Coordinator  Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. Today’s conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time.

I will now turn the meeting over to Jane Walstedt. Thank you. You may begin.

J. Walstedt  Thank you, Carolyn. Welcome to this tenth in a series of monthly Wi$e Up teleconference calls this year. Thank you to each of you who are participating today. My name is Jane Walstedt, and along with Beverly Lyle, the Women’s Bureau Regional Administrator in Dallas, I’m the Co-Chair of the Women’s Bureau Team that developed the Wi$e Up program.

As most of you know, Wi$e Up is a financial education demonstration project being offered on-line with an e-mentoring component and in a classroom setting. Six Women’s Bureau regions are participating. These teleconference calls are a component of the demonstration project. The theme of today’s call, which will last one hour, is “Facing a Financial Crisis, Part Two.” We have three excellent speakers, who will be introduced shortly.
There are many possible reasons why we might face a financial crisis. Among them are such things as divorce, widowhood, losing a job, illness, and becoming disabled. Hopefully we will have taken steps prior to such events to avert a financial crisis, such as creating an emergency fund. As the chapter on savings basics in the WiSe Up curriculum says, an emergency fund is intended to cover your basic living expenses should you experience a financial emergency, like losing your job or other source of income or experiencing an unanticipated catastrophic expense, perhaps a medical expense or a major household expense.

In her book, *Think Single! The Woman’s Guide to Financial Security at Every Stage of Life*, Janet Bodnar, one of our speakers today, says, “Thinking single has nothing to do with the state of marriage. Rather, it’s a state of mind in which you’re confident of your ability to support yourself financially if necessary, and comfortable with handling money--or seeking help if you need it. You can (and should) achieve this kind of financial independence regardless of your marital status.”

With regard to divorce, Census data indicate that for all women age 15 and over, 23% had ever been divorced in 2001. This was true of 12% of women age 25 to 29 and 19% of women age 30 to 34 in the same year. The data show that marital disruption results in much poorer economic circumstances for women than for men.
With regard to widowhood, while the median age when widowed for women in a first marriage was 58.6 years in 2001, women may become widowed at a much younger age, such as the young widows of September 11th or young military widows.

The format of our call today is that we will first hear from three speakers. Then, when the speakers have finished, the operator will come on and give us instructions about the question and answer session.

I’m delighted that one of our speakers today, Cliff Fowler, comes to us thanks to the efforts of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) with whom we’ve entered into a partnership in the delivery of the components of Wi$e Up.

Now let me turn the program over to Kelly Jenkins-Pultz in San Diego, who works for our regional office in San Francisco, to introduce our first speaker. Kelly?