

GIVE YOURSELF SOME CREDIT — SOCIAL SECURITY CREDIT

By Robin Schmidt, Social Security Public Affairs Specialist for Alaska

Sometimes people do not give themselves enough credit. But if you work and pay Social Security taxes, you're earning credit for yourself every payday -- credit that will pay off later in life when it comes time for retirement, or in the event that you become disabled and are unable to work; credit that can help your family if you die early and need to provide for those who depend on you.

You qualify for Social Security benefits by earning Social Security credits when you work in a job or are self-employed and pay Social Security payroll taxes. In 2011, you receive one credit for each \$1,120 of earnings, up to the maximum of four credits per year. Most people need 10 years of work (40 credits) to be eligible for retirement benefits.

The number of credits needed for disability benefits depends on how old you are when you become disabled. For example, if you become disabled before age 24, you generally need 1 1/2 years of work (six credits) in the three years before you became disabled. At age 31 or older, you generally need at least 20 credits in the 10 years immediately before you became disabled.



In most cases, about 10 years of work is needed for a worker's family to qualify for survivors benefits. Survivors of very young workers may be eligible if the deceased worker was employed for 1½ years during the three years before his or her death.

You can find a detailed chart that shows exactly how many credits you would need in the online publication, *How You Earn Credits*, available at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10072.html. You also may want to read *Understanding the Benefits* for more information about Social Security and how it works. You can find it online at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10024.html.

Next time you feel like someone else is taking credit for your hard work, just remember that your hard work is earning you credit in ways you probably don't even think about — Social Security credit.