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## *A Whole New Look*

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The Sylvia Group is proud to announce the launch of their new website. Easy to navigate and designed with you in mind, the site reflects the direction of our company and our commitment to providing you with smart, easy and personal services.

By visiting us at [www.sylviainsurance.com](http://www.sylviainsurance.com), you can access features that are important to you on your own schedule. Day or night, you will find resources, answers, direction and support. Some of our new and expanded website features include:

- Client Resource Center - find resources, articles, tips and more
- Billing and Payment Information - find information regarding your insurance company's payment options
- Claim Reporting Information - helpful information about what to do if you experience a claim

- Map & Directions - find the quickest route to our office
- Products & Services - learn about all the ways we can help protect you and your assets
- Staff Directory - meet the professionals at the Sylvia Group and get their contact information
- Financial Calculators - to help you make some important financial decisions

### *Financial Calculator*

Only 42% of U.S. workers have tried to determine how much they will need to save for a comfortable retirement. Have you thought about how much you will need?

Take a look at our financial calculator to help you estimate answers to common financial questions.

[www.sylviainsurance.com/calculators.cfm](http://www.sylviainsurance.com/calculators.cfm)

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## *Carvalho, Francis & Roy Join Staff*

We are pleased to welcome Liz Carvalho, Cary Francis and Rob Roy to our team of professionals.

Liz Carvalho will be working as a Personal Lines Customer Service Representative. She has 22 years of industry experience, is a licensed insurance broker, a Certified Insurance Representative (CISR) and is fluent in Portuguese.

Cary Francis is the owner of Schofield & Francis Insurance Agency. He has attended the University of Denver as well as the Hartford School of Insurance. With over 35 years of industry expertise, he has worked as an underwriter for Royal Globe Insurance Company as well as a producer for Starkweather & Shepley Insurance Agency. He is a member of the MA Association of Insurance Agencies, a past volunteer with the United Way, a Corporator for Child & Family Services and a member of the Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust, the Buzzards Bay Coalition, the New Bedford Yacht Club and the New Bedford Country Club.

Rob Roy joins us as an Account Executive with 35 years of industry experience. He is a licensed insurance broker who began his career with John Hancock where

he served as an Assistant General Agent. He has most recently served as an Account Executive working with clients of the Schofield & Francis Agency. He enjoys fishing and studying World War II history.

You can read more about this story on page 4.

## *Owens & Roy Join Staff*

We are also pleased to announce the appointments of Sandra Owens and Dana Roy to the positions of Customer Service Representatives in our Personal Lines Department.

Sandra Owens has twelve years of experience working with both personal and commercial lines clients. She is a licensed insurance broker, a Certified Insurance Representative (CISR), a Certified Professional Insurance Woman (CPIW) and the current secretary of the Bristol County Chapter of the MA Insurance Women's Association.

Dana Roy began her industry experience in 2003 as a personal insurance counselor for Travelers Property & Casualty. She is a graduate of Bristol Community College, a licensed insurance broker and has experience as a Customer Service Representative and Team Leader.

## Health Care Reform Update

Many of our clients have questions about the new health care reform law in Massachusetts. As new information and requirements under the law are addressed through regulations from the state Department of Revenue, Department of Unemployment Assistance, Division of Insurance, Connector and the Legislature, we will use our newsletter and our agency website to help keep you up to date with the law. The following are two timely questions:

### Health Care Reform Q&A

#### **Q: What are the new state tax filing requirements?**

A: At the end of 2007, you may be receiving a Form 1099 - HC from your health insurance carrier. Why are you receiving this form and what do you do with it? The state of Massachusetts now requires that everyone in the state have health insurance coverage. As proof of your coverage, your health insurance carrier will be sending you a 1099-HC and reporting your coverage status to the state. You will be required to complete a new Schedule HC tax form when filing your state income tax return. If you are not covered by a health insurance plan as of December 31, 2007, you will be subject to a state income tax penalty. For 2007, the penalty is equal to the personal income tax exemption on your state tax return (approximately \$209). Starting in 2008, the stakes will be higher - your tax penalty will be equal to one-half the cost of an 'affordable' policy for every month you are without coverage.

#### **Q: How will I know if my business has to pay the \$295 Fair Share Contribution?**

A: The initial Fair Share assessment period started on October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007. If you employed 11 or more full-time equivalent employees during that period, you must complete an online report through the Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) before November 15, 2007. If you receive a post card from the DUA, *even if you do not believe you had 11 or more employees during the reporting period*, you must comply with the reporting requirements. By the same token, if you do NOT receive a notice from the DUA but you believe you are subject to the fair share requirements, you must also complete the online report. Based on the results of the report, you will be able to determine if you need to make a payment to the state on behalf of your employees.

Your Benefits Team at the Sylvia Group is able to help you and your business understand your responsibilities under the new health care reform law. We will be updating our business clients on the latest information and requirements at our HCR workshop on Wednesday, October 10th at 9:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. If you would like to attend one of these sessions please let Kristine know at [karsenault@sylviainsurance.com](mailto:karsenault@sylviainsurance.com) or at 508.742.9247.

## Sylvia & Company Recognized as a Level 7 Certified Company

The Sylvania Group of Insurance Agencies is pleased to announce that they have been officially recognized as a **Certified Level 7 Company**. This award comes after extensive measurement of The Sylvania Group's implementation of the Level 7 business model and associated protocols. In particular, the Sylvania Group has achieved the three rigorous benchmarks required for Level 7 Accreditation and is thrilled to be the first group in the country to receive this designation.

"The Sylvania Group has been awarded Level 7 Certification as they have definitively mastered the systems, practices and requirements demanded by the Level 7 accreditation process" according to Penny Ciaburri, Founder and Chief Executive of Level 7 Certified LLC. "This is an incredible honor for the Sylvania Group. They have evidenced persistent dedication over the past four years. I am impressed with their commitment to be known as "the best of the best". How fortunate for all their valued clientele and the talented staff members who work at the Sylvania Agency."

Headquartered in Rochester, New York, Level 7 Certified is a business-to-business organization whose mission is to vigorously advance and support national business process endeavors and organizational excellence. Level 7 Certified established the Level 7 Certification Program to recognize innovative companies who transform their businesses into a sustainable commercial success, while continually increasing both employee satisfaction and client loyalty.

## *Kids in College?*

As many of our children pursue higher education away from home, they often take many valuable items with them. In addition to clothes, shoes and books they also have valuable electronic equipment like computers, cell phones, MP3 players and other high-tech gadgets.

Colleges do not take on the responsibility for your child's belongings. Most homeowner's policies do cover these belongings for up to 10% of the parents' personal property limit, however, that may not be adequate considering the high value of some of those items, the possibility of a high deductible, and limitations on coverage for some of those electronic items. Add to that the high rate of theft of these items and your probability of loss increases greatly.

Many insurance companies offer either a special endorsement to cover students' property in the dormitory or a stand-alone policy. These options are reasonably priced and can help protect you in these circumstances. Call your Customer Service Representative at the Sylvania Group to discuss whether this is a coverage you need.

## *Identity Theft Protection*

Have you stopped getting your credit card or bank statements in the mail? Are stores refusing your checks, saying you have a history of bouncing them, even though you don't? Are you getting calls from collection agencies regarding items you never bought? If so, you may be a victim of identity theft.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the U.S., claiming more than 10 million victims a year. Help protect yourself so this doesn't happen to you.

1. Order a copy of your credit report every year from one of the national credit bureaus and review it closely for anything questionable.
2. Shred or cut up all old bank statements, bills and credit card receipts before throwing them away.
3. Close all unused bank accounts or credit card accounts.
4. Remove your name from all pre-approved credit lines and telemarketers.
5. Keep your PIN number hidden when you use an ATM or public telephone.
6. Update your computer virus software, use a secure browser and install a firewall program.
7. Don't give out personal information via the phone, internet or mail unless you initiated the contact.
8. Don't carry information like your Social Security Number or any PIN numbers in your wallet or purse.
9. Don't put your Social Security Number on your checks or other identifiers.
10. Be Aware - and manage your personal information carefully!

Many companies now offer policies or will endorse coverage on to your homeowner's policy to protect you from the potentially disastrous effects of identity theft. Talk with your representative at the Sylvania Group to find our more information.

## *Lunch & Learn Series*

Now you can offer your employees another benefit, at no cost to you. These "mini seminars" are designed to help you and your employees navigate the complicated world of insurance and finance while enjoying lunch on us. Available topics include:

- The ABC's of LTC (Long Term Care Insurance)
- Investing 101
- Meeting Your Retirement Goals
- Making the Most of Your 401K
- College Savings Plan Strategies
- How Much Life Insurance is Enough?

Please contact Kristine Arsenault in our Financial Services & Benefits Department at (508) 742-9247 or [karsenault@sylviainsurance.com](mailto:karsenault@sylviainsurance.com) if you would like more information or to schedule a Lunch & Learn session for your employees.

## *Staff Updates*

Jenney Fairclough will be moving into the position of Commercial Lines Account Manager. In this position, she will be responsible for the service and placement of commercial accounts. She is a graduate of Bristol Community College and has been with the Sylvania Group since 2003.

Denise Rego has been promoted to the position of Quality Manager in the Personal Lines Department. In this position, she will be working to maximize the efficiency, accuracy and workflows in the department as well as with various Group Discount Programs. She is a licensed insurance broker with 19 years of insurance experience and her CISR designation.

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## *Schofield & Francis Joins the Sylvia Group*

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Schofield & Francis Insurance Agency joined the Sylvia Group of Insurance Agencies in August of this year. The Schofield & Francis Insurance Agency has been helping provide financial security to their clients since 1982. Cary Francis and Liz Carvalho will remain on board to continue to service the needs of their clients.

Mr. Francis noted that with insurance companies taking a hard stand relative to writing insurance coverage for properties close to the water, he needed to partner with an agency that could offer more markets to his insureds. Based on his long-term relationship with our agency, he felt this was a perfect fit. "They pride themselves on their personal service to every client and I am very comfortable that the transition will be smooth and with no disruption in services."

"We are thrilled to have Cary Francis and Liz Carvalho join us here" said Maureen Sylvia Armstrong, President and CEO of the Sylvia Group. "Cary put a great deal of thought into selecting an agency that shares the same client-focused philosophy that he has operated by for so many years. We are committed to doing everything possible to earn the trust and confidence he has shown in us by becoming a valuable resource to the Schofield and Francis Clients."

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For businesses with 11 or more full-time equivalent employees...

### **Health Insurance Reform: The Next Step**

- **Update on §125 Plan Requirements**
- **HIRD Form Requirements and Recordkeeping**
- **Filing the First Annual Fair Share Contributions Report**
- **Non-discrimination Requirements**
- **Payment of the Fair Share Assessment**

**October 10, 2007**

Two Sessions:

**9:00 to 10:30 am**

Or

**3:00 to 4:30 pm**

Please choose the time that best suits your schedule  
Registration begins one half hour before the Workshop

**RSVP by October 5th:**

Kristine Arsenault  
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*Trusted Advisors Dedicated to Our Clients and Community*