



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
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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



Left to Right: Steve Lopez, Linda Johnson, Joe Stearns, Lori Rocker, Marblehead's newest retiree Bob Black, Dave Barbuzzi, Sam Cruz, and Roger Martin. Marblehead came out to celebrate Bob Black's retirement at the April Branch Meeting.

President's Message

“Skip Your Lunch”

There, I said it, I've got your attention, but I can explain. There is one day a year where skipping your lunch may be an acceptable thing to do. The NALC/USPS Food Drive held on the second Saturday in May (this year May 14) is a joint effort that is supposed to be a no loss no gain venture. That means that the time it takes for you to collect food and bring it to the food pantry or other designated collection spot is your gift to those unfortunate families that rely on us. It is not a gift to the Postal Service.

I have written about this in the past, but as the last actual food drive was in 2019, these words bear repeating. Historically, food drive day is one of the most sought after annual leave days, right up there with the day after Thanksgiving, the day after the Superbowl, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Unfortunately, if the leave calendar is filled, there is a high incidence of sick calls. That's unfortunate

Think of it this way. There are those that are much less fortunate than you. You have a job, a living wage, and benefits. I realize that many of you are not living the “high life”, but you're not living in your car or in a shelter either. Volunteering is something that makes a tremendous difference to countless peoples' lives. On the second Sunday in May, you have the opportunity to volunteer from your postal vehicle or while walking your route. You don't have to get up on Sunday morning to go to a soup kitchen, you don't have to go somewhere after work, you simply have to pick up the bags of food that customers leave in or around their mail boxes and bring the food to whatever location your office has designated. IF that takes you longer than your route would normally take you (which would be a good thing because that would mean that you're picking up a lot of food), then donate your lunch to the cause. I hope you'll feel great for having done it.

As the late Ed Sullivan would say: “We have a really big show”. I'm referring to the May Branch 25 regular monthly meeting on May 3 at 8:00PM at the Knights of Columbus in Wilmington, MA. First off, the \$1000 door prize will be given out this night as the backup attendance pool has reached \$1000 as well. Cash money is always a great motivator.

There will also be some significant votes taken at this meeting. We will be voting on the proposed merger with Branch 212 Lawrence (merger agreement published in last month's “Wake-Up!"). And finally, we will be voting on multiple proposed changes to the Branch 25 By-laws, most significant in my eyes is the proposal to compensate shop stewards. All the proposed language and existing language is printed in the following pages of this month's “Wake-Up!”.

Last, and certainly not least, our National Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe will be attending our branch meeting. It is always extremely informative to hear a National officer speak. Every member should try to take advantage of any opportunity they can during their career to experience it. I'm sure Brian will be speaking about the recently passed Postal Reform, explaining its nuances and answering questions about its impact. Hopefully, Brian will also peel back the curtain just a bit to let us know whatever he can about potential agreements on route inspections and other matters presently being discussed at the National level. Each month in the Wake-Up! and at our branch meetings the officers of Branch 25 try to fill you in on what is happening in the branch, and at the national level. On May 3, you will be able to cut out the middle man and hear the news from one of the principles. I have to advise you that this month's meeting will most likely go a tad longer than usual, but with everything that I've just told you will be happening, it will be well worth the time spent attending.

As the summer approaches, and more specifically as prime time begins, staffing will become even worse than it is presently. I want to remind all Shop Stewards, letter carriers AND managers that windows of operation are NOT a free pass to violate the provisions of Article 8 of the National Agreement. If management in your office works carriers overtime that are not on the overtime desired list (ODL) off their assignments because they don't want to work the ODL carriers beyond the dispatch of value, there is most likely a contract violation taking place. I say “most likely” because the contract has a phrase that reads: “...while recognizing that bona fide operational requirements do exist that necessitate the use of overtime from time to time.” That language is partially clear, but then the “from time to time” is thrown in to gum up the works. From time to time is not defined. That is why we have to look at each incident on its own merits to determine whether a grievance exists. When prime time is in full swing, if carriers are working off the list and off their assignment day after day, and odl carriers are only working until the dispatch of value, that would most assuredly be a grievance. Contact your steward or the branch office so that we can address it. Remember, however, that if you are not on the ODL management does not have to pay an ODL carrier penalty time to save you from working regular overtime on your own route. Easy peasy right?

Stay well and Stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi
Presidnet

Executive Vice-President's Report

Well, it took a lot longer than it should have, but Postal Reform has finally passed through the houses of Congress and has been signed into law by President Biden. Eliminating the pre-funding mandate for future retirees' health benefits corrects a huge mistake made by Congress in 2006, that may have seemed reasonable at the time, but shortly after showed to be otherwise. The pre-funding mandate was something that should not have ever happened, but unfortunately it takes much longer to correct a mistake by Congress, than it does for Congress to make a mistake. Thanks to everyone that contacted their representatives over the past years and those that have contributed to either COLCPE or the Letter Carrier Political Fund, or both.

The past couple of years, the NALC both nationally and regionally have not been able to meet for training in person, obviously because of Covid. Any virtual training is fine, but it is not the same as meeting in person. On the last weekend of April there will be a New England Regional training session in Providence, RI put on by the office of National Business Agent Rick DiCecca. There will be training on Saturday night and all-day Sunday for our stewards and branch officers. Monday will be a Rap Session with President Rolando and Exec VP Renfroe. Hopefully, we will get an update on the possibility of a new route evaluation and adjustment process as discussed by VP Dan Wheeler in this issue. Any joint adjustment process is usually better than going through a full 6-day count. If we do enter into an agreement, the data is going to have to be accurate, so please make the correct time punches and do your street duties on the street, not in the office. This will be the first regional training for all of our stewards in three years, and it will be great for all the new stewards that have been appointed, or elected for the first time, since the Covid shutdowns. It should be very beneficial to the Branch.

The food drive cards are currently being distributed to our stations. The cards should be delivered to the customers between 5/10/22 and 5/12/22. If the cards are not going out in your station, please let the Union office know. The food drive is 5/14/22. This is our first drive in 3 years and it should be very productive. The NALC-USPS food drive is the biggest one-day food drive of the year in the country, and it fills the food pantries every time. I'm sure the pantries are looking forward to it, it comes at a time of year that most pantries historically struggle. The carriers of Branch 25 have always taken great pride in collecting as much food for the communities we work in, let's keep the tradition going. If there is any way to keep track of how much food (pounds) get delivered to your local pantry, please let us know in each station. Some pantries will weigh it as it comes in and give you a total. As always, we like pictures of the carriers with food to be sent to the Branch for the Wakeup.

As I write this it is opening day at Fenway Park, and it is a beautiful day. Perfect weather to deliver mail. I would like to think the weather would remain this way, but the heat and humidity will be here sooner than later. Please keep hydrated, as you should year-round, and take extra rests if necessary. We have had too many carriers become ill from the heat in recent years, and the hot weather seems to arrive earlier each year. I hope to see a big crowd at the next Branch meeting, with national Exec VP Brian Renfroe attending.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

May 3	Regular Monthly Meeting K of C Wilmington 8:00PM Food served at 7:00Pm
May 4	Star Wars Day
May 5	Cinco De Mayo
May 6	Military Spouses Day
May 7	Kentucky Derby Day
May 8	Mothers' Day
May 13	Friday the 13th
May 14	NALC FOOD DRIVE!!!
May 21	Armed Forces Day
May 23	Lucky Penny Day
May 30	Memorial Day

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

The job of a letter carrier. Stress. Owing to its very nature and the often neanderthal approach by management to get the mail delivered, these two entities go together like a hand in a glove.

I recently read an article by Dr. Frank Litman, founder of Eleven Eleven Wellness center in New York City and was struck by how some of his findings regarding stress related to letter carriers.

The first thing I learned was that poor foot biometrics (the way the toes and feet function and interact with the body) can lead to hip and back pain, poor balance and more when feet are under stress according to Dr. Litman. He suggests that walking barefoot when convenient (around the house, in the backyard perhaps?) can be quite helpful. I'd like to add that if your feet are giving you grief, a visit to a podiatrist or treating yourself to a professional pedicure could prove helpful. It may even be that orthotics come into play for you. For high option plan members see page 46 in the brochure; for CDHP and VOP members see page 116.

A second stress inducer is inadequate sleep. Obviously, there can be many reasons for this, but one Dr. Litman alludes to may fly under your radar. He writes about the blue light emitted by TV's, smartphones and tablets that advises that you stay away from them when it's time to sleep.



Still a third contributor is the bombardment we experience from valueless email, unnecessary tests and robocalls. For all of us, I'm sure, they cause annoyance and sometimes anger. Also, the 24-hour news cycle can be toxic. There are antidotes. For unwanted emails be sure to unsubscribe; for texts, give yourself some personal time - turn off the phone. For me personally the greatest annoyance is robocalls. I've reduced them significantly by enrolling in the Do Not Call Registry at donotcall.gov. I've also put a limit on watching the news although I do try to stay informed.

There are also mental approaches you can take to reduce the negative effects of undue stress which I find helpful. Among them as suggested by social psychologist Veronica Tait, PhD, becoming deeply involved in music and learning to experience and appreciate the serenity and tranquility that Mother Nature offers.

As always, this article does not purport to be a panacea or all-encompassing but I hope you find it informational and of value.

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

It's starting to get warm out and soon we will be dealing with the oppressive heat of summer. One of the most dangerous things we face during the summer months is the risk of heat-related illness.

According to the National Weather Service, heat-related illnesses occur when the body heats up too quickly to cool itself, or when too much fluid or salt is lost through sweating or dehydration. During extremely hot and humid weather these conditions can cause heat cramps, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke. All are serious, and all may require medical attention.

Heat cramps are the first sign that your body is in trouble. They are painful muscle cramps that usually develop in the legs and abdomen. When heat cramps occur there is also usually heavy sweating. Get to a cooler, preferably air conditioned room, and take sips of water. If cramps last more than one hour, seek medical attention.

Heat exhaustion is more serious and is your last chance to intervene before heat stroke occurs. According to the CDC, signs of heat exhaustion are heavy sweating, clammy skin, rapid, weak pulse, muscle cramps, nausea, weakness, dizziness, headaches, and fainting. At this point you **MUST** take action to cool yourself. Find a cool place, loosen clothing, use a wet cloth to cool your body, and sip water. If you are vomiting, your symptoms get worse, or your symptoms last more than an hour, seek medical attention.

The last and most dangerous illness is heat stroke. You have heat stroke if you are experiencing a body temperature is 103°F or higher, hot red skin that is damp or dry, a fast, strong pulse, headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and loss of consciousness. Call 911 immediately, move to a cooler place, try to lower your body temperature with a wet cloth, and do not drink any fluids.

The best way to prevent heat-related illness is proper hydration. According to the CDC, hydrating before work will make it easier to keep up with hydration during work. While working in the heat it is important to drink water before you are thirsty. Drink one 8oz. cup of water every 15-20 minutes. That's about one 20oz. bottle per hour. Don't over hydrate though. More than 48 oz. per hour can cause the salt concentration in your blood to drop too low. Hydrating after work will help replace the fluids you lost throughout the day, and it also gives you a head start on hydrating for the next day.

Hydrating before work does not mean extra coffee, and after work does not mean extra beer. Too much caffeine can affect your heart which is especially dangerous in extreme heat. Alcohol can cause dehydration and increases the risk of heat illness if consumed within 24 hours of working in hot conditions. Water is best for staying hydrated. Eating regular meals during the day will keep your salt levels high enough to make sports drinks unnecessary.

The most important thing is paying attention to your body. If you're feeling thirsty then you are already behind on preventing dehydration. Take the time to reduce your physical exertion and catch up on hydration. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms of heat-related illness, **ACT!** Get out of the heat. Find somewhere with air conditioning, or even just sit under a shade tree. Treat your symptoms and stay out of the heat until you feel better. Contact your supervisor if you need extra time. Seek medical attention if you are not getting better. There is no point in suffering heat stroke trying to finish your route. Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Call 911.

Stay Safe,
Jeremy Provost

“Undertime? We Talking Bout Undertime?”

Spring has arrived and with the (hopefully) nicer weather and longer days comes two of my least favorite things: pollen and supervisors claiming carriers have undertime. As of writing this the pollen hasn't arrived yet but management has already begun with the old “projections show you have undertime” or my personal favorite “it's Tuesday, there's no mail here” routine. Does it make sense that moments after reporting to your case, with clerks still having to distribute three more postal packs of parcels, that your supervisor is telling you that you have undertime? Is there any reason the same supervisor isn't approaching you on a Monday and telling you to take an hour overtime on your own route because of high volume? Supervisors may try to save the company money, but you should not abandon your responsibilities as a letter carrier to attempt to deliver in their projected times.

Do yourself a favor and try not to get agitated by these comments from management, and if you do have legitimate undertime or businesses closed, do your best to get all the mail delivered while being as safe as possible. Please do not skip your lunch or breaks to finish in their expected times. Our responsibility as letter carriers is to discuss with management how long we estimate our route will take us to deliver it. There are infinite reasons why the numbers they see on paper don't make sense compared to actually delivering your route and remember that no projection tool can ever simulate a professional letter carriers' knowledge of their own route. If you do need auxiliary assistance be sure to request a 3996.

Recently management has been conducting mail counts. These are supposed to be done to determine the efficiency of a carrier in the office. Per the M-39 Handbook Section 141.2, the carrier should receive one day's advance notice of the count **AND** be advised of the result of the count. On another note, if you are ever instructed to curtail mail distributed to your route in the morning be sure to request and submit PS Form 1571 (Undelivered Mail Report) per Section 131.44 of the M-41 Handbook. This also applies if you are instructed to return to the office resulting in mail being curtailed (131.45). Record the number and type of pieces curtailed, remarks on why curtailment happened, sign it and provide it to management. Be sure to request a copy for your records. Being able to provide this documentation may be important during future route adjustment consultations, or when management approaches you about your daily performance. If management refuses to provide you with a copy, request union time to speak with your steward or contact the Branch Office.

In Solidarity,
Tony Bossi

Proposed By-law Language

Printed below are proposed changes to the current language in the By-laws of Branch 25. The relevant Article and Section is referenced before the proposed language with the exception of Article 6 Section 5. Presently, the Branch 25 By-laws do not contain an Article 6 Section 5.

The existing language for each of the Articles and Sections listed below is reprinted on the two pages directly following these two pages. These proposed changes were presented at the April 5, 2022 regular branch meeting and will be voted on at the May 3, 2022 regular branch meeting.

Article 4 Section 2

Regular monthly meetings will be held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, weather permitting. Meetings shall start promptly at 8:00PM. The membership shall be advised as to the location of each meeting in sufficient time to permit their attendance.

Article 5 Section 2 President

The position of President shall be a full-time position. The President will be Chief Steward and shall be the responsible executive and administrative head of the Branch, Editor-in-Chief of the Wakeup, and shall be a member ex-officio of all committees. He/she shall examine all contracts to which Branch 25 is a party. No obligation shall be incurred, nor a contract made, unless countersigned by the President. He/she shall have the authority to appoint members to fill unexpired vacant terms of office for Branch officers. He/she shall have the authority to appoint all committees and name their Chairperson. He/she shall automatically be a delegate to all National and State Conventions or to any meeting called by the National Association of Letter Carriers, Committee of President's (C.O.P.) meetings, or affiliates. The President shall receive a base salary of \$84,403.00 as of 2-7-2020, the date of the by-law approval by the Committee of Laws. Any subsequent contractual increases and cost of living increases (COLA) will be added to the base salary. At the end of each contract, all contractual and COLA increase will be rolled into the base salary to become the new base salary.

Branch 25 will incur the obligation of employee and employer CSRS contributions, up to 5% matching contributions for FERS employees, the U.S. Postal Service's share of the Federal Employees Government Life Insurance, and the U.S. Postal Service's share of the Health Benefit Premiums not to exceed the premium charged by the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

As for leave, the position would be granted the same amount of sick and annual leave per year as the person holding the position would earn at the Postal Service, with the requirement that he/she must take at least 15 days of vacation each year. If the duties of the President require him/her to work on a Saturday or Sunday, or after normal business hours, then he/she shall be granted compensatory time for said hours. No more than thirty-two (32) hours of compensatory time may be accrued at any given time. Unused annual and sick leave will be placed in a sick and annual bank. The person holding the position will forfeit leave in the same manner as it is earned. For every 80 hours of LWOP used, 8 hours of annual and 4 hours sick will be reduced from the total, or that equal to what the person in the position is currently earning. When he/she vacates the office, unused earned annual leave will be paid and unused sick leave will be forfeited unless he/she vacates the office to fill another full-time position in the Branch.

Proposed By-law Language

Article 5 sect 2 Exec VP

The position of Executive Vice President shall be a full-time position. The Executive Vice-President shall serve at the direction of the President. The Executive Vice-President shall serve in the absence of the President. He/she shall also participate in all forms of organizational activities as directed by the President, and shall automatically be a delegate to all National and State Conventions and Committee of President's (C.O.P.) meetings. He/she shall be involved in all aspects of Branch administration. The Executive Vice-President shall coordinate, schedule and provide training to the membership as required. The Executive Vice-President shall preside in the absence of the President, and in case of death, resignation, disqualification, refusal or neglect of the President to discharge the duties of his/her office, the Executive Vice-President shall then perform all the duties incumbent upon the President for the remainder of the term of office. The Executive Vice-President shall receive a base salary of \$83,403.00 as of 2-7-2020, the date of the by-law approval by the Committee of Laws. Any subsequent contractual increases and cost of living increases (COLA) will be added to the base salary. At the end of each contract, all contractual and COLA increases will be rolled into the base salary to become the new base salary.

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Article 6 section 3

During the month of October, of election years, an election of Shop Stewards shall be held in each station or unit. The President shall have the authority to appoint a standing election committee of at least 5 members in good standing. The committee shall organize and receive nominations during the second week of October, and no later than the 15th of the month they shall post the names of all nominees (in alphabetical order) for a period of seven (7) days, after which the vote shall be taken by secret ballot. The election committee shall supervise the election, count all ballots and declare the nominee receiving a majority of votes cast, the elected Shop Steward and then notify the Branch Secretary at the Union office. The nominee receiving the second highest vote shall be the Alternate Steward.

Article 6 Section 5-no previous language

The Shop Steward shall receive a quarterly pro-rated salary equal to the Union dues he/she has paid while serving as a steward. The Alternate Shop Steward shall receive a quarterly pro-rated salary equal to 50% of the Union dues he/she has paid while serving as the Alternate Steward.

Existing By-law Language

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Branch 25 will incur the obligation of employee and employer CSRS contributions, up to 5% matching contributions for FERS employees, the U.S. Postal Service's share of the Federal Employees Government Life Insurance, and the U.S. Postal Service's share of the Health Benefit Premiums not to exceed the premium charged by the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

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Existing By-law Language

Article 5 Section 2

Executive Vice President

The Position of Executive Vice-President shall be a full-time position. The Executive Vice-President shall serve at the direction of the President. The Executive Vice-President shall serve in the absence of the President. He/she shall also participate in all forms of organizational activities as directed by the President, and shall automatically be a delegate to all National and State Conventions and Committee of President's (C.O.P.) meetings. He/she shall be involved in all aspects of Branch administration. The Executive Vice-President shall coordinate, schedule and provide training to the membership as required. The Executive Vice-President shall preside in the absence of the President, and in case of death, resignation, disqualification, refusal or neglect of the President to discharge the duties of his/her office, the Executive Vice-President shall then perform all the duties incumbent upon the President for the remainder of the term of office. The Executive Vice President shall receive a salary of \$83,403.00. This salary will constitute the base salary for the Executive Vice President. Any subsequent contractual increases and Cost of Living Adjustments will be applied to the base salary.

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Article 6 Section 3

During the month of October, of election years, an election of Shop Stewards shall be held in each station or unit. The President shall appoint an election committee of three (3) members, in good standing, in each station or unit. The committee shall organize and receive nominations during the second week of October, and no later than the 15th of the month they shall post the names of all the nominees (in alphabetical order) for a period of seven (7) days, after which the vote shall be taken by secret ballot. The election committee shall supervise the election, count all ballots and declare the nominee receiving a majority of votes cast, the elected Shop Steward and then notify the Branch Secretary at the Union office. The nominee receiving the second highest vote shall be the Alternate Shop Steward.

Article 6 Section 5

Currently this Section does not exist.

Vice President's Report

I will start this month's report with a couple updates that I first mentioned at the April branch meeting: The first is about our newest Union Brothers and Sisters in the Amazon Labor Union (ALU). In March, workers at the JFK8 Warehouse in Staten Island New York voted to form the very first American Union at the country's second-largest employer. This has been seen as a great win for the over-all labor movement. Unions represented almost 25% of private-sector employees in this country in the mid-1970s, but that number had fallen to only 6% by last year. According to the ALU, workers from 50 other Amazon buildings have contacted them about potential organizing efforts. Amazon, who spent over 4 million dollars last year, is not giving in without a fight. They have filed 25 objections to the election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), alleging all kinds of misconduct by ALU organizers. The NLRB has given Amazon until the end of April to substantiate these claims.

Last month, I wrote about the MDD scanners we use, specifically how integrated they were going to be in the new route evaluation process for the rural carriers. Also, in the near future, we will be moving away from swiping time badges to clock in and out of work and using the MDD scanners for these functions. It only makes sense that they would become part of the evaluation process in route adjustments for city carriers in the future as well. In the April issue of *The Postal Record* Executive Vice-President Brian Renfroe dedicated most of his report on this exact topic. He says that "A sincere interest in developing the first national joint process in several years remains strong by both parties at the national level." There has been testing at a few locations which has "incorporated a significant amount of technology that is now available." Apparently, the feedback that has been received has been unanimously positive and everyone has been happy with the results.

The next big thing they are working on is a new process for moving territory during a route adjustment. Currently, a PS Form 3999 is used to adjust territory. The 3999 is a one-day snapshot of a carrier's route and is not always the best way to do it. Having been part of many route adjustments myself, I can say that updating this method would be a good thing for letter carriers if a more representative method can be found using scanner info. It is not always easy to find a representative 3999 and sometimes we are left with using one that is "close enough" or "the best we got" for adjustments. Any methods would have to be agreed on jointly, going forward, but it seems like a new process is coming and it is good to hear that testing has been positive so far. Although full-blown route inspections seem to be paused for now letter carriers who qualify for special route inspections under Handbook M-39, section 271 can still request one. Contact your steward or the branch office if you have any questions about one of these inspections.

On April 1, the USPS notified the Union that the handling procedures for mail that required customer signatures was being restored to pre-pandemic regulations, as laid out in Handbook M-41, section 122.22. Every office should have received this information in a stand-up talk already. Since March 19, 2020, there had been modifications in place due to COVID-19 protocols. During that time, we had been signing for these items ourselves, with customer approval, and not having customers handling the scanners themselves. Please take the time to handle these mail pieces, which require signatures, properly. It is not worth potential discipline or the bad customer service to sign off on these items yourself just to save a few minutes on the route.

In Solidarity,
Dan Wheeler

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at the next meeting
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K of C Wilmington
8:00 PM



Left to Right: Sean Pickett, Brian Morrison, Fred Durfee, Bedford's newest retiree Randall Waleyko, and Dave Barbuzzi. Bedford came out to celebrate Randy's retirement at the April Branch Meeting.