



WAKE UP!

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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

Marblehead letter carrier Joe Stearns along with his wife and daughter Julia on campus at Keene State College. Julia was one of last year's Branch 25 Scholarship winners.



Branch 25's newest retiree from Bedford, Randy Waleyko, making his last punch. Good luck and congratulations on 33 years of service!

President's Message

I look forward to the day that there will be no mention of Covid-19 in the Wake-Up!...but that day has yet to arrive. That being said, this month I simply want to reiterate that if have been infected with Covid or if you become infected with Covid, please fill out a CA-1. It is easiest to do so online at ecom.dol.gov. There has been a release by the Department of Labor recently that addresses a couple of things with regard to Covid. First, it has been determined that if you are reinfected with Covid within 90 days of recovering, the reinfection is considered a recurrence. Second, I had been advising carriers to get home tests confirmed by physicians as I didn't think home tests would be accepted on their own. The release confirms what I thought. Home tests alone are not sufficient to have a claim approved. A doctor would have to diagnose Covid in order for a claim to be approved.

This month, March, our regular branch meeting will be via ZOOM. The meeting address is on the back cover of the Wake-Up!, but it is even easier to go to the branch website (nalbranch25.com) where you will find a hyperlink. All you have to do is click on the link, and the meeting will launch. I would hope that we can have a good turnout for the meeting. After all, you can sip your favorite beverage (hot cocoa or spirits), relax in your recliner, and participate in the meeting. We do our best to keep the meetings brief, usually about an hour, so I hope to see you Tuesday, March 1, 8:00PM, via ZOOM.

If you are a steward, keep your eyes open for a training that is being scheduled by National Business Agent Rick DiCecca. Date and location are not yet confirmed, but it seems like late April early May would be the preferred time. I'm fairly certain that the branch will vote to send any steward that wants to go to the training. Contact me at the branch office if you are interested in attending.

Sometimes, I think the postal service is engaged in a horrible game whereby they push their employees to the limit to see what it takes to brake them. Even though staffing is beyond pushed to the limit, the limit has been breached; the service is still operating as if everything were great. Case in point, the service recently picked up more zones where we are providing last mile service for UPS. Also, in the near future, same day delivery is going to be tested based upon our Express Mail network. You did not misread that, SAME DAY DELIVERY! Now look, if we were in a position that we had the staffing to accomplish these tasks, I would be an enthusiastic cheerleader for the programs. However, we have to right our own ship before we can try to take on more of a burden, especially a time sensitive burden. I will pass along more details as I become aware of them.

On January 29, 2022, there was a blizzard that affected the entire state. The district management failed

every employee at least in the state of Massachusetts. Countless employees reported to work as scheduled, only to find that there was no DPS mail available, very few parcels and sparse FSS. The reports I received from the field were that there was a morning collection done, only to have the mail collected on Saturday sit in the buildings until dispatch on Monday! What was the point of the collection? The only thing I can guess is that management wanted scans on collection boxes.

In Gloucester, the social media page for the Department of Public Works displayed a message that the plows had been called off the streets of Gloucester because it was unsafe for them to be out. Yet, those that are in charge of making decisions for the post office didn't update the 800 emergency call line and tell employees not to report to work.

We have resolved grievances in some of the stations that filed them to obtain guarantee time for those carriers that reported to work. Those carriers were required to either sit in the office while the conditions worsened, or they were allowed to come home if they used their own leave. Each carrier that was faced with this decision was placed in harm's way by the district management. Your local managers were also placed in harm's way.

I can't tell you not to report to work, I would be terminated for creating a work stoppage. I will tell you to exercise extreme caution and make your decision based on your own safety whenever a storm occurs during your career.

Recently, I sent an email to all the Postmasters in the branch regarding the use of private vehicles. Apparently, CCA's (and other employees) are being asked to use their private vehicles to deliver mail. That is bad enough on a sunny spring day, but this has been occurring during inclement weather, whether it be the ice storm or snow storms. There is a form to fill out if a CCA voluntarily agrees to use their own vehicle. I won't list the form in this article as I'd rather you call me so I can explain to you that it's a bad decision to use your own vehicle. The biggest reason is that you would be financially liable if you were involved in an accident. In order to be covered by insurance, you would have to obtain a rider to your insurance policy.

The weather should start getting better. Along with the snow melting comes the muddy yards. Be careful cutting lawns in the early spring as soggy yards can cause slipping injuries and twisted knee injuries if your feet sink into the ground.

Stay well and stay informed!

Dave

Executive Vice-President's Report

As this is the March issue of the Wakeup, Spring is near. Not only does that mean the weather will probably get much better, but we also will be gaining daylight every day. Seeing that carriers are working long hours, that is a small consolation but a welcome one. Massachusetts is about to relax its mask mandate, but inside the walls of the Postal Service we are still bound by their policies. The indoor mask policy could change in the coming months if the Covid numbers continue to improve. Currently, the number of covid cases and hospitalizations are decreasing every week, and with the weather getting better the numbers should continue in that direction with everyone getting out more. As I am writing this, the snow and ice are rapidly melting. Until then be safe.

I hope everyone has seen the progress being made on Postal Reform as it has been passed in the House of Reps and awaits approval in the Senate. These talks have been going on for many years and these things usually are not done overnight, but there is support from both sides in the Senate and this time it should actually happen. The NALC supports the bill and, should it pass, it would eliminate the pre-fund mandates for retiree health benefits and put the Postal Service on more solid ground financially. It should also reduce the cost of health benefits for postal workers and retirees. There also is a 6-day delivery mandate in the bill. There is an explanation of the bill's provisions on the NALC website, and probably a better summary by Vice President Dan Wheeler in this issue. Unfortunately, the success of the Postal Service and our benefits and retirement benefits are subject to the houses of Congress. It is simply the way it is being a federal agency. The NALC has supported our friends in Congress for many years through the Letter Carrier Political Fund (formerly COLCPE). Most of these representatives truly believe that a strong Postal Service is necessary and there is strong public support, but there is a minority in Congress, who would prefer to destroy the agency for political gain. The Postal Record this month lists the contributors to the Letter Carrier Political Fund and explains how to contribute through payroll deductions. It doesn't have to be a large contribution, but anything makes a difference so that we can keep our friends in Congress for when we need them, like right now.

Congratulations to all the recent retirees, usually there is a surge in retirements after New Years and this year is no different. We hate to lose veteran carriers, but I am glad to see the CCAs and PTFs being converted to regular status. If a PTF exists in a station that has a vacancy, the PTF should be converted to full-time regular status, and retains their seniority date that they were converted to career status (PTF). If no PTFs exist in a station, and a conversion is necessary, it goes to the CCA with the most relative standing. Also, any CCA with 2 years of service in an installation will be

converted to PTF status as a result of our latest national agreement. Any questions about conversions or vacancies in your stations, ask your steward or call the Union office.

The March monthly meeting will once again be via Zoom, there is a link to it in the Wakeup and a direct link to click on the Branch 25 website. The Zoom starts at 8pm and you can just sit back and listen, no heavy lifting. There is a good chance we will soon be returning to having our monthly branch meetings in person again. Hopefully this will happen in April. I hope we can continue to get more members to attend on a regular basis. It doesn't have to be every month, but whenever you can make it. Bring another member with you. We try to keep the meeting to about an hour long and we provide some food prior to the meeting. It is a relaxed meeting so that the members can get some information on what is going on locally and nationally and ask any questions you may have. The meeting starts at 8pm but the food is there by 7:15pm and we usually adjourn around 9pm.

Usually, this time of year I am getting ready for baseball Spring training, but not yet this year. The owners and players once again are fighting over money. Rich people's problems, as they say.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

March 1	Branch Meeting via ZOOM (Meeting address on back cover)
March 1	Mardi Gras
March 2	Ash Wednesday
March 3	Caregiver Appreciation Day
March 4	Hug a GI Day
March 12	Girl Scouts' Day
March 15	Ides of March
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 20	Spring Equinox

David J. Barbuzzi	President
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Jeremy Provost	Assistant Safety Officer
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Ron Noviello	Workers' Comp Rep.

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

Thank you!

To the members of Branch 25,

Thank you for my scholarship!!!! It has proven to have done well for me & my college experience here at Keene State College. So far, I have transitioned well into school & living on my own. I have also involved myself in multiple organizations & theatre performances. I am on the board for my school's Pride Organization and a member of the school's radio station. As for theatre I did a staged reading of the play "The Normal Heart" in the role of Emma this past December. I am now cast in a production of "The Winter's Tale" which we are performing the beginning of March.

Thanks again for all you do!!!

GO OWLS!!!

Julia Stearns

As I hope you are aware, the NALC Health Benefit Plan offers a wellness incentive program to its members in addition to its covered benefits. The reason for this is to encourage us to engage actively in preventive care. This in turn results not only in healthier lives for us but also cost savings for the plan. The end result? Allowing it to add plan benefits and contain premium costs.

By now each plan member should have received a TASC debit card in the mail. I think the card may be properly described as an incentive to take part in the incentives. It's "money in your pocket" to pay for qualified medical expenses, co-pays and prescription drugs for example. On a personal note, I have already realized ninety dollars in savings, and I think it would be appropriate to list the specific incentives and savings so here they are:

- ◆ Covid-19 vaccinations—High Option-\$50
- ◆ Your Health First Disease Management Program—High Option—\$50 or Consumer Driven Health Plan/Value Option Plan—\$30
- ◆ Tobacco Cessation Program—HO—\$50 or CD/VO-\$30
- ◆ Annual Biometric Screening—HO-\$50 or CD/VO-\$30
- ◆ Health Assessment—HO \$30 or CD/VO—\$20
- ◆ Annual Influenza Vaccine—HO \$10 or CD/VO—\$5
- ◆ Pneumococcal Vaccine—HO \$10 or CD/VO \$5

Please note that members and dependents must be eighteen or older to participate in an incentive-eligible program. Also, be aware that you may only receive one reward amount per person per program each calendar year. If you leave the plan you forfeit your reward amounts.

A great deal of information I know, but as always you're invited to contact me through the branch with questions or concerns.

Keep on truckin'

Rich Donlon

BRANCH 25 RETIREE GRATUITY VOUCHER

Name: _____
(as it will appear on plaque)

P.O. Retiring from: _____

Phone number: _____

Retirement date: _____

Please note: Retiree must be a member in good standing at date of retirement. Retiree has 4 months from retirement date to remit this voucher to the branch office. Please mail to: NALC Branch 25
2500 Main St, Suite 201, Tewksbury Ma, 01876

“Get A Grip”

I was already planning on writing about ice grippers, but I went one step further. I did an experiment. It was not by choice, but now I get to share my findings with you. Tuesday, February 8th I forgot to bring my grippers to the street. “No big deal,” I thought. “The ice has kind of been melting.” I start my route. One curb line box followed by three townhouse developments and an apartment complex. All have cluster boxes, and almost all of these cluster boxes are protected from the elements. After the apartment complex I’m not even thinking about my grippers anymore. My next stop is a business. I pull up to the front entrance. The walkway is really icy. I secure my vehicle, slowly walk in, and deliver the mail. I walk back out to my vehicle and as I reach for the door, BAM! I’m on the ground. Luckily all I hurt was my pride. After that I used my morning break to drive back to the office and grab my grippers. With my grippers on I delivered the rest of my route without my tailbone touching the ground.

I haven’t always liked ice grippers. The clicking can drive you crazy, and they can make your feet sore after walking in them all day. I’ve come around to them though. It’s amazing how much of a difference they make. They really work.

According to Winter Walking, the company that makes my grippers, they are best suited for ice, snow, and compact snow. Their website also advises that the

grippers are a traction aid, and you still have to walk carefully when you’re wearing them. And they are not for indoor use. Anyone who uses them regularly can tell you that they are very slippery on tile floors. This brand also has sizing information on the packaging and recommends going up a size if you are wearing bulky boots.

So there you have it. Walking carefully through ice and snow and wearing a pair of well fitting grippers can help you work safely all day. If you don’t wear grippers, BAM! On the ground.

On a completely separate note I think it’s important to quickly talk about postal vehicles. My office is really short on LLVs right now. CCAs have been waiting until noon or later for a truck to come back so they can start their route. Management, desperate to get CCAs to the street, have been trying to give them broken or unsafe vehicles. A carrier trying to open a frozen door the other morning accidentally broke a window. He brought the keys to the supervisor and told him about the damage. The supervisor then gave the keys to a CCA. **THERE WAS STILL BROKEN GLASS ON THE SEAT!**

We need to do our part to stop this. Do your vehicle checks. If your vehicle is broken or unsafe, write up a repair tag. If management in your office is trying to give unsafe vehicles to CCAs then tie an orange tag to the keys. If you don’t feel safe taking a vehicle then **NOBODY** should be taking it.

Stay Safe,
Jeremy Provost

*Letter Carriers
retaking “normalcy”
from Coronavirus ...*



Vice President's Report

I had held off in writing this month's article in hope that I would be able to report that the long-awaited Postal Reform bill had been passed. Unfortunately, that is not the case yet. The need for Postal Reform has been discussed at-length, here in *The Wake Up*, as well as other places for a long time. It had almost seemed like it was one of those things that would always be talked about but may never actually happen; like getting new postal vehicles. All the sudden, in early February, news came from Congress that the bill was finally on the move. On February 8, the House passed the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 with wide bipartisan approval by a margin of 342-92. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer vowed to move quickly to pass the bill in the Senate, after the legislation won approval in the House. "It is my intention for the Senate to quickly take up and pass this bipartisan, bicameral postal reform bill," Schumer said. "We hope to take action here on the floor and pass the bill before we go to Presidents' Day recess." To briefly recap what this bill would mean to the Postal Service: The legislation would lift the burdensome pre-funding requirements that have put the Postal Service deeply into debt and would require it to continue delivering mail six days per week. The Postal Service has suffered 14 straight years of losses due to this pre-funding mandate which was imposed in 2006. The bill would also require the Postal Service to display online how efficiently the mail is being delivered. Postal Service officials have said without congressional action, it would run out of cash by 2024, a frequent warning from the service. It has estimated it will lose \$160 billion over the coming decade. The legislation would also require future Postal Service retirees to enroll in Medicare, which would save the Postal Service money by having Medicare cover much of its costs.

Democratic Representative Carolyn Maloney of New York, the chairwoman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, said the Postal Service "provides service to every American, no matter where they live, binding us together in a way no other organization does." Representative James Comer of Kentucky, that committee's top Republican, said "the days of letters alone driving Postal Service revenue are not coming back." The bill, he said, will "help it succeed into the 21st century." Senator Gary Peters, a Democrat of Michigan and chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said he expected his chamber to "move quickly" on the measure. The bill has 14 GOP sponsors and, with strong Democratic support expected, seemed on track to gain the 60 votes most bills need for Senate passage.

It looked like the bill was on its way to be voted on in the Senate and then to head to President Biden's desk for a signature quickly. But, just like a football team that moves quickly down the field and just when they get into the red zone the drive stalls out, the momentum came to

a screeching halt. Enter Senator Rick Scott, a Republican from Florida. Scott blocked the Senate from moving forward with the bill, objecting to the Senate's attempt to move the bill along with a procedural move to fix a clerical error in the bill. When the House sent the bill to the Senate last week it passed along an incorrect rendition that did not include the most up-to-date text. The House on Friday quickly corrected the error by unanimously approving a measure to send over the correct version. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, had already started the process of approving the incorrect bill last week and was hoping to move the House-backed technical correction on Monday with unanimous consent, allowing the chamber to resume consideration of the full bill when Scott objected, bringing the process to a stop for now.

Although it is disappointing to get that close, only to be held up by someone who seems to be delaying the process just because he can, Schumer said he was confident that the bill will still be passed and sent to Biden's desk for final approval. Congress is in recess after Friday February 18 and does not come back until March. Hopefully, next month I will be able to report that the bill has finally passed. After 15 years, what's another month?

In a bit of good news, for anyone who may have missed it, the fifth regular COLA under the 2019-2023 National Agreement was \$1,331 following the release of the January 2022 Consumer Price Index. On February 10, 2022, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that the CPI for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W, 1967=100) stood at 823.000 in January, 77.624 points above the base level of 745.376 in July 2019. The 5th COLA stood at 64 cents per hour or \$1,331 annually.

In Solidarity,
Dan Wheeler

Shop Steward

**A shop steward knocked at the heavenly gate
His face was scared and old
He stood before the weigher of his fate
For admission to the fold.
What have you done, Saint Peter said,
To gain admission here?
I've been a shop steward, Sir he said
For many and many a year.
The pearly gate swung open wide,
St. Peter touched the bell
Come in and choose your harp, he said
You've had your share of hell.**

--Author Unknown

MINORITY MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Mental Health Resources for Minority Groups

Asian American/Pacific Islander Resources

National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association naapimha.org
Asian American Psychological Association aapaonline.org

African American Resources

Black Mental Health naapimha.org
Black Mental Wellness aapaonline.org
Black Emotional And Mental Health (BEAM) beam.community.com

Native American/Native Alaskan/Indigenous Resources

Mental Health America BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) mhanational.org/infographic-bipoc-and-lgbtq-mental-health

Native and Indigenous Communities U.S. Department of Health & Human Services- mhttcnetwork.org/centers/national-american-indian-and-alaska-native-mhttc/home

American Indian/Alaskan Native acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/american-indian-alaskan-native-communities

Hispanic and Latinx Resources

National Hispanic and Latino Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network mhttcnetwork.org/center/national-hispanic-and-latino-mhttc/home

Sana Mente (Movimiento de Salud Mental de California) <https://www.sanamente.org>

National Alliance on Mental Health nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/Latinx-Hispanic

General Crisis/Hotlines

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline 800-662-HELP (4357)

National Suicide Hotline 800-273-8255

Mental Health America 800-969-6642

As always, support is available to you through the Postal Service Employee Assistance Program around the clock, every single day of the year. EAP staff are non-judgmental, culturally competent professionals, ready to take your call and hear your concerns. We are here for you.

To learn more visit **EAP4YOU.com**

Regardless of your background, culture or struggles, you are not alone.



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WWW.EAP4YOU.COM

WAKE UP

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at the next meeting
Via
ZOOM.
(address below)

Regular Monthly Branch 25 Meeting

Time: Mar 1, 2022 08:00 PM Eastern Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89302558266>

Meeting ID: 893 0255 8266

One tap mobile

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