

newsletter **WINNER**

## United Church of Canada

**ALAYNA WILSON DESCRIBES THE** time she came up with the title for the United Church of Canada's health benefits newsletter as a "eureka moment."

The Church's group insurance advisory committee had come to Wilson—the communication coordinator with the Church's department of pensions and group insurance—with the idea of creating a benefits newsletter for employees. The objective was to motivate plan members to become educated consumers so that they would help the organization keep plan costs as low as possible.

The group insurance advisory committee wanted two components to the newsletter. It wanted to address the cost experience of the plan—what the plan takes in in premiums, what it pays out in benefits. The second part of the newsletter had to be educational—either how to maintain good health or how to become healthier. The hope was that the newsletter—through education—would help lower plan costs.

"Essentially what's good for the plan member would be good for the plan," says Wilson. The end result was *Well•Aware*, this year's winner in the newsletter category. "I had a wonderful eureka moment when I came up with the name *Well•Aware* because to me that says everything," says Wilson. "The 'Well' part of it addresses the health side and the 'Aware' part of it meaning education."

Once she came up with the newsletter's title, Wilson worked with consultants at Krieger & Associates to develop the logo, design and content. "Recognizing the nature of the audience was our biggest challenge," says David Krieger, president, Krieger & Associates in Toronto. "This is a group of highly engaged individuals. While the textual messages were very assertive and blunt at times, the design had to be upbeat and positive. It had to be high quality and readable but couldn't look expensive."

The Church's benefits plan covers 4,000

active members and 2,000 retirees. "We have a unique employee group here in that our employees are as concerned about employer costs as they are about employee costs," says Wilson.

Wilson's biggest challenge with *Well•Aware* was finding the time to squeeze it in to an already packed day. "It was something new for me and I wasn't giving up any other part of my job so it was something that had to be worked in," she says. The process was made easier, though, because she didn't have to convince anyone of the newsletter's merits. "It was an idea that came from the Church. They said 'we want this' so I didn't have to sell the idea."

Plan members have welcomed the newsletter. They have told Wilson they like the newsletter's design and message. "The last issue I did on healthy weights and diet, I got a whole bunch of phone calls from people saying they had stuck it on their fridges," says Wilson. "That's gratifying."

In years past, Wilson says she would receive a number of calls from angry plan members about premium rate increases. Since the launch of *Well•Aware*, the number of irate callers has dropped significantly. "Our plan members are a very educated group. They'll speak out on a topic if they feel something should be said," she says. "I can take the time to do the explaining in the newsletter and now our irate calls are almost non-existent."

And while it's too soon to tell if the newsletter has had a significant impact on plan costs, there has been improvement in the financial performance of the benefits plan for the active members.

"The active plan went a bit into the black last year," notes Wilson. "I think it's too soon to directly relate [cost-savings] to the newsletter but when we got the cost experience last July, it had gone from the red to the black." —*Andrea Davis*



### FINE POINTS

**IMPETUS:** Motivate plan members to become educated consumers so they keep plan costs as low as possible.

**CHALLENGE:** Making time for the project.

**OUTCOME:** Positive feedback from a vocal group of plan members, as well as lower plan costs.

**COST:** \$1 per issue for first four-page edition; cost has since dropped to 50¢ per issue.

**JUDGE SAYS:** "Design is well thought out, using logos and photos to reflect spiritual metaphors and to reinforce relationship to articles."