

JEROME J. KEATING BRANCH



BRANCH NINE NEWS

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL"

1964

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December 2019

Branch 9's Holiday Party

Tw'as a Sunday in November, at the Cinema Grill. Santa came to visit and the children had a thrill. There was coloring and ornament making, to list the things the children could produce. Eating pizza and meatballs, drinking soda and juice. Watching holiday movies on the big screen and a chance to tell Santa how good they have been. Surrounded by our Union family, we shared our good wishes and cheer. For this is the spirit our solidarity brings, this time of year.



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RETIREMENTS



Last Punch for Dave Johnson (Elk River) with Steward Jim Julik. Happy Retirement!



Last Punch for Doug Weingartz (Lost Lake) with Steward Jeff O'Rourke. FYI Doug was Jeff's first Steward. Oh how the tables have turned. Well Wishes in Retirement!



Last Punch for Pam Thompson (Richfield) with Steward Joe Rian. May there be many happy songs to sing in retirement!



Last Punch for Kathy Fealy (Bloomington) with Steward Vicki Fleming and Friends. Best Wishes!

NEW MEMBERS

- Abdullahi Abdi
- Mohamed Ali, Sr
- Nidal Al-Ramahi
- Xavier Aponte
- Thupten Choephel
- Corey Edmisten
- Neil Elavsky
- Denver Grubb
- Abdikader Herzi
- Kristin Huber
- Timothy Lamere
- Thu Le
- Beverly Praml
- Michael Quashnick
- Peter Sarafolean
- Jonathan Saunders
- Shaliza Self
- Firas Taha
- Louis Trizna
- Brittni Welter
- Zhibin You

IN MEMORIAM

- Kenneth Honkanen
- John McPartlan
- Charles Lenzen

Clarence W. "Smoky" SMEKOFSKI



Union brother of Branch 28 He was a proud participant in the 1970 Postal Strike. After retirement he stayed active as the union president of the retirees club

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The Branch Nine News is a monthly publication of NALC Branch 9, and is published in the interest of and for the members of NALC Branch 9.

The opinions expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the OFFICERS, or of NALC Branch 9.

Articles MUST be submitted to the editor by the 1st of the month, and must be signed. The Editorial Staff reserves the right to edit or refuse to print articles which are derogatory in nature.

Any official NALC organization may reproduce our articles provided appropriate credit is given.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Wow! What a year 2019 has been.

It seems like this year has been going a light speed and a turtle's crawl at the same time. As has been the tradition at Branch 9, my December article be a review of the year 2019.

Membership - Our membership has been mostly flat throughout the year: We began the year with a total of 1354 members and the years will end with approximately 1375 active members. The most popular question our office receives is when will I make regular? Unfortunately, there has not been any conversions in the Minneapolis Installation since the end of May. For the last 6 months my answer has been, I don't know. But, the question about when the next conversion in Minneapolis is coming to a head. In Minneapolis there are less than 10 Unassigned Regulars. This month there will be another canvassing of Unassigned Regulars for the residual vacant positions. As soon as we have more information, we will disseminate that information to the field. As for conversion in the Associate Offices, there should be conversions as your offices have residual vacancies. If this isn't happening in your office, please contact the Branch Office.

National Agreement: The second most popular question is when will the contract be resolved? Our National Agreement expired at midnight on September 20th followed by a mandatory 60-day period of mediation. This period has come and gone with no resolution. So, what happens next? The National Parties are in the process of setting up the arbitration panel of three that would be made up of one arbitrator representing the Postal Service and one representing the NALC. These are usually attorneys from either side. The third Arbitrator is independent and chosen by both sides and

will serve as the Chairman of the panel. The parties will set up a schedule for testimony and written arguments and then the three arbitrators will deliberate and there will be a decision. This is not a quick process, but we have been through this before. Until there is a decision, the terms of the expired contract remain in full force and effect.

Conventions: This past October at the MSALC (State Association) convention the delegates agreed to resume annual business conventions beginning in 2020. That was the reason for the two 2 elections of delegates in 2019. As a result, on August 17 through the 21st the delegates will meet in the National Convention in Honolulu. 53 Branch 9 members have been elected as delegates. As we did for the 2018 National Convention, by January each delegate will receive a letter stating the latest information about the convention and where each delegate stands as far as meeting attendance (18 of 24 meetings between August 2018 and July 2020). Later in the Summer the same type of letter will be sent to the 38 delegates about the Fall 2020 MSALC Convention. The MSALC State Convention will be October 4th – 6th 2020. Delegates to this convention were elected at the September 2019 General Membership. In order for those delegates to receive funding, they must attend 9 of 12 General Membership Meetings the year preceding the State Convention (October 2019 – September 2020).

Election 2020: There have been many lessons that have been learned from the most recent elections. First and foremost, that we are a divided nation We as a union are no different. We as a union, have always focused on which candidates will do the most to improve conditions for the Postal Service, our jobs and the lives of us and our families. It doesn't matter we could have



Mike Zagaros

or should have done, now is the time for the real work to begin. This is not the first time we have faced opponents in Congress and the White House both of whom have sought to change the Postal Service to our detriment. We have seen what damage can be done (the prefunding for future retirees' health benefits).

There may be resolution for the prefunding requirement on the horizon in the form of two bills. HR 2382 with over 300 co-sponsors and has been placed in the queue for a vote on the house floor. There is now a companion bill that has been introduced in the Senate, S-2965 that has the same language to repeal the prefunding requirement.

So, what can, or should we do now? We need to reach across the divide, first with our own members. We need to talk and more importantly listen to understand. We need everyone's input in to our legislative and political agenda. We are only effective when we carry the same message. Then we need to speak with our Representatives on both sides of the aisle to encourage them to continue to support letter carriers and our families I am also encouraging all of our members to consider making contributions to PAL 9 (Branch 9's Political Action League) and the LCPF (Letter Carriers Political Fund). I have

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Joel Carter, President of PAL-9

WHY PAL-9?

You understand that we need to participate in politics, because Congress is our boss. They set the rules that dictate whether the Postal Service succeeds, or struggles. Congress passed the pre-funding bill that has squeezed the P.O. every year since 2006. \$5 billion/year to pre-fund retiree health care for the next 75 years. A cost that no other business has to pay, putting the Postal Service at a great disadvantage. But Congress can fix it. In fact, a bill is before the House, H.R. 2382, that would repeal the pre-funding requirement. A bi-partisan majority supports the bill (227 Democrats, 45 Republicans).*

The problem is no companion bill exists in the Republican controlled Senate. And even if they were passed in both chambers, would our current President sign the bill?

So we have to play the long game. Contributing to our PAC, "PAL-9", gives Branch 9 letter carriers the ability to participate in politics at every level. When we build coalitions that support the Postal Service (and its employees), we can be freed to compete and succeed.

*from nalc.org/Government Affairs

Branch 9 recognizes former PAL 9 President Lenny Larson and Treasurer Ron Lawrence, for the success and commitment of our pac fund.



The earliest Branch records show that efforts by our leadership at that time were engaged with forming PAL 9 in 1975. In early 1976, President Bob Tripanier in correspondence with National Ex. V.P. J. Joseph Vacca, sent his ideas about a local pac that would work in conjunction with NALC headquarters.

As it turned out, our Branch started PAL 9 on our own. Since that time we have gone through many changes in how we operate. At first, due to Hatch Act provisions, only retired members could make up the PAL board and its' officers. Revisions to the Act in 1993 now made it possible for active carriers to take an active role.

Lenny and Ron recognized the importance to become involved with state and local politics as well as federal elections. This involvement helped to give the rise of support for our causes from local unions and politicians. Evidence of this support has been repeated many times over. All of our rallies and campaigns to protect our jobs were attended and supported by these locals and the politicians we support.

Some may wonder why we have a political action committee while our National operates one of its' own. There have been times that our national leadership has asked this same question. There are several reasons. Because our pac funds are local we are able to contribute to local and state candidates as well as federal. Although our national office encourages us to attend political fundraisers, our requests for funding were often turned down. Oftentimes these events are planned on very short notice making it very difficult to obtain funding to go because of time constraints within our national.

Local control of funding to at least attend a political event gives us much greater ability to meet our candidates and explain our position on matters of legislation affecting letter carriers. We believe that face to face meetings with candidates and politicians to be much more effective than just a late donation through the mail.

Additionally, we have used PAL 9 funds to help other Branches within the state to attend political events and candidate fundraisers. Our feeling is that we need to elect as many labor friendly candidates from Minnesota as possible.

After participating and overseeing PAL 9 for over thirty years Lenny and Ron have been paramount to its success. Thank You.

Exec. Vice President's Report

On December 3rd, 2019 senators Steve Daines (R-MT) and Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the USPS Fairness Act S.2965 - A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to repeal the requirement that the United States Postal Service prepay future retirement benefits, and for other purposes. This bill is identical to HR 2382 in the house to eliminate the prefunding mandate that has plagued the Postal Service for the last several years. In Minnesota we have done a great job of contacting our Congressional Representatives to sign on. Seven of our eight representatives have signed on, only Jim Hagedorn in the 1st district has not signed on. We need to have everyone writing letters, and contacting our Senators, Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith to ask for their support on S. 2965

Looking ahead to next year, we will be continuing our efforts on the political front to make sure all our Senators and House Representatives know we continue to need their support on Postal issues. If we do nothing the future of the USPS will remain uncertain.

I had previously written briefly on the new way to file an OWCP

claim on your own. I have assisted with setting up an account for injured carriers, and it was not difficult at all. To file an OWCP for either a traumatic injury (CA-1), or an occupational injury (CA-2) online go to www.ecomp.dol.gov <<http://www.ecomp.dol.gov>>. On the right side of the page, toward the bottom is a link to create an account, click on the link. You will be brought to a page to fill in our personal information, and the Government Organization section scroll all the way down to United States Postal Service. Next you will need to pick a password, then three security questions and their answers. You will be provided with an ECOMP Control Number (ECN) that we can use to verify information with the submission of your claim. Write this information down somewhere and save it. Next click on create account.

You will be asked to verify your email account, do not forget to do this step. After you complete the set up, you will be able to pick either a CA-1 or a CA-2 form to complete online. After your form is completed you can print out a copy for yourself, and an email will be sent to your supervisor. Make sure to get an email address for



Samantha Hartwig

either your supervisor or your Manager. You will be required to enter in their email address during the filing process.

Once your account is set up you will be able to log in at any time and look at your OWCP file. If you need help creating an account and/or uploading documents online, we can assist you with that. At some point in the future online filing of OWCP claims may be the only way to file. The best part of the new online process is that the injured worker does not have to wait for a supervisor to find the appropriate OWCP form, and it can be done in the comfort of your own home.

I want to wish everyone a safe and Happy Holiday Season.

In Solidarity,
Samantha Hartwig



Br. 9 Retired Letter Carrier
Kerry Herdine
Home: 952.854.2655
Cell: 612.805.8407

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Dave Allmann

As the year comes to an end, another year awaits. What does that have in store for you? You have your vacation bids in place. Now comes the fun part of planning them out. Is it the big household project? Road trips are always a great way to get away. Hopping on a plane in the middle of winter to a warm sunny beach is also appealing. Seeing family members at a family reunion is always entertaining. We all look forward to our vacation time. Why not, we earned the time off and deserve it.

Safety Liason Report

No matter how you plan on spending the time off it requires planning. Always making sure all the details are covered. Your families are getting excited for what awaits. May the countdown to vacation time commence. How much time do you have to wait for your vacation?

We still have a job to do until that time comes. Winter still has at least another 3 months left. Nobody knows what Mother Nature will throw our way. We have to be prepared for these elements. This is when we see the most slips, trips and falls. You wear your ice grippers, yet still find a way to fall. Who would have thought that an object got buried under last night's snowstorm, only to find yourself tripping on it the next day. There are many hazards that lead to slips, trips and falls.

The ugly side to slips, trips and falls is the injuries that occur. Any injury is an injury to all. You have the worse of it because of the pain of the injury. You will have to do any rehabilitation that may be required. Surgeries are never fun for anyone. Have you thought

about doing everyday chores with a boot or cast? Even worse, what if you can't put any weight on your leg for an extended period of time. Will you be able to drive? How will this affect your family?

Imagine that this happened to you. I know what you're thinking. This will never happen to me. You're probably right that it won't. But I can guarantee you one thing, neither did the carrier who was injured. You fell and broke your arm or leg and will require 6 weeks to heal. After receiving this news your mind wanders to something even more heartbreaking. I'm supposed to be on vacation in 3 weeks. Fill in your own vacation plan and think how it would be affected.

Please take safety seriously so that this doesn't happen to you. Pay attention to your surroundings while walking or driving, and expect the unexpected. Then go ahead and enjoy your vacation and be sure to share what you did to others. Those stories are much better than the ones involving injuries.

Happy Holidays!

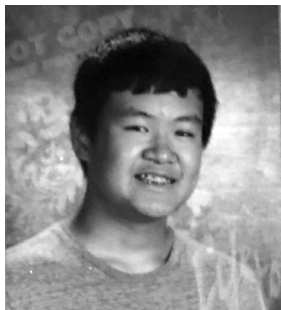
S C H O L A R S H I P W I N N E R S



I wish to express my gratitude as the winner of the 2019 Jerome J. Keating/ Austin B. Carlson Scholarship.

I'm a graduate of Robbinsdale Armstrong High School in Plymouth, MN. I'm currently attending Hennepin Technical College and pursuing a degree in IT Support including supplementary certifications. the scholarship will greatly help me in achieving that goal. I appreciate the generosity and hard work of all the members and letter carriers of Branch 9.

Thanks You,
Basil Rothstein



I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the generous scholarship you have given me. I feel so fortunate to have been selected as a recipient of this honor. Your generosity will allow me to pursue my dreams, and for that, I cannot thank you enough. I plan to continue my Neuro Science Education and eventually build a career in the research and development area.

Thank you again for your thoughtful and generous gift.
Sean Pham

Pres. Report cont'd from page 3

appointed Rosa Espinosa from Richfield to serve as our LCPF Coordinator. She will be available at all General Membership and the Steward's Board Meeting. At one time 11% of our members belonged to the National PAC (COLCPE/LCPF) now we are under 10% participation. By category the largest number of members participating in either or both the LCPF and PAL 9 continues to be our retired brothers and sisters who have been primarily carrying the load in contributions. We need to do better, because the time is now. Every election cycle we hear that this is the most important election ever and it is. It always is. That is because with each election there is hope for things to be better. We also know that things can get worse if we don't get involved

Grievances: Contract compliance has always been difficult. As people move into new positions, there is a learning curve as to what is or isn't in the contract. There is a learning curve as to how to manage and represent letter carriers. For the last 2 years we are seeing over 1400 grievances. So, what does that say about the Branch? We owe a debt of gratitude to our stewards and I wish to thank our Formal Step A representatives: JoAnn Gilbaugh, Joe Rian, Robb Petersburg, Johnna Lush, Chris Pennock, Karen Pederson for standing in the breach to enforce letter carriers' rights. I want to express my gratitude to our Executive Vice President Samantha Hartwig for taking over the administration of our grievance handling and for her work with the Informal and Formal Step A Representatives

Remembrances: As with every year, our ranks are diminished as some of our members have passed on. This year, 13 of our brothers have passed. During

Pres. Report cont'd on page 9

Director of Retirees Report

Whether a retired or active carrier, you have a fight in saving the Postal Service. If active carriers want the LLV safety traps to be replaced and retirees want to be sure their annuities remain viable, then the Postal Service's survival should be a priority concern. That means repealing the pre-funding mandate (passing HR 2382) and making sure that the next Post Master General is not someone who would move to privatize the USPS. Anyone, or any group of companies that would take over or buy parts of the USPS are not going to care about any annuity promises. Look over the private industry; there have been literally hundreds of takeovers, buyouts or run-them-into-bankruptcy holding companies and the first thing to go is any promise made to workers. The House has introduced an anti-privatization bill (HR 33) that has gained 266 cosponsors. All of the Democratic Minnesota state representatives have signed on. Pete Stauber, Republican from CD8 has also added his name. This is a start.

The other part is VOTING. At a recent meeting, I saw the voting statistics for Minnesota union retirees.

There were almost 41,000 registered to vote and 38,000 actually voted in 2018. But 20,000 were not even registered to vote! How is it that 33% of union retirees aren't even registered? It could be that they actually moved out of state and are still counted here. Or moved in state and haven't reregistered. But the point is vote. Even as a retiree, you have a stake



Melia Derrick

in who runs the government. If somehow you think it's only the working suckers who should care, then think of their future. And vote.

When a carrier retires, our branch officers enjoy sending them off with a station presentation of their NALC pin and watch. Recently we have been trying to post these station pictures on our Facebook page. If you are not currently following, do so. You will know who has reached that magical day and be able to congratulate them with a timely comment.

Many of our retirees meet monthly at breakfasts around the metro area. A large group of carriers meet in Ostego the first Friday of the month and a smaller but robust group of retirees enjoy breakfast at Elsie's the first Tuesday of the month. Some not not-so-early birds have started a lunch group in Blaine on the second Tuesday. Every retired carrier is welcome for these conversations where grandkids, retirement cabins, part time jobs and vacations reigns. The Branch 9 News has a recently updated list of retiree meetings, so check out the details in the paper. We are more than willingly to add groups, just let the Branch know.

-MD

Branch 9's Holiday Party cont'd...





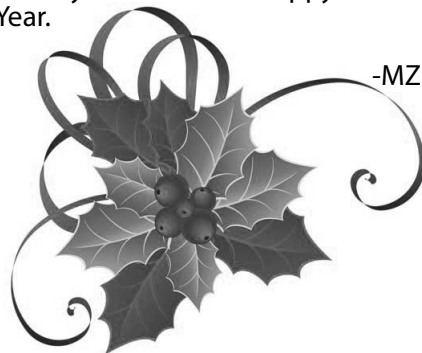
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the holiday season, please take a moment to remember them in our hearts and remember their families as well: Scott Sammons (Active), George Farmer, Carl Palm, Duane Hoverman, Charles Lenzen, Eugene Panser, John Millner, Hugh Byrne, Ken Honkanen, Eugene McNulty, John McPartlan, Paul Tanick, Todd Brandell, Bill Nelson and Delmar Woida, Rest in Peace.

We are in the middle of another one of those generational shifts that I keep talking about at the Post Office and the Branch. Look around at the stations and branches as we see the turnover in management. I joined the Postal Service at the beginning of one of those generational shifts. I will be leaving during one as well. I announced at the December General Membership that I will be stepping down as the Branch President at the March General Membership Meeting on March 24, 2020. There will be a better (longer, it wouldn't be me otherwise) explanation in a future issue of the Branch Nine News.

2020 is shaping up to be an interesting year, with lots of opportunities and protentional pitfalls, but we need everyone's involvement and participation. Together we can deal with anything. United we will make things better for our members and our families.

On behalf of the Officers and Stewards of Branch 9, I want to wish you all a joyous and safe holiday season and a Happy New Year.



-MZ

Delivery After Dark

Daylight Savings Time ends on Sunday, November 5th, and with that comes a decrease of daylight hours available. Carriers will once again be exposed to the possibility of delivering mail after dark.

What should you do? Is it safe to be delivering mail after dark? That depends. There is no uniform policy regarding delivery after dark. That's because we are not dealing with a consistent situation for everyone.

There are some delivery areas that may not be safe and should not be delivered to after dark. That depends on whether or not a carrier can safely make that delivery based on individual circumstances such as is it unfamiliar territory, a high crime area, is there poor visibility or other hazards (i.e. animals, uneven surfaces or other impediments such as fences, toys, etc).

The time to plan for delivering after dark is now before you find yourself literally in the dark. Are there parts of your route that are less hazardous than other to being delivered after dark (apartments with lighted entryways or well lit neighborhoods). Discuss these issues with your supervisor, steward and safety liaison then make a plan and write it down for the CCA's who may be delivering your route for the first time.

If you find yourself in a situation where you believe you'll be out delivering mail after dark, REMEMBER THAT YOU DO HAVE RIGHTS, and follow these instructions:

1. Inform your supervisor in the morning of your need of auxiliary assistance in order to complete your street duties before dark. **THIS MEANS FILL OUT FORM 3996 - HELP SLIP.**
2. Notify your supervisor prior to heading out to the street that you may not be able to complete your duties on the street by dark.
3. When on the street if you realize that you definitely will be out after dark, call your supervisor and make them aware of that reality. Stress your concern for your safety and again request auxiliary assistance.
4. Assuming no help arrives and you are faced with darkening conditions, attempt to continue.
5. **IF** while attempting delivery, you literally experience a safety hazard (i.e. stumbling, tripping, hear dogs barking, but unable to see that threat, not able to see potential dangers using your LLV/van's outside mirrors ...) call your supervisor. Explain your situation and notify them that you cannot safely continue delivery then return to your station.
6. **COMPLETE FORM 1571 - Curtailment form for the undelivered mail.**

Be sure to hand the curtailment slip to the supervisor, and ASK FOR A COPY. The copy is for your protection. You can also request a Form 1767 - Notice of Hazardous Working Condition. This will help you document the safety hazards you encountered while attempting to deliver after dark.

It is important to note that these instructions are not intended to endorse or encourage the unnecessary curtailment of any mail. It is about your safety and the protection of the mail in our charge.

There is not a single answer for every possible situation. It simply is the responsibility of each carrier to measure their safety and ensure that they are working safely. PERIOD.

Mandatory Stand-up Talk



Date: January 6, 2015

Dressing for Cold Weather – Think Warm

All Employees

With cold temperatures and snow arriving throughout many parts of the country, dressing properly is an important solution to keeping our Postal employees safe this winter. Dressing for cold weather is not difficult, but careful planning helps.

Some important things to consider:

Layering

Choose your clothing carefully. Layering is the best way to keep warm. Add a first layer consisting of a light fabric that will wick sweat away from your body. Avoid pure cotton, linen, or other similar materials, because these fabrics retain moisture and can cause you to become colder. In addition, layer a knit sweater or sweatshirt over the top of the first layer. Finally, add your coat or jacket as the top layer. Not only will the multiple layers keep you warm, but if temperatures increase, you can easily remove a layer to remain comfortable.

Protect Face and Extremities

Your face and extremities, such as your hands and feet are the most vulnerable when exposed to cold and windy temperatures. It is important to protect your face and extremities from the cold and wind. Wrap a scarf around your neck and pull it over your mouth and nose to guard against the cold air. Additionally, wearing a winter hat can protect your ears and head before going outside, and lastly, keep your hands warm with gloves or mittens.

Stay Dry

When planning how to dress for cold weather, staying dry should be a top priority. It is usually a good idea to get a coat that has a waterproof or water-resistant outside layer, especially if you will be exposed to rain, sleet, hail or snow. Additionally, waterproof or water-resistant shoes or boots will help keep your feet dry on wet days. If your clothes get wet, it is important that you remove and replace them to avoid frostbite.

So remember...Dress appropriately for the weather, and as always, if you feel that you are experiencing weather-related issues, notify your supervisor immediately.

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Contribute to the PAC
The Letter Carrier Political Fund is the anchor for NALC's legislative and political activities.



nalc.org/government-affairs/political-activity

Branch 9 Calendar

<u>December 25</u> Christmas Day Holiday	<u>January 28</u> MLK Jr. Birthday Holiday
<u>January 1</u> New Years Day Holiday	<u>January 28</u> General Membership Meeting 7:00 PM Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN
<u>January 14</u> Steward Meeting 7:00 PM Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN	<u>February 11</u> Steward Meeting 7:00 PM Crystal VFW, Crystal, MN



Northside Retiree Breakfast
1st Tuesday of the Month
9:30AM @ Elsie's
729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

N Suburban Retiree Breakfast
1st Friday of the Month
8:30AM @ Denny's Restaurant
9020 Quaday Avenue NE, Otsego

Southside Retiree Breakfast
2nd Tuesday of the Month
9:00AM @ Fred Babcock VFW
6715 Lakeshore Dr, Richfield

POCUM
4th Monday of the Month
6:00PM - MFT 59
67 8th St. NE
Minneapolis, MN 55412