



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher

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Jim Lockhart of Holliston receives his plaque and gratuity from President Barbuzzi as Vice President Dan Wheeler, Jeremy Boucher and George Burgey look on.

President's Message

"Reality Bites"

The recent route inspections conducted in Wayland resulted in the loss of two full-time routes, which in turn triggers the excessing of two full-time letter carriers. Let that sink in for a minute. The carriers did their jobs, the mail and parcels simply didn't cooperate. Wayland was inspected under a perfect storm whereby both mail volume and parcel volume bottomed out. Operations Programs Support (OPS) got lucky.

"OPS got lucky". That's the way they feel, but that isn't the way they should feel. They should be concerned that they may have created an untenable situation at the Wayland office by going forward with adjustments that they in good conscience (if they had a collective conscience) know are the result of an anomaly. But push forward they are and the carriers in Wayland and the Union will have to push forward as well. The carriers will have to be diligent in performing their work each and every day by the book. They will have to be diligent to make sure they don't case any DPS or FSS, to make sure they take every minute of break and lunch that they are entitled to, that they deliver parcels into customers' hands, and that they follow every other rule designed to keep them safe and the customers satisfied. The Union will have to ensure that there is a review of the adjustments after approximately sixty days to determine whether or not the routes are indeed adjusted to as near to eight hours as possible. We've been through this before and we will most certainly go through this again.

We will most likely go through this again sooner rather than later. Take stock in your office. Do you consistently run out of mail? Do you notice that your parcel hamper is quite a bit lighter than it was a month or so ago? I have been notified unofficially that Peabody, Salem, and Marblehead will no longer receive parcels from Amazon to deliver. What impact will that have?

Are you working eight hours a day right now? Are those eight hours all legitimate work, or do you run out of mail and grab your automated mail or case your circulars? If you do any of those things, reality is going to bite you HARD. If you do any of those things, your route is showing too much office time because you don't get a count for the mail that you are casing. As a result, it appears that you are in the office far longer than you should be. That is what triggers a route inspection! The bean counters come to your office to identify why you are not efficient, why you are not making standards.

Unfortunately, when they come, if you run out mail you are placed on waiting time. You may spend an hour-and-a-half in the office, but forty minutes may be waiting time so you are only credited with a fifty minute office time. That is what is supposed to happen every day. If you run out of mail, you are supposed to wait for

mail. If it happens repeatedly, then management must either address the mail flow or change your starting time in such a way that you won't run out of mail.

So, during the inspection it's established that your office time is actually significantly less than you show each day. What happens then? Your route, and your office, loses time. The loss of office time is compounded by a reduction in parcels. A reduction in parcels directly impacts your street time and what do you get, a reduction of street time for your route and your office. It is not unheard of for a route to lose close to an hour between the office and the street. Multiply that hour by the total number of routes in your office and then divide by eight and that is how many routes you lose. You're not done losing though. If the number of routes isn't a multiple of five, you lose a T-6 position as well.

What does this all mean. It means that for the first time since roughly 2011 letter carriers will be excessed. For those of you that don't know what that means, it means that the junior regular carrier(s) in your office won't work in your office anymore. In 2011 carriers were excessed as far as Brockton. You can be uprooted and be faced with an unbearable commute. There can also be collateral damage. Do you think it's easy to report to work on time when you're driving such a great distance? Whatever traffic delays you presently face are compounded exponentially when you have to travel significantly further.

Do you think that you will get a free pass if you are repeatedly late as a result of your new commute? Think again, you won't. How about your quality of life? How will your life be affected if your eight hour work day becomes an eleven hour away from home day due to the extended commute? Like the title says, reality bites.

The route inspections will come, and the pencils will be sharp. The postal service is suffering now from the reduction in revenue due to the decrease in Amazon. Please, do your part to ensure that you don't contribute to a loss of workhours in your office. I know some of you still work off the clock, I know some of you still case automated mail or circulars. Sure, no one wants to be out in the elements a minute longer than they have to so you may justify doing some of these things in order to get inside sooner, to get home earlier, to pick up the kids from daycare, to make it to your second job, whatever the reason. You may have enough seniority that you may not be affected to the extent that you will be excessed. But, if you're doing any of the things that I have described, YOU will be responsible for someone's life taking a miserable turn for the worse. Even if they get to come back eventually, they can never get the time they lost due to their extended commute back. Don't do this to your brother or sister, do your job right, please.

Stay informed!

Executive Vice President's Report

There are a lot of articles being written on President Trump's 2020 budget report, and none of them are positive as far as letter carriers are concerned. Trump and his people want to make Federal workers pay much more toward our retirement funds and more toward our health plan premiums. He also wants to eliminate the retiree's COLAs and FERS supplement for retirees. He would love to take away our collective bargaining rights also.

These are just a few of the things the White House would like to change, but the good thing is that Trump can't do this on his own, he needs congressional approval. He hopefully doesn't have enough support for it right now, seeing this would affect people almost everywhere. There aren't a lot of Congressman and Senators that are willing to tell their constituents that they are taking away some of their take home pay and retirement benefits, and then expect them to vote for them in the next election cycle, but some don't care. We need to make sure our reps in Congress are told not to support these proposals.

Well, we have been talking about the possibility of widespread route inspections for years now, and it is more than likely about to happen. The Northeast Area has declared that they want all routes in the area inspected by the end of 2020. That means every city delivery station in the Branch. We only have the schedule for the Spring, which at this point includes only one Branch 25 station, Acton. We are going through the adjustment process from the 3 previous inspections conducted in February. More could be added but we expect a lot this Fall and Spring of 2020. We can only give advice and that would be not to cut corners by skipping breaks or lunch, or casing automated mail. Also, make sure you deliver parcels according to the manuals, which means attempted at the door. At this point, I should not have to tell anyone this, but the Postal Service is going to attempt to eliminate as many positions as possible.

A lot of carriers approach me in their stations with questions about a pending retirement. There are a lot of carriers that are approaching retirement eligibility and are curious how much they would get as an annuity per month. First of all, everyone is different because of the different immediate annuity eligibilities. Carriers with 30 years of service and reach minimum retirement age can retire with an immediate annuity. Two other thresholds are 60 years of age and 20 years of service, and 62 years of age with 5 years of service. The number of years and your high-3 years salary determine the annuity. Anyone that is eligible for immediate retirement should be sent an annuity estimate from the Postal Service once per year. There are other retirement options available, such as deferred or reduced retirements, that are too lengthy to get into here. There

is a questions and answer booklet for FERS and CSRS retirements on the NALC website, under the Retirement pages. Also, a call to HR Shared Services will generate an annuity estimate that includes the FERS supplement estimate as well, for those eligible or close to it. As always, we tell carriers that aren't sure they want to retire, talk to a certified financial planner if there is any question if you can afford to retire. There is a minimum retirement age, but no maximum.

It was good to see many of the branch's shop stewards make the appreciation night held by the branch at the March meeting. It was a good show of support to the stewards who work hard to protect the rights of the members on a daily basis. Thanks to Jim Nutter for taking care of the ordering of the hoodies and windbreakers we presented to the stewards and officers and other special branch recognitions also.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

March 26	Executive Council Meeting
April 1	April Fools' Day
April 2	Regular Monthly Meeting Wilmington K of C 27 School Street Extension Food Served 7:00 PM Meeting Begins 8:00 PM
April 7	World Health Day
April 15	Patriots' Day
April 20	Passover
April 21	Eastern Sunday
April 22	Earth Day
April 27-29	Region 14 Training & Rap Session

Do You Realize You've Been Robbed?

Recently, 2nd V.P. of SE Merged Branch 18 Rich Drolet quantified what has been stolen from letter carriers in the last several years and what the present government proposes to steal moving forward. Perhaps being able to see the dollars and cents effects of our enemies in Congress and the White House will motivate some to become more involved by either contacting their Senators and Representatives, working on the campaign (s) of our friends, or donating to our PAC, the Letter Carrier Political Fund. Here are the figures.

Letter carriers hired *after* December 31, 2012 have already had their contributions to their pension fund raised from 0.8% to 3.1% of their pay as part of the "Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act". So, instead of having to pay \$19.23/pay period when they reach the top step of our pay chart, they will have to pay \$74.51! Then, in 2014, the "Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013" raised the rate for newly hired federal employees hired after January 1, 2014 to 4.4%, which will come out to \$105.76/pay period at the top rate of pay! So these are two hits that newly hired letter carriers have been subjected to that will not raise their pensions at all! The only way to stop these increased costs for our benefits is to support those in Congress who support us by donating to the LCPF!

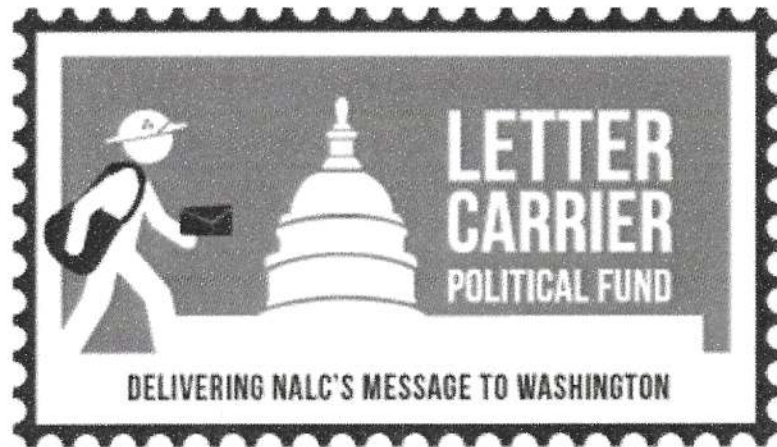
What new benefit cuts have been proposed by President Trump's budget?

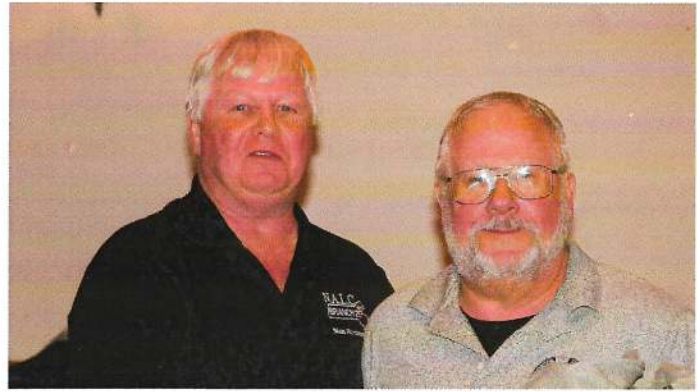
- ◇ He wants to raise the rate that all postal and federal employees have to pay for our pensions to 6.45% of pay over the next 6 years, which will cost active letter carriers up to \$3,600 per year. This is your money they are trying to take away from you and all of us. This change alone would effectively eliminate the 5% match by the USPS if letter carriers voluntarily set aside 5% per year toward retirement.
- ◇ His budget proposes \$46 Billion in cuts and revenue changes to the postal service, most likely reducing the frequency of delivery by eliminating Saturday delivery and scaling back other delivery.
- ◇ His budget also slashes the rate of interest paid on assets invested in the Thrift Savings Plan Government Securities Fund (G Fund), costing active and retired letter carriers \$32 Billion over 10 years.
- ◇ His budget also reduces CSRS and FERS pension benefits for new retirees by basing annuities on our highest 5 years (High 5) rather than the current highest 3 (High 3) of pay.
- ◇ His budget would eliminate cost-of-living adjustments (COLA's) for current and future retirees under the Federal Employees Retirement Systems (FERS), which would cost the average retiree \$23,400 over 10 years, \$99,471 over 20 years and \$246,185 over 30 years once we've retired!
- ◇ His budget would reduce COLA's for CSRS

annuitants by one-half of 1% each year, which would cost each of them: \$12,598 over 10 years, \$60,576 over 20 years and \$169,874 over 30 years!

- ◇ His budget also proposes to eliminate the FERS Special Annuity Supplement for FERS employees who choose to retire before the age of 62. If that supplement is eliminated through legislation, here is what you would lose if you retired at the age of 56 with 30 years of career federal/postal service: approximately \$12,000 per year, over a 5 year period, which would cost those employees upward of \$60,000. In many instances, that would prevent employees from retiring because they could not afford to lose that \$12,000 per year FERS Annuity Supplement.

- ◇ The Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) will use money that it receives at the national and local levels to contribute and otherwise assist candidates for federal office who favor legislation in the interest of NALC, without regard to their party affiliation, and to undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the LCPF from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, staff, or their immediate families living in the same household. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 per calendar year. Any monetary guideline included with the solicitation amount is merely a suggestion - an individual is free to contribute more or less than the guideline suggests and the NALC will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount of their contribution or their decision not to contribute. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal.





At the March regular monthly meeting, Branch 25 recognized our shop stewards who are either presently serving or who just finished a term. Along with the shop stewards, the Branch recognized our officers as well as some contributing members. Jim Nutter who spearheaded the effort also presented the hoodies or pullovers. Pictured with Jim in clockwise rotation beginning from top left are National Business Agent and Branch 25 member Rick DiCecca, Worker's Comp Representative and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Ron Noviello, Trustee Dan Raske, Secretary Andy Coan, Cartoonist extraordinaire Ken Bonin, Assistant Treasurer John McNulty and Trustee Bruce Johnson.



Branch 25 Shop Stewards that are either currently active or who just completed their terms pictured with Treasurer Jim Nutter who presented the hoodies and pullovers at Steward Appreciation Night:

Dan Wheeler

Paul Desmond

Andie Coulter

Dan Laflash

Tony Bossi

Ken Dusombre

Bob Cronin

Marc Masse



**Jack Lyman
Jim Salvati
Ed Lendall
Dave Hallinan**

**Junior Abreu
Chris Bruno
Joe D'Amato
Joe Stearns and Ron Linnane**

Have you ever heard the expression “This is gonna be a piece of cake”? Maybe you’ve said it to yourself. I did and will never say it or think it again. Let me explain why. A little over a year ago I was injured while out on my route. My injuries were serious enough that I needed to file with OWCP. I said to myself, “I can do this, the paper work is pretty much easy to understand. Dealing with OWCP is gonna be a piece of cake”. What a dumb, naïve thought that was.

After waiting for 10 months, with 2 denied surgery attempts, I finally was approved by OWCP on my doctor’s 3rd attempt for surgery and physical therapy. Because of the delays by OWCP I have been out of work for over a year and this may affect keeping my job position with the Post Office.

How did my claim finally get approved? When I initially saw early signs that OWCP wanted to bang heads with me and delay my claim as long as possible it didn’t take me long to figure out that I needed assistance with this. Believe it when I tell you that OWCP can bring tears to a glass eye! That’s when I contacted our union and spoke to Ron Noviello about my situation. Ron listened and said, “I’m going to help you figure out what we need to do.” Ron then came up with several actions we needed to take, and I followed his instruction. With each new roadblock from OWCP Ron would come up with a new approach and strategy.

What you need to know is that Ron never faltered and always said, “we will get your claim accepted.” Ron was right. It was tough going for a while, but I believe Ron’s assistance and knowledge was paramount in finally having my claim accepted by OWCP.

The point I am trying to get across here is this; Don’t go it alone...you have a union that is truly dedicated to help you when you need them. No matter what you think or say I guarantee you that you are going to need your union at least once (most likely many more times) during your career with the P.O..

Now answer this question...when is a piece of cake a piece of cake? When it actually is an edible piece of cake!

Thank you Ron and thank you Branch 25,

Dave Cataldo
Winchester


By now, all employees should have received their 2019 Personal Statement of Benefits mailing from the UPSS. It contains a simple layout of all our pay and benefits. Just a quick glance at the numbers will educate our members of the dollar amounts at risk if some in Washington get their way with dismantling the USPS.

Here’s an example from my own statement. I paid \$4073 toward my health plan last year, but the USPS picked up the remainder at \$13,890! And then, there’s pension contributions; \$496 from me and \$8,620 from the USPS. I’d like to keep those numbers in these proportions, wouldn’t you?

There’s also so many other benefits at risk, which all of us work hard to earn over a career. COLA’S, the retirement annuity supplement (RAS) and collective bargaining itself are all being suggested for reduction or elimination.

I have no problem contributing a few dollars a pay period if doing so will give us all a chance at some modest amount of working class security. It’s quick and easy to contribute to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, so give it a chance.

Andy Coan
Secretary

 **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



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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.

Just For The Health Of It

As we are all aware, one's health is a very personal and private affair and health care needs vary dramatically. I mention this because I marvel at the success the NALC Health Benefit Plan enjoys in meeting members' needs. Part of that success is owed to helpful programs offered outside of plan benefits. I hope some of you have taken advantage of these programs which I've described to you in past issues of the Wake-Up!

Today's offering is called Healthy Rewards. It presents the chance to save up to 60% on ways to live a healthier life. Among these:

- Vision and hearing care discounts.
- Fitness Club and Equipment Discounts around the country.
- Discounts on wellness and healthy products.
- Jenny Craig discounts.
-

There are no claim forms or referrals involved and the program offers more than 50,000 providers and fitness clubs.

Interested?

For more information call 800-558-9443.

Keep on truckin'

Rich Donlon

On Sunday February 24th, we had our first Union-sponsored CPR class. For the first held of it's kind , the class was a great success! There were six letter carriers in attendance including myself. We followed along with an instructional video and practiced the different CPR techniques hands on as the video was paused. Our instructor was informative and open to questions throughout the afternoon.

With six of us, the group divided up nicely into three groups of 2. Each group had an adult mannequin to practice on. CPR is less stressful and less tiring if you have a partner. While one person did chest compressions, the other would monitor the situation and get ready to give the breaths. (See part one of trivia challenge). Later in the class, we each had a baby mannequin to practice CPR on an infant.

The other facet of the training dealt with the use of an Automated External Defibrillator or AED. An AED can increase the chances of a victim's resuscitation significantly. When used correctly, the AED will let the rescuer know whether or not to shock the victim to get their heart back to beating normally. You can ask your Supervisor or Post Master if an AED is on site at your station. If not, you should request that one be purchased.

When this issue of the WakeUp is published, we will have had our second CPR class. If we have enough interest ,CPR training could become an ongoing benefit for carriers not only for our education but to maybe save one of our brothers or sisters or anyone!

Jim Salvati
Safety Officer

Trivia Challenge part one

The ratio of chest compressions to rescue breaths is;

- A. 20:4
- B. 25:5
- C. 30:2
- D. 12:1

Part two: Lyrics Trivia

'Cause love was meant for you and I
Wind, rain, sleet or snow
I will be wherever you go
You leave me _____

VETERANS' CORNER

Semper Fidelis is a Latin phrase that means "Always faithful" or "Always loyal". It is the motto of the United States Marine Corp; usually shortened to Semper Fi.

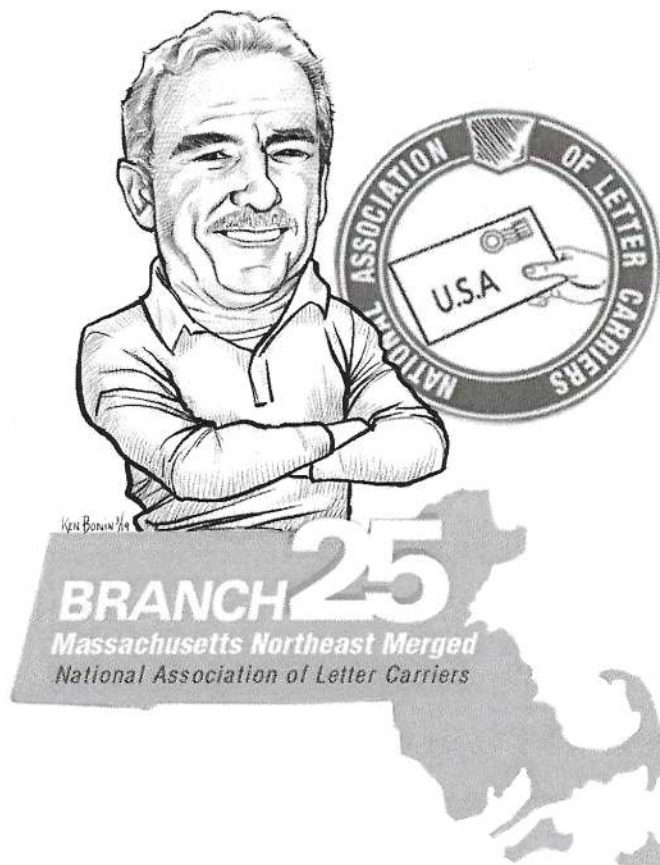
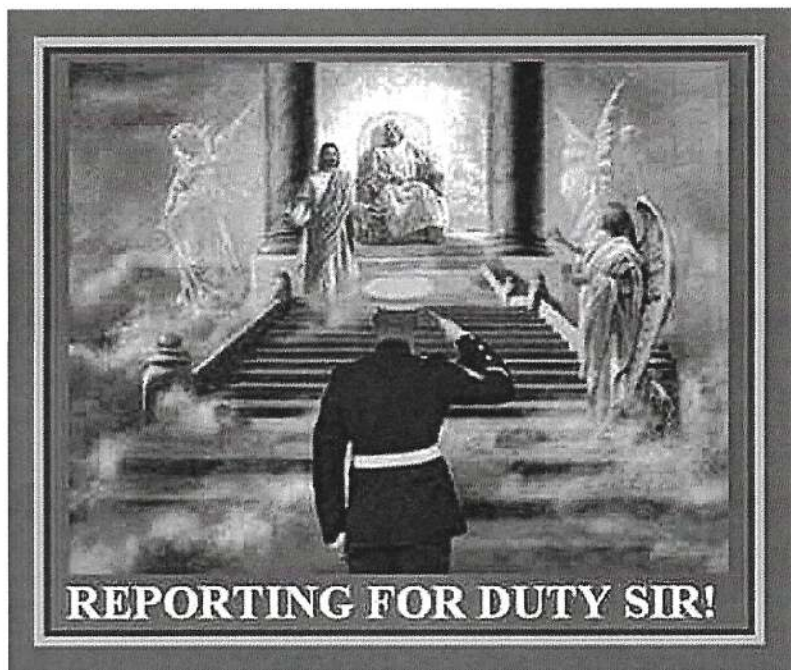
Randy Keller brought this to the Union he served so proudly. He made our Union stronger and in true marine standard he left it in strong, capable hands with Dave and Paul. He was there for all with advice and guidance. For me personally, giving me great advice and helping me with my son and his scholarship with the marines.

He took me out for my first grievance on territory violation against our postmaster. We won and received over \$3,000 settlement.

Although we served the corp a few years apart I will quote Lt. Gen Lewis "Chesty" Puller. "Old breed? New breed? There's not a damn bit of difference so long as it's marine breed". Randy brought this to all letter carriers in the branch, from the salty carrier to a boot CCA you treated us all the same.

I am proud to call you my friend and honored you called me the same. There is one more duty you have my friend. The marine corp hymn states "If the Army and the Navy ever look on heaven's scenes, they would find the streets are guarded by United States Marines".

Randy Keller, United States Marine Corp reporting for duty.



Semper Fi

Andie Coulter

Momentum

Financial wellness



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Smart money strategies

- ☑ Set realistic financial goals in areas like home and car purchases, investments, children's education and travel.
- ☑ Establish a budget and track your spending. Many free smartphone apps make budgeting easy.
- ☑ Contribute as much as possible to your retirement plan, and prioritize paying down debts.
- ☑ Build your savings. An emergency fund helps you manage unforeseen expenses without accruing debt.

Financial wellness for your life's journey

It's important to start financial planning early, and to continuously monitor your financial health as you work toward your long-term goals.

- Early in your career, it's vital to establish smart spending habits—to carefully track your spending, start saving, build your credit and achieve financial independence.
- If having a family is among your life goals, prepare to handle expenses for child care, daily living needs of children and life insurance to protect your family.
- As you advance in your career, your priorities may change to funding children's college educations, investing wisely and preparing for retirement.
- In later life stages, it's important to formalize an estate plan to minimize taxes and ensure that your legal, financial and medical wishes are carried out.

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I WANT YOU...

*at the next meeting
April 2, 2019*



President Barbuzzi presents a plaque and retirement gratuity to Haverhill's John Coyne as Ken Dusombre and Janice Earnshaw look on.