shops in the world. I love New York.

A special note to our neighbors: Canada is on List 2. Since we are going to be seeing a lot more of each other, you folks might want to try not pissing us off for a change. Mexico is also on List 2. President Fox and his entire corrupt government really need an attitude adjustment. I have a couple extra tank and infantry divisions sitting around. Guess where I’m gonna put ‘em? Yep, border security. So start doing something with your oil.

Oh, by the way, the United States is abrogating the NAFTA treaty—starting now. It is time for America to focus on its own welfare and its own citizens. Some will accuse us of isolationism. I answer them be saying darn tootin’. Nearly a century of trying to help folks live a decent life around the world has only earned us the undying enmity of just about everyone on the planet. It is time to eliminate hunger in America.. It is time to eliminate homelessness in America. It is time to eliminate World Cup soccer from America.

To the nations on List 1, a final thought. Thanks guys. We owe you. To the nations on List 2, a final thought. Drop dead.

God bless America. Thank you and good night.
WASHINGTON, April 11 — Medicare will soon publish detailed information comparing the prices of most prescription drugs, shining a bright light on some of the biggest secrets in the health care industry.

Economists and federal officials say the information, intended to help Medicare beneficiaries, could also be immensely useful to other consumers, as well as to private insurers and employers who provide drug coverage to employees and retirees.

The data will be available late this month on a government Web site, Medicare.gov. The site will list the prices charged for various dosages of specific drugs at retail pharmacies in or near a given ZIP code. If a brand-name drug has generic equivalents, their prices will be displayed as well.

Medicare officials said the Web site would also show prices for competing brand-name drugs used to treat the same condition. Thus, a person shopping for Lipitor could see the prices for other cholesterol-lowering agents like Zocor and Crestor.

Ana Nunez-Poole, Web site manager at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said the main purpose of providing such information was to help beneficiaries compare the merits of the drug discount cards issued by private entities and approved by the government.

Beneficiaries will be able to sign up for the cards next month. Card sponsors have negotiated discounts with drug manufacturers. The site will list the retail prices for different drugs under different cards, so beneficiaries can choose the card that best meets their needs.

Through the federal Web site, consumers and government officials will have access to prices for more than 60,000 products sold at nearly 75,000 pharmacies around the country. “That has never happened before,” said James L. Yocum, executive vice president of DestinationRx, a contractor that helped develop the site.

The process of setting drug prices is notoriously secretive. Ten people buying the same drug at a retail pharmacy may pay 10 different prices, depending on what insurance coverage they have, if any.

Comparison shopping is difficult. “This type of information is hard to get today,” said John C. Rother, policy director of AARP, the lobby for older Americans. “Most consumers don’t have access to it.”

Tommy G. Thompson, the secretary of health and human services, said the act of making the data public would “help drive down drug prices,” as “companies will have to reduce prices to compete.”

Americans without drug coverage pay some of the world’s highest prices for their medicines. The Bush administration says the sponsors of drug discount cards have negotiated savings of 10 percent to 25 percent off retail prices. Democrats are generally skeptical and predict savings at the lower end of that range.

Elderly people who are not comfortable using the Internet will be able to call a toll-free telephone number, 800-MEDICARE (633-4227), to obtain prices for the medicines they use. About 22 percent of Americans 65 and older regularly use the Internet but the number is growing rapidly, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, a research organization.

DestinationRx, a small company based in Los Angeles, developed the software needed for comparison shopping and will tabulate the prices reported by drug-card sponsors. “This is an enormous undertaking,” said Mr. Yocum of DestinationRx. “It’s as if the federal government were trying to find the price of milk at every supermarket in the country at the same time.”

The company already operates a Web site that compares prices of drugs available through large online pharmacies.

“The market for prescription drugs has been largely opaque,” Mr. Yocum said. “When markets become transparent, consumers see lower prices almost immediately.”

Pharmacists say they expect to be deluged with questions from Medicare beneficiaries and from other consumers who want the same discounts. “We are already getting lots of questions,” said Page Dunlap, the owner of a pharmacy in Hartselle, Ala., north of Birmingham.

Every state has a health insurance counseling program to help Medicare beneficiaries sort through their choices. Counselors who saw a demonstration of the new Web site here last week said they were impressed, but had many questions.

Robin S. Szwanek, (4787) a counselor with the Nebraska Insurance Department, said the price data could be a “savior” for elderly people and those who advise them on how to cope with soaring drug costs.

Tracey A. Bergmeyer, a trainer with Missouri’s program, said the site would be useful to some Medicare beneficiaries, but confusing to others. “It’s too much information, too much data, for some beneficiaries,” she said.

Gail E. Shearer, a health policy expert at Consumers Union, said that “there is already a high degree of confusion and anxiety among seniors and the disabled about how to choose a drug discount card,” and that the information on the Web site could compound that confusion.

Thanks to Kimber Olli

This month we contributed 15 inkjets to Redeemer’s youth. The total is now 118. Thanks.
LEGISLATIVE ALERT: Act now on Federal Matching Assistance Program (FMAP)

From a flyer from MGH

The temporary FMAP increase for Michigan and other distressed states, is about to expire. If it expires, health care services for thousands of Michigan children, single mothers, disabled and elderly citizens could lose coverage.

The state has already cut $505 million from the Medicaid program since 1998. Worse still, Michigan is facing an additional $500 million Medicaid budget shortfall for fiscal year 2005. If the FMAP increase expires, hundreds of thousands of Michigan citizens could lose their health care.

Please protect health care services for thousands of Michigan children, single mothers, disabled and elderly citizens: support legislation in Congress to extend by at least one more year, the federal matching assistance percentage (FMAP) increase for Michigan. This is a critical health care funding issue and MGHS needs a voice to talk to Washington. Be part of the solution to the health care problem.

Write or email your representatives, US Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Lansing), US Sen. Car Levin (D-Detroit), and our US Rep Bart Stupak. For more information, including sample letters, see www.hospitalsact.org.


1971-1973 Bookkeeper for the Wakefield Township Schools
1974-1976 Secretary to the Principal at Marquette Senior High School (Bill Hart)
1976-1977 Secretary C4 to the Chief Accountant in the Controllers Office at NMU (Don Grisham and later Robert Kemp)
1977-1980 Secretary (C6 unclassified) to the Director of Auxiliary Services (Stan Walker)
1980-1987 Secretary (AP2) to the Director of Housing and Food Service (Bob Fisher and after a reorg. in 1987, Carl Holm)
1987-1989 Secretary (4C) to the Director of Public Safety & Police Services (Ken Chant)
1989-1999 Secretary (4A) to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (Don Heikkinen and Michael Marsden)
1999-June 30, 2004 Secretary (4A) in Academic Affairs (Leonard Heldreth)

What can I say? I’ve met and worked with a lot of great people over the years. Northern’s been good to me.

Plans for the future...I’m not making any definite plans — Will probably spend more time in Wakefield assisting my folks, might pursue my hobby job (buy low and sell less low), might work part time somewhere, would like to get more involved in week day church activities, will look at volunteer opportunities, might finally weed my garden and spring clean the house :)