

MassMutual offers free \$50,000 life policies in R.I.

The MassMutual Financial Group introduced a totally free term life insurance program for working parents in Rhode Island. Under the company's LifeBridge Free Life Insurance Program, qualifying working parents will each receive a \$50,000 free life insurance policy to help pay for the education of their children, who -- in the event of a parent's death during the policy's term -- may not be able to afford their schooling. Nicholas Lardieri and his staff at MassMutual's Providence agency are donating their time to offer the program locally.

The Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Co. (MassMutual) plans to give away \$1 billion of free life insurance nationally to working people who are having a difficult time making ends meet. Under the LifeBridge program, MassMutual will pay the premiums for 20,000 term life insurance policies, each with a \$50,000 death benefit.

"We're delighted to extend this program to our region," said Lardieri, a general agent for MassMutual in Providence, which is offering the program to residents locally. "Experience tells us that some of the people who believe most fervently in the protection that life insurance offers are often those who can least afford it. We want to create a level playing field for children who might otherwise be deprived of an education if their parent dies during the term of the policy," Lardieri added. □

Banks earned \$1.73 billion in insurance for first 6 months

Banks earned \$1.73 billion in insurance commissions and fee income in the first half of 2003, according to Michael White's 2003 Mid-Year Bank Insurance & Investment Fee Income Report.

Among the report's significant findings:

- Of 8,321 commercial and federally insured savings banks, 3,833 or 46.1%, participated in insurance activities in the first six months of 2003 and reported \$1.73 billion in insurance income in the first half of 2003, down 3.2% from \$1.79 billion at mid-year 2002.
- The largest banks, those over \$10 billion in assets, had the highest participation rate (76.4%) in insurance and produced \$1.25 billion in insurance fee income, 7.2% more than the \$1.16 billion recorded in the first half of 2002.
- Banks in the eastern and central regions of the country dominated insurance income in the first half of 2003. The Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions collectively accounted for \$1.33 billion of insurance income, 76.9% of the industry's year-to-date total. Insurance income in these regions changed, respectively, 22.4%, -8.8% and 2.9% YTD compared to the same six-month period last year.
- BHCs in the Northeast produced the most investment fee income, \$2.1 billion or a 43.5% share. □

Life applications rose slightly in Sept.

Applications for life insurance in the U.S. took a positive turn in September posting a 1.9% increase over 2002 levels.

These are figures from the MIB Life Index published by MIB Group, Inc., headquartered in Westwood, Mass.

September's jump in applications failed to offset a disappointing July and August; third quarter results show an overall decline in the U.S. of 2.1% from Q3 2002.

Growth of life insurance applications in the 60+ age group continued at a breakneck pace. September marked the fourth straight month where the MIB Life Index posted a "highest-ever" recorded value for a given monthly time period. Age 60+ application activity in the U.S. showed a 13.5% year-over-year increase in September with third quarter results up 10% compared to Q3 2002. In the 0-44 age group, third quarter performance lagged that of 2002 by more than 5%. □

Hub network buys N.H. and Mass. agencies

Hub International Ltd. announced the acquisition of Garnet Health Systems Corp. and Garnet Insurance Services, LLC, both of Hampton, N.H. for an undisclosed amount of cash and Hub stock. Garnet's health systems group provides credentialing services.

The firms, with combined annual revenue of \$3 million, will remain in Hampton and become part of the company's New England hub, C.J. McCarthy Insurance Agency, Inc.

On Oct. 1, Hub closed on its purchase of Commonwealth Insurance Agency, Inc. of Lowell, Mass., a homeowners insurance agency with approximately \$300,000 in annual revenue. It will also become part of C.J. McCarthy, one of 11 regional "hubs" that make up Hub International network. □