



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher

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Acton , Amesbury , Andover , Bedford , Beverly, Billerica , Burlington , Chelmsford , Concord , Danvers, Dracut , Gloucester, Haverhill, Holliston, Ipswich, Lowell, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Maynard, Merrimac, Newburyport, North Chelmsford, North Reading , Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem , South Hamilton, Sudbury , Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester



Retired Haverhill Letter Carrier Ovila Cote recently received his 55, 60, 65, and 70 year NALC Membership pins as well as the 70-Year Plaque pictured.

Ovila retired in 1981 and currently lives in Haverhill with his wife.

Branch 25 extends our wishes for many, many more happy and healthy retirement years!!

President's Message

The front and back covers of this month's Wake-Up! represent over 110 years of NALC Union membership from just two individuals. Ovilla Cote, who retired in 1981 from the Haverhill office, recently celebrated 70 years of membership, while Vinnie Lebednik recently retired from the Marblehead office with over 40 years of membership. I would like to personally wish each of them many more healthy years of retirement. They have both certainly earned it!

I would like to hit the ground running this month regarding the Branch's efforts concerning MDA and Scholarship fundraising. We can do better with both causes, but we need the buy-in of as many of our active carriers as possible to be successful.

No doubt, many of you have received a number of gift cards from your customers this year in recognition of your service day in and day out. We would like you to donate a gift card or two to be raffled off for the Branch 25 Scholarships and for MDA. If you only drink Dunkin Donuts coffee and a customer gave you a Starbucks card, donate it to the cause. If you got movie passes and you prefer watching movies in the comfort of your home, donate the passes to the cause. Depending on the value of the donated gift card, the branch will then sell raffle tickets either at a branch meeting or some other event with the proceeds going to MDA and the Branch Scholarships. Please consider this painless way to help two great causes!

In other news, the branch has assigned 212 grievance numbers as of press time for this month's Wake-Up! We finished out 2018 with 284 grievances. Barring a rash of mismanagement requiring grievances in response, we should realize a significant reduction in grievances this year. I would like to think that our stewards are directly responsible for that reduction. Our stewards have both prevented problems from reaching the grievance stage by addressing issues with management before they become grievances. They have also been quite successful at Formal A, B, and arbitration. This success makes management think before violating the contract again.

Speaking of thinking before doing something, I would like to talk to you about a couple things that have come up more often than they should. The first is the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Let's just get something out of the way immediately; OIG agents are not your friends. They are not there to help you. They are not there to tell you the truth. They aren't even there to try to find the truth. They are there to conduct a one-sided investigation designed to blame someone for something.

DO NOT SPEAK TO AN OIG AGENT WITHOUT REPRESENTATION! If you are ever approached by an OIG Agent (and this could happen on the road, in the office, or even at your home), politely let them know that

you would be more than happy to cooperate with them as soon as you are afforded representation. In some instances, the appropriate representation may be an attorney. Their typical response to this is something like, "That's fine, but it would be a lot easier for everyone if you just talk to us now." They may also promise that you have nothing to worry about so you should just talk to them.

Don't believe it. If you had nothing to worry about, they wouldn't be talking to you. In many instances, they know the answers to the questions they are asking before they ask them. They are trying to see if you tell the truth. There will be time to tell the truth when you have proper representation.

The other thing that I would like to talk about is carriers resigning without thinking it through. The turnover rate for CCA's nationally is over 50%. The job is not for everyone and there will be turnover regardless of the office, management team, etc. However, it is unfortunate to speak to someone who has resigned AFTER they have already put in the papers and passed the point of no return.

If there is a CCA in your office who is struggling with the job, or with management, help him or her out if you can. If they are being forced to do things that violate the contract, if they are not getting proper training, if they don't have proper clothing, let us know at the branch office so that we can intervene. Whatever you do, please don't "pile on" to their troubles. If they are providing assistance to you, explain anything that may be unusual about the piece that you are giving them. Ask them how they're doing. It's in everyone's best interest to grow a workforce that realizes that their union brothers and sisters want to have their back.

On a final note, with all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season around us, it is easy to forget that our current contract has expired and the bargaining period has also expired. The terms of the contract are still in force while the parties wait to present their cases at interest arbitration. A neutral arbitrator, as well as one arbitrator selected by the NALC and one selected by the USPS will make up a panel that will weigh argument. Ultimately, the neutral arbitrator will issue an award that will become our next national agreement. At some point shortly thereafter, the local implementation period will begin. That is the period where each office's local agreement may be opened by either the Union or management. Start looking at your local agreement now to see if you have suggestions for improvements.

Happy New Year and Stay Informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

Executive Vice-President's Report

I know it has been an extremely busy holiday season, with the insane workhours and some untimely weather making it more difficult. Hopefully, everyone has had a time to breath and spend some time with family. It seems that Amazon and UPS are struggling to keep up with the e-commerce rush this time of year and are relying more on us to get the job done.

Once the New Year passes, the Postal Service will be ramping up their inspection process, as we have gotten notification that the Winchester station will undergo route inspections the first week of February. As of now this is the only station on the inspection schedule, but that could change very quickly. Keep in mind that the people in OPS probably will not schedule an inspection unless they feel that the office will lose time. It is imperative that everyone make the proper punches for all auxiliary assistance, whether it be on the street or in the office. We want the numbers to be representative of the actual work performed.

Congratulations to all the recent retirees. With such a high percent of the workforce eligible for retirement, we have been getting a lot of calls about the process. If you have a good idea of the date that you want to retire, it is a good idea to call Shared Services and give them your requested retirement date at least 6 months ahead of that date. They will send you what is called the "blue book". You need to have the blue book in order to schedule a retirement consultation with Shared Services. Shared Services will in turn help you fill out the book and you send it back with the exact retirement date on it. The problem that exists certain times of the year, is that the consultations fill up as it gets close to the retirement dates. It seems a lot of carriers like to retire just after Christmas or just before the summer. I have talked to carriers that wanted to retire and needed help with their blue book, but couldn't schedule a consultation date. The Shared Services specialists were all booked. They eventually filled out the book with help, but if you know a date you would like to retire, please make the call to Shared Services 6 months ahead of that date.

I know we all have incidents where you might fall or bang your knee or turn an ankle and there is pain for a minute and then it disappears for good. Sometimes the pain may come back later or maybe not until later that night. At the time when you initially felt the pain you certainly didn't feel it was an injury and certainly didn't feel you needed to seek medical attention. Management requires that we report all injuries immediately. In order to comply with this policy, sometimes it is necessary to inform management of an incident that occurs, no matter how minor you feel it is. Any time you feel something that could possibly in the future result in seeking medical care, you should notify management. I'm not saying you

should seek medical care immediately, and would advise against it if you don't feel you need to, but simply inform management of any minor incident. You do not need to fill out a CA-1 unless you are seeking immediate medical care. Form CA-1 is the Form used to file a claim for an on the job traumatic injury and must be filled out if you are seeking medical care. I bring all this up because too many carriers may feel a twinge or pain that later requires medical attention and management challenges the claim. A simple phone call informing them and stating you don't require medical attention is sufficient to cover yourself. If you need medical care later that is fine.

I know there is a lot of crazy things going on politically right now, but don't get distracted because of the impeachment hearings as far as legislature goes. There are still a lot of bills that need to be passed that are sitting on Mitch McConnell's desk. Check out the NALC website and/or app occasionally to update yourself.

Keep your head up and Happy New Year!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

January 1	New Year's Day
January 4	USPS 2020 Leave Year Begins
January 7	Regular Monthly Meeting Wilmington K of C 27 School Street Extension Food Served 7:00 PM Meeting Begins 8:00 PM
January 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 25	Chinese New Year's

Branch 25 Directory of Officers

David J. Barbuzzi	President
Paul G. Desmond	Executive V.P.
Dan Wheeler	Vice President
Andy Coan	Secretary
James P. Nutter	Treasurer
Kenneth Dusombre	Health Benefits Rep.
Jim Salvati	Safety Officer
Jack Lyman	Sergeant At Arms
Ron Noviello	Chmn. Board of Trustees
Dan Raske	Trustee
Bruce Johnson	Trustee
John McNulty	Trustee
Anthony Bossi	Assistant Secretary
Peter Godino	Assistant Treasurer
Bob Cronin	MBA-NSBA Rep
Steve Pickett	Assistant Safety Officer
Richard Donlon	Asst Health Benefits Rep
Ron Noviello	Workers' Comp Rep.

Your "Wake-Up!" is produced in-house at the Branch 25 Union office each and every month.

Vice President's Report

As we start 2020, I wanted to give a recap of some of the things that happened this last year, both in the branch and on the national level. 2019 started out with the country amid a government shutdown, which started in December of 2018 and lasted until the end of January. Luckily for us, the shutdown didn't affect postal workers' paychecks but over 300'000 government workers were furloughed and another 400'000 were told to keep working without being paid before it was over. Branch 25 started the year with a bang; National President Fred Rolando attended our January meeting to install branch officers and give the members update on current issues. Unfortunately, February did not start so well as the branch lost Branch 25 President Emeritus Randy Keller on February 6. Randy was former branch president and National Trustee from 1998-2017.

In the spring members first started to hear word of the Postal Service's new case consolidation imitative. Peabody was the only office in our branch to be on the list of offices where this "test" would be rolled out in the first couple of waves. The Postal service never hit their target numbers for getting offices on the new program. Peabody is still "on hold" until further notice. The only two offices in Massachusetts that have started are Taunton and Fitchburg. The NALC's lawsuit which sought to end the imitative was dismissed in November. There is still a national level arbitration pending at this time which will hopefully net some good results soon.

As the heat of summer came the branch had its first outing at the Lowell Spinners. Over 60 members and

their family members came out to enjoy a pre-game BBQ and take in a Spinners game. President Barbuzzi even got to throw out one of the first pitches before the game. We hope to do this event again in the future. Also, in August Branch 25 sent a delegation to the National RAP Session in Denver, Colorado. Case consolidation was the biggest topic although many topics were covered in classes and updates from national officers. Some branch offices were in the moderate or critical zones for the Triple E virus, but letter carriers made it through with no issues.

As fall rolled around the branch stayed busy with training. President Barbuzzi and I attended the Committee of Presidents meeting in Las Vegas in October and we had several stewards attend regional steward's training put on by NBA Rick DiCecca's office in November. As the year comes to an end, we are preparing to enter arbitration with our contract, wondering what changes will come from PMG Megan Brennan's retirement and what will come next with the case consolidation imitative. We are still waiting for new vehicles, supposedly getting new scanners soon and preparing to deal with whatever else the Postal Service throws at us.

Happy New Year!

Dan Wheeler

Veterans' Corner

You fought for your country put your life on the line. Your courage is strong we can still see it shine. Veteran colors: red for remembrance, blue for our fallen friends, brown for your service.

All over the world Americans have served with over 1.3 million stationed in service, protecting and ensuring liberty and peace. These brave men and women are away from their families and friends, standing watch all hours of the day, including during the countdown to the midnight on New Years' Eve.

As you raise your glass to bring in the New Year, please include a blessing for our troops to be safe and to return home safe.

Happy New Year!

Semper Fi

Andie Coulter



Here Come the Holidays: When Grief or Distance Make the Season Challenging

When distance and circumstance prevent us from being with those we love during the holidays we may find ourselves sad and lonely. And if we've lost someone close to us, the holidays will likely feel less bright this year. When others are celebrating, we may experience emotions that include resentment, anxiety, emptiness and grief. How can we manage these normal reactions and find ways to soothe our sadness? Can we allow ourselves to find ways to connect to others, to look for ways to make the holidays meaningful if not joyful? **Here are a few suggestions that may help you survive:**

Don't pretend. Rather than putting on a "happy face" when you aren't feeling so merry, give yourself permission to feel your emotional truth. Acknowledging what you feel allows you to express and release painful emotions so that you don't carry them around. Write a letter to the ones you won't be with. Letting go is easier once you have put a name on a feeling. "I will really miss seeing you this season." This can open a discussion of ways to connect without being physically together.

Be gentle with yourself. If a loved one has died this year, you are especially vulnerable right now. You may wonder if you'll ever enjoy the holidays again in the same way. Take things day by day. You will have some better days and can reach out to others when you have the energy. You have the right to change your mind. Ask for what you need. You'll be surprised how others will include you and how taking part in small ways may ease your sadness.

You have choices. When loss or circumstance changes how we spend the holidays it can be an opportunity to create new traditions. Things aren't the same now so no need to do what has always been done for the holidays. What feels appropriate is different for each of us. What brings you peace? How can you honor a loved one who is no longer with you? Who do you know that has been through what you are facing now? Consider talking with them about their experience.

We grieve because we loved. This doesn't make our pain easier but it does help us see some reason. While the person is gone, the love isn't. We can manage to journey from grief to gratitude, however long it takes. We don't have to take the journey alone, we can reach out for help. From a friend, from family members, from a professional. And we can look forward to a time when we will again find joy in celebrating with others.

The EAP is available every hour, every day. Even on holidays. Make the call if you need to. Someone will be on the other end of the line to care and to listen. Call us today. We are here for you and would like to help.



CALL US TODAY: 800-327-4968
800-EAP-4YOU | TTY: 877-492-7341
WWW.EAP4YOU.COM

“If Ignorance Is Bliss, Why Aren’t There More Happy People?”

The above book title although humorous in content is a good lead-in to the subject of this article, namely, chronic or clinical depression. It’s important to be aware of what this depression is NOT. It is not the sadness you feel when unpleasant things happen, e.g. a tragic accident or even the death of someone dear to you. A layman’s definition of clinical depression could be “a prolonged period of intense unhappiness accompanied by strong feelings of self-worthlessness, a lack of interest in people or things normally considered important, and in the extreme, the entertainment of suicidal thoughts.

Dr. Marco Vitello, the senior medical director for Cigna, one of our health care partners, gave an excellent lecture on the subject at our Health Benefits seminar last October.

Among his points:

1. It is more common than thought of in our society.
2. Like diabetes it often goes unrecognized.
3. It knows no age barriers, afflicting young children all the way up to the elderly.
4. Interestingly, the most vulnerable group is those who fall in the 18 to 24 age bracket in our country.
5. There are multiple potential factors/causes, including but not limited to:
 - a. Poor lifestyle including diet.
 - b. Lack of physical activity.
 - c. Lack of social interaction (loneliness).
 - d. Excessive use of alcohol (That “high” you may feel is actually a “low”. Alcohol by its very nature is a depressor.)
 - e. Hormonal imbalance (Those chemicals in your body may be jiggling around improperly).
 - f. Clinical depression is treatable.

This article is by no means an attempt to be all-knowing about the subject but rather to let you know that it’s out there. If you feel that this affliction relates to you or someone you know it would be wise to talk to your primary care physician about it. Another avenue is that you can enlist the help of a health advocate from our disease management program by either calling 877-220-6252 or visiting nalchbp.org for information and self-help.

Keep on truckin’

Rich Donlon

Cellphones and CPR

Every year, more than 3,000 Americans are killed in crashes that involve a distracted driver; roughly 400,000 are injured—which is more than the entire population of Cleveland, Ohio. That is why Governor Charlie Baker recently signed a bill into law that will ban drivers from using cellphones and other hand-held devices. The start date is February 23rd but there will be a grace period until March 31st.

You will be ok If you have a hands-free navigational device that is permanently or temporarily affixed to your car, but you can’t be checking directions from a phone that is loose on your lap or in the passenger seat. Similarly, even if you’re checking websites or emails to help you get where you’re going, you cannot access these screens while driving.

A first-time violation will result in a \$100 fine. Your second offense will cost you \$250. Third offenses and beyond will cost \$500 each. And, if you’re caught a third time, you’ll be in the “surchargeable incident” category, which means cell phone use while driving could affect your insurance rates. (A surchargeable incident is an at-fault car accident or traffic law offense that may result in an increase in your insurance premium.)

On a separate subject, we are still looking for more members to take part in the next CPR class. The date is to be determined but will not be scheduled on any Patriots game days or any playoff game days. Just to remind everyone this is a complete CPR and AED training available at no cost to members. Contact the Branch office if you are interested in taking advantage of this great opportunity.

Stay safe,
Jim Salvati

Instead of trivia this month we have a riddle.

What starts with M and ends in X and has an endless amount of letters?



TREASURER'S DESK

“Casing Consolidation Initiative”

For the past month I have been observing the new initiative of the United States Postal Service in Fitchburg, Consolidated Casing. So far, I have not spoken with a carrier, who has been positive about the program. In my experience of being a letter carrier, I certainly would not be a fan of it. Similar to most carriers, the loss of control of the assigned route which one would be responsible for does not appeal to most of us. Knowing what mail you have with you from start to finish, being personally responsible for mark ups, forwards and vacation holds was always a staple of pride for a carrier. Being dependent on mail processing and the flow of mail was understood as a necessary variable in the type of day it would be, adding an additional variable compounds the length of the day. In sum, a carrier likes to have control over the type of service he or she provides to the public, which we serve.

The basic duties of a letter carrier of casing a route and pulling it down are still in place. Loading a vehicle, driving, delivery of mail and packages are still in place. All the other services just cannot be replicated by reducing the carrier's control of providing great service to the public, which we have always been known for, take pride in, and is expected of us to be relied upon. Forwards, hold mail and mark ups, suffer greatly under this system. Clerks inform me the customer complaints have risen significantly. Some in management seem to believe it is just the cost of doing business. I can envision there may be a benefit in having less equipment, less vehicles, and excess floor space. The excess floor space may allow consolidating by closing other delivery units and moving them into one facility. Another possibility would be to sell the current location and move the operations to a smaller facility. These savings can be realized on a one time basis, but are they enough to offset the apparent overtime and loss of public trust in the institution, which we work for?

Carriers in Fitchburg are a good solid bunch of employees and as near as I can tell they are fully intent on performing their duties in the best most professional way possible. Delivering well after six o'clock at night is not something any of them aspire to. The added time on the street and exposure to the elements is not by their choice. They do it anyway. They do it because it is the public they serve.

No doubt the USPS must look at the industry for ways of controlling cost and increasing revenue. The repealing of the congressional retirement prefunding of health benefits which no other public or private entity is required to do will take a tremendous burden off of it. The new technological advances in communication certainly have, and will continue, to affect our charge. Adapt we must. We must also recognize that the

initiative the USPS has undertaken is not the wisest of measures to address our needs.

The national grievance is currently being heard by the arbitrator. The union has prepared to put on the best case to serve the interests of the public and the letter carriers. How long it will take for the arbitrator to render his decision, I do not know. Here is hoping it is a good and fair one that recognizes the interests of our members in correcting the failures of this initiative.

On another note, the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance came in and audited the union's payroll records on November 20th. The examiner left stating he found us in compliance with the state's regulations. We are now waiting on the official letter stating that opinion. My thanks to the trustees and all the officers of this branch that oversee our adherence to these regulations on a daily basis.

My sincerest wishes to all for an enjoyable holiday season, and may everyone enjoy the fruits that life brings with the coming New Year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2020!

Jim Nutter, Treasurer



WAKE UP

2500 Main Street
Suite # 201
Tewksbury, MA 01876
Phone: (978) 658-5820
Fax: (978) 658-0888
Web: www.nalcbranch25.com

First Class Mail
U.S. POSTAGE
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*at the next meeting
January 7, 2020*



Left to right: Jim Acciavatti, Joe Stearns, Dave Barbuzzzi, Marblehead's newest retiree Vinnie Lebednik, Ralph Viger, Ron Linnane, and Bobbie Black celebrate at the December branch meeting while Vinnie receives his plaque and gratuity.